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ARTICLE

Arabic Language in the Hajj Ritual: Rhetorical Symbolism as a Medium for Internalizing Islamic Character Education

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the role of the Qur'anic and liturgical register of Arabic in the Hajj pilgrimage as a symbolic and rhetorical medium that supports Islamic character education. Arabic in Hajj not only functions as a liturgical language but also conveys spiritual and moral values. Through rhetorical-symbolic analysis, the study highlights how expressions like talbiyah, wuqf supplications, tawaf remembrances, sa'i supplications, jumrah invocations, and tahallul rituals embody values such as sincerity, patience, humility, and obedience. The repetition and emotional engagement within these rituals make Arabic a supporting medium for shaping character across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Using a qualitative, literature-based approach complemented by expert interviews, the article argues that understanding Arabic in the Hajj context adds educational value to character development rooted in Islamic teachings. This study is particularly relevant for educators, Hajj guides, and practitioners involved in religious and moral education.

1 | Introduction

The Arabic language holds a central position in Islamic teachings not merely as a tool of communication but also as a sacred medium that represents spiritual and moral values across various aspects of Islamic life, especially in acts of worship (Umbar et al. 2024). In this article, "Arabic" refers primarily to the Qur'anic and liturgical register used in formulaic worship expressions, rather than to regional colloquial Arabic varieties. In the context of the Hajj ritual, this register of Arabic is used not only as spoken language but also as a liturgical medium that embodies complex rhetorical symbolism capable of instilling Islamic character values meaningfully among pilgrims (Alzeer and Abuzinadah 2024). For instance, expressions such as talbiyah, supplications during wuqf in Arafah, dhikr during tawaf, and supplication during sa'i are not mere verbal formulations but rhetorical expressions rich with character values.

The intricate vocabulary and phrases used during the Hajj rituals encourage pilgrims to internalize Islamic values such as humility, unity, and devotion (Bozonelos and Raj 2015). For Arabic speakers, this internalization may arise from direct semantic access to the Qur'anic register; for non-Arabic speakers, it may occur through learned meanings, guided interpretation, communal rhythm, and affective participation in shared recitation. Pilgrims not only participate in the rituals physically but also mentally and emotionally through the recitation of prayers and invocations (duas) in Arabic, which deepen their connection to their faith and strengthen their sense of collective identity (Al-Ajarma 2021). In this regard, liturgical Arabic becomes a vehicle for internalizing key principles in Islamic character education, such as sincerity, patience, submission, and humility (Bozonelos and Raj 2015). Therefore, Arabic acts as more than a communicative tool during Hajj; it facilitates the development of an integrated Muslim identity.

In this modern era, marked by a crisis of values and identity, character education based on Islamic values becomes increasingly crucial (Haerullah et al. 2024). The Hajj, as an annual ritual with a transnational framework, offers a potent space for actualizing character education if deeply reflected upon. However, the approach to Arabic in Hajj practices remains mostly textual and ritualistic, failing to optimally touch upon its rhetorical and symbolic dimensions (Ariati et al. 2024). Yet, understanding this rhetorical symbolism is essential to transform the Hajj experience from mere ritual compliance into a source of moral and spiritual transformation that affects the daily lives of pilgrims (Albahri et al. 2022).

This study aims to explore and analyze how **Arabic in the** Hajj ritual can be interpreted as a symbolic and rhetorical means of internalizing Islamic character education. Through a qualitative approach and literature-based analysis, complemented by interview data, the study uncovers the symbolic meanings embedded in Arabic expressions used throughout the Hajj and relates them to Islamic character education values. This integration of textual and empirical sources enriches the academic depth and practical significance of the findings, especially for educators, Hajj guides, and practitioners of character education in religious institutions.

Furthermore, this study positions Arabic not merely as a ritualistic language but as a medium for character formation in a broader context. In line with the view that language reflects the culture and values of a community, Arabic in the Hajj ritual represents an Islamic worldview rich in moral teachings. Therefore, a symbolic and rhetorical appreciation of Arabic during the Hajj ritual should be understood as adding educational value to the goals of Hajj, rather than replacing those goals, and may support the nurturing of an integrated Muslim identity.

Supporting this framework, Wahyudi et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of integrating Islamic studies (Dirasah Islamiyah) and Arabic language instruction in shaping students' Islamic character from an early age. This aligns with the present study's emphasis on Arabic in Hajj rituals as a medium for internalizing character values, showing that a deep understanding of Arabic reinforces character development through religious practice. Similarly, Setiawan et al. (2023) demonstrate that habituating Arabic usage in modern pesantren creates a conducive linguistic atmosphere for students, resonating with the rhetorical symbolism of Arabic in Hajj where consistency in recitation deepens spiritual and moral understanding. Sofyan et al. (2022) also highlight how the linguistic environment of Arabic Qur'anic and Hadith quotations in public spaces strengthens both language skills and Islamic knowledge—an experience mirrored in Hajj, where pilgrims are immersed in Arabic throughout the rituals. Likewise, Amirudin et al. (2020) underscore the management of Arabic learning through listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, paralleling the immersive and holistic engagement of pilgrims with Arabic in Hajj. Finally, Molyono (2024) shows that integrating the character values associated with Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (1058–1111 CE), a Muslim jurist, theologian, and mystic, into Arabic learning fosters honesty, responsibility, and diligence, paralleling the sincerity and patience cultivated through Hajj rituals expressed in Arabic utterances.

For general readers, Hajj is the annual pilgrimage to Mecca required of Muslims who are physically and financially able to

perform it. Classical legal manuals describe its rites through acts such as entering ihram, standing at Arafah, circumambulating the Ka'bah, performing sa'i between Ṣafā and Marwā, stoning the jamrah, and completing tahallul (Al-Miṣrī 1991; Hallaq 2009). While Sunni, Shi'i, Ismaili, and other Muslim communities may emphasize distinct legal or symbolic meanings of Hajj, all treat pilgrimage as a major ritual practice through which worship, identity, and communal belonging are expressed (Halim 2022).

The importance of studying Arabic for Muslims has also been emphasized in classical Islamic scholarship. A widely cited statement attributed to 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb urges Muslims to "learn Arabic, for it is part of your religion," and Ibn Taymiyyah develops a related argument that Arabic supports understanding of the Qur'an and Sunnah (Ibn Taymiyyah 1907). This does not mean that all Muslims must speak colloquial Arabic, but it does show why familiarity with Qur'anic and liturgical Arabic can deepen worship, interpretation, and character formation during rites such as Hajj.

This study addresses an important research gap. While previous works have examined Arabic as a liturgical tool or as a language-learning object, few have analyzed its rhetorical-symbolic role in the Hajj as a means of character education. The novelty of this research lies in integrating rhetorical theory with empirical interview insights to demonstrate how Arabic expressions function pedagogically in shaping sincerity, humility, and obedience among pilgrims. In this way, the study clearly states its objective: to examine Arabic as a symbolic and rhetorical medium that supports the internalization of Islamic character values in the context of Hajj without redefining the legal, devotional, or theological goals of Hajj itself. The scientific contribution of this work lies in combining rhetorical analysis, field-based perspectives, and pedagogical frameworks, thereby advancing the discourse on how sacred language can be systematically integrated into character education.

2 | Methodology

2.1 | Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design with a focus on rhetorical-symbolic analysis. The qualitative approach was chosen to capture the depth of meaning embedded in Arabic expressions used during the Hajj rituals. Unlike quantitative approaches, which measure frequency or numerical outcomes, this method emphasizes interpretation, symbolic representation, and the experiential aspects of pilgrims' engagement with sacred language. The study also integrates empirical evidence from expert interviews to ensure that the analysis reflects both scholarly perspectives and practical experiences of Hajj guidance and pedagogy.

2.2 | Data Sources

Two primary sources of data were utilized in this study. The first consisted of literature-based sources, including academic works, journal articles, and classical rhetorical theories such

as Kenneth Burke's rhetorical symbolism as well as character education frameworks such as those developed by Thomas Lickona. Lickona's framework originated in late-20th- and early-21st-century United States schooling rather than medieval Christian Europe; it addressed contemporary moral education, including schools operating in a religiously pluralistic society (Lickona 1991, 2004). Accordingly, this study employs it as a comparative analytic heuristic, not as a normative source for Islamic ethics. These texts provided the theoretical foundation of the study and offered insights into symbolic action, internalization of values, and the educational potential of ritual language. The second source consisted of empirical interview data gathered through in-depth conversations conducted by the author with three key informants: Dr. Ahmad Fauzi, M. Ag, an Islamic rhetoric scholar and Hajj guide; Prof. Nur Aisyah, PhD, an expert in Islamic education and Arabic curriculum design; and Ust. Bilal Harith, Lc., a senior Hajj trainer and alumni of the Islamic University of Madinah. These informants were selected purposively because their combined expertise spans Arabic rhetoric, Islamic education, and practical Hajj training. The study did not interview ordinary pilgrims because its aim was not to generalize pilgrims' experiences statistically, but to interpret ritual language through expert perspectives that could guide educational application. This decision is acknowledged as a limitation that future studies may address by incorporating wider pilgrim narratives.

2.3 | Data Collection

Data collection proceeded in two stages. First, a comprehensive document review was conducted to identify recurring themes in the relationship between the Arabic language, symbolism, and education. This process covered both classical rhetorical theory and contemporary Islamic education research published between 2018 and 2025. Second, semi-structured interviews were administered to the three respondents using a set of 20 guiding questions. These questions explored the significance of Qur'anic and liturgical Arabic as the language of Hajj, the symbolism of specific rituals such as talbiyah, wuquf, tawaf, sa'i, jamrah, and tahallul, the pedagogical and affective impact of Arabic expressions, and the broader roles of Arabic in fostering global Muslim unity, prophetic heritage, and intercultural solidarity. The semi-structured format allowed respondents to elaborate beyond the prompts, producing rich narrative data that complemented the textual sources.

2.4 | Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic coding combined with rhetorical-symbolic interpretation. First, all interview transcripts were transcribed and coded line by line, with emerging codes categorized into themes such as submission and obedience, humility and repentance, moral courage, unity and equality, and educational application. Second, building on Kenneth Burke's framework, Arabic expressions were examined as symbolic actions, understood as linguistic performances that shape identity, belief, and behavior. For instance, the phrase Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik was interpreted not only as a verbal response to God but also as a pedagogical tool for cultivating

obedience. Finally, the process involved triangulation in which interview findings were cross-verified with the existing literature to strengthen validity. For example, Fauzi's statement that wuquf prayers cultivate humility was compared with educational theories on affective learning to ensure coherence and reliability of interpretation.

2.5 | Credibility, Ethical Considerations, and Visualization

To ensure the rigor of the study, several strategies were adopted. Credibility was strengthened through triangulation of literature and interview data to reinforce interpretive accuracy. Transferability was achieved by framing the findings, while rooted in the Hajj context, in ways that could also be applied to broader Islamic educational settings. Dependability was maintained through detailed coding procedures and systematic documentation of analytical steps, ensuring reproducibility. Confirmability was supported by reflexivity, with the researcher acknowledging positionality within Islamic education discourse and distinguishing expert interpretation from general pilgrim experience.

Ethical considerations were central to the research process: all respondents gave informed consent for their participation, and their identities were disclosed with permission, reflecting their willingness to contribute scholarly and practical expertise. The author had no financial, supervisory, or institutional conflict of interest with the Hajj guide or the Hajj trainer, and the respondents did not participate in data analysis or manuscript preparation. The sacred nature of the Hajj rituals was respected by avoiding misrepresentation or decontextualization of religious expressions.

The novelty of this methodology lies in combining rhetorical-symbolic theory with empirical insights from experienced Hajj educators. While earlier studies reviewed in this article have tended to discuss Arabic as a liturgical medium or as a language-learning object, they have not systematically connected Hajj utterances, rhetorical symbolism, and character education in a single analytical framework. This study therefore foregrounds the dynamic role of Arabic as a pedagogical tool shaping moral character. By integrating thematic coding, rhetorical analysis, and visual frameworks, the methodology establishes a replicable model for studying sacred language in ritual contexts.

3 | Results and Discussion

3.1 | Islamic Character Education: Integration of Qur'anic and Prophetic Values

Character education from an Islamic perspective is the process of internalizing moral values derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah into the lives of learners. Its primary goal is to form holistically developed persons who possess noble character, strong faith, and piety toward God. Key values emphasized include shidiq (honesty), amanah (trustworthiness), sabr (patience), ikhlas (sincerity), and tawadhu' (humility). Abdul Mujib emphasizes that Islamic character education should

encompass three core components: knowledge (cognitive), attitude (affective), and behavior (psychomotor). These three components should be integrated into the learning process to produce individuals who not only understand moral values but are also capable of practicing them in daily life (Mujib and Mudzakkir 2006). Suprayogo (2013) adds that Islamic character education should begin at an early age through habituation and role modeling. He underscores the importance of a conducive educational environment, where Islamic values are taught not only through theory but also through practical, real-life experiences (Suprayogo 2013). In the Hajj context, these three domains are enacted through embodied rites, repeated utterances, and reflective worship, making the pilgrimage a concrete setting for observing how moral knowledge, feeling, and action converge.

3.2 | The Role of Arabic in Character Internalization

The Arabic language, as the language of the Qur'an and the primary language of Hajj rituals, plays a crucial role in the internalization of Islamic character values. Expressions such as the talbiyah, Qur'anic recitation and supplications during wuquf, dhikr during tawaf, personal du'a during sa'i, and takbir during the stoning of the jamrah are not only liturgical communication but also rhetorical symbols that carry deep spiritual and moral meanings. The study recognizes that personal supplication during wuquf and sa'i does not have to be in Arabic; pilgrims may pray in Javanese, Indonesian, English, or other languages. Nevertheless, Qur'anic and liturgical Arabic remains central because it anchors the ritual in a shared sacred register while allowing personal meanings to be expressed in other languages. Through recitation and understanding of these expressions, Hajj pilgrims are invited to reflect and internalize values such as sincerity, patience, and submission to God. As such, Arabic in the Hajj ritual becomes an effective medium for instilling Islamic character. In the context of modern education,

the implementation of Islamic character education requires a holistic and integrative approach, including curricula based on Islamic values, training competent teachers in character education, and creating learning environments that support value internalization. Recent studies show that integrating Islamic character values into Arabic language learning enhances learners' understanding and practice of those values.

Figure 1 illustrates how Arabic expressions during Hajj rituals impact three domains of character education—cognitive, affective, and psychomotor—within the author's expert-interview data. The affective dimension emerges as the most dominant, as pilgrims often experience strong emotions of repentance, awe, and humility when repeating Arabic phrases such as the talbiyah or wuquf supplications. The cognitive dimension, though less emphasized, still plays a crucial role in enabling pilgrims to understand theological and ethical meanings embedded in Arabic words. Meanwhile, the psychomotor domain is activated through embodied actions like tawaf, sa'i, or stoning the jamrah, which combine physical movement with sacred utterance. This distribution confirms the argument that Arabic functions not merely as ritual language but as a holistic pedagogical medium that shapes thought, emotion, and behavior simultaneously. However, these outcomes should not be treated as automatic or universal: pilgrims may experience confusion, fatigue, linguistic distance, or uneven understanding, and these limitations require stronger guidance before and during Hajj.

3.2.1 | Rhetorical Symbolism: Language as a Medium for Meaning and Awareness

Building on Kenneth Burke's concept of rhetorical symbolism, Arabic expressions in Hajj can be seen as symbolic actions that shape belief, identity, and behavior. For example, the talbiyah ("Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik") is both a verbal declaration of obedience and a pedagogical act of training submission.

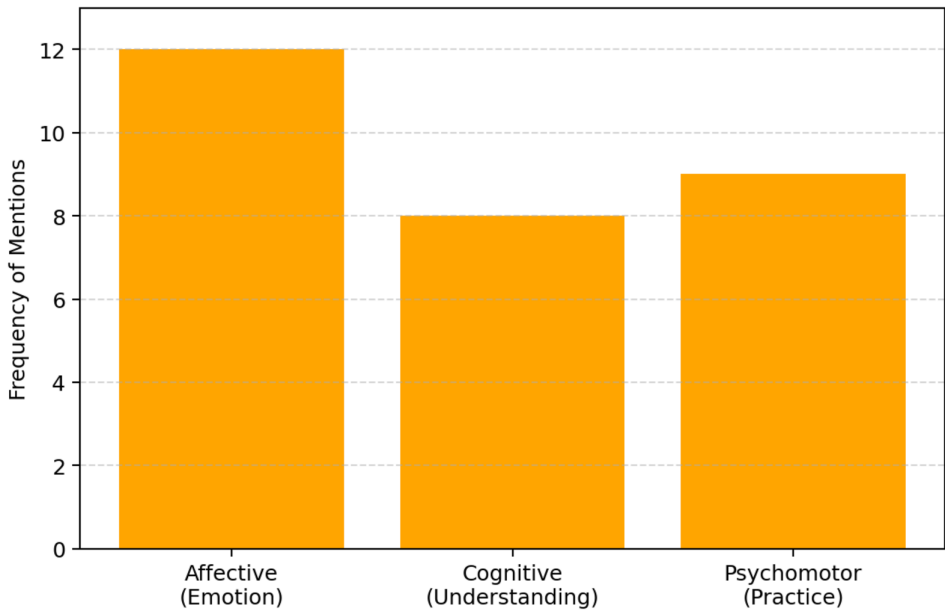


FIGURE 1 | Impact of Arabic expressions in Hajj rituals on the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of Islamic character education, based on thematic coding of the author's interview data. [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]

Similarly, wuquf supplications may include Qur'anic recitation, formulaic Arabic invocations, and personal du'a in any language; together they articulate humility, repentance, and dependence on God. Tawaf chants emphasize love, loyalty, and devotion, while sa'i supplications connect human effort with trust in divine mercy. These linguistic performances, repeated communally, internalize values across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

3.2.2 | Internalizing Values: Thomas Lickona's Perspective

Thomas Lickona developed his character-education framework in the context of late-twentieth-century United States schooling, not medieval Christian Europe. Although his work emerged from contemporary American moral-education debates and was directed particularly to schools in a religiously pluralistic society, he emphasizes that character development involves **knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good**. He argues that moral values must not only be taught cognitively but also internalized through emotional and practical experiences (Lickona 1991, 2004). In this study, this triad is used as a limited analytic heuristic for movement among cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains; it is not treated as the source or measure of Islamic virtue. This perspective partially corresponds with Islamic education, which integrates instruction, role modeling, habituation, and spiritual experience. Rituals such as prayer, fasting, and Hajj embody moral values that can be deeply internalized by individuals. This does not reduce the purpose of Hajj to moral education; rather, it shows that moral formation is one pedagogical dimension within a broader act of worship. Scholars of religious practice have similarly described embodied discipline and repeated devotional acts as technologies of the self through which subjects cultivate dispositions, agency, and ethical awareness (Foucault 1988; Mahmood 2005). By placing Lickona within—not above—Islamic pedagogy, Arabic in Hajj rituals emerges as a vehicle for moral education that supports, rather than replaces, the devotional purposes of Hajj.

The cross-contextual translation is therefore structural and selective rather than substantive or wholesale. The normative content of Islamic character remains grounded in the Qur'an, Sunnah, and Islamic ethical-pedagogical traditions. Lickona's categories are useful only for naming a pedagogical sequence already present in Islamic education through instruction, role modeling, habituation, spiritual discipline, and embodied practice. In contemporary Indonesian Muslim education, this limited use can support dialogue with widely recognized character-education vocabulary while allowing diverse local Islamic traditions and pedagogical authorities to determine the meaning and priority of virtues. Hajj remains an act of worship; character formation is one educational dimension of the rite, not its defining theological purpose.

What is at stake is whether an external framework clarifies the educational dynamics of Hajj or silently recasts Islamic worship in secular, individualistic, or culturally American terms. Uncritical adoption could detach virtue from divine command and worship, reduce Hajj to an instrument of citizenship training, privilege an individual-centered model over communal

obligations, homogenize the diversity of Indonesian Muslim traditions, or imply that Islamic pedagogy requires validation from Western theory. This study limits those risks by subordinating Lickona's categories to Islamic normative sources, triangulating them with Islamic education scholarship and expert accounts of Hajj, and using them only to organize the relation among understanding, affective commitment, and embodied action. The framework is thus complementary and revisable, not universal, culturally neutral, or theologically equivalent to Islamic pedagogy.

The interview findings reinforced these interpretations. Dr. Fauzi stated that the talbiyah is "a spiritual proclamation of surrender," which the author interprets as evidence that Arabic recitation can convert obedience from an abstract concept into a repeated embodied commitment. He also described wuquf supplications as moments that "reveal deep self-awareness," supporting the interpretation that Arabic prayer at Arafah encourages humility and repentance. Prof. Aisyah highlighted **the affective and symbolic functions of Arabic**, describing it **as a language** of the heart that unifies pilgrims emotionally and spiritually. Ust. Bilal explained that Arabic rhythm "transforms fatigue into endurance" during sa'i, suggesting that even non-Arabic speakers may experience the cadence of recitation as an affective aid to perseverance. Table 1 presents the summary of Hajj interpretations based on the author's interviews.

From both literature and interviews, Arabic in Hajj emerges as more than ritual performance. It is a symbolic pedagogy that nurtures Islamic character education while remaining subordinate to the broader devotional and legal purposes of Hajj. The results confirm that Arabic phrases, through their repetitive and affective force, can become embedded in the pilgrim's consciousness and behavior when their meanings are explained and practiced. These findings underline the novelty of the study: By synthesizing rhetorical theory, character education models, and empirical interview data, the research highlights how sacred language functions as both a spiritual and educational tool.

3.3 | Rhetorical Symbolism in Arabic Language During Hajj as a Medium for Internalizing Islamic Character Education

3.3.1 | Arabic as a Symbol of Spirituality and Moral Formation

Arabic in **the Hajj pilgrimage is not merely a linguistic medium but a profound symbol of spirituality and identity**. Its role is visible in rituals such as the talbiyah, prayers, tawaf, sa'i, sermons at Arafah, and supplications at the jamrah, each of which conveys meanings that extend beyond their literal utterances. The talbiyah, for instance, is not simply a chant; it is a declaration of tawheed and obedience that transforms the pilgrim's inner state. Through repetition and emotional resonance, it nurtures humility, sincerity, and submission. Burke's rhetorical symbolism provides a lens for interpreting these utterances as symbolic action: speech that shapes consciousness and behavior rather than merely describing them. In this sense, Arabic becomes not only the language of ritual but also a form of embodied moral pedagogy, a claim supported by character education theory

TABLE 1 | Summary table of interview findings.

Ritual	Key Arabic expression	Symbolic meaning	Internalized values	Supporting insight
Talbiyah	Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik	Response to divine call	Submission, readiness, loyalty	Fauzi: "A spiritual proclamation of surrender"; interpreted as embodied obedience.
Wuquf	Rabbana dzalamna anfusana; istighfar; personal du'a	Confession and plea for mercy	Humility, repentance, sincerity	Fauzi: "Reveals deep self-awareness"; interpreted as affective self-examination.
Tawaf	Subhanallah, Alhamdulillah, Allahu Akbar	Praise and remembrance of God	Love, devotion, loyalty	Aisyah: "Every utterance centers life on God"; interpreted as devotional orientation.
Sa'i	Personalized du'a; takbir; tahlil	Reenacting Hajar's perseverance	Patience, trust, resilience	Bilal: "Transforms fatigue into endurance"; interpreted as ritualized perseverance.
Jamrah	Allahu Akbar, raghman lil-shaytan	Rejection of evil and Satan	Moral courage, self-discipline	Aisyah: "Language shapes inner resistance"; interpreted as ethical rejection of temptation.
Tahallul	Taqabbal minni	Plea for divine acceptance	Humility, renewal, gratitude	Fauzi: "Pilgrim sheds ego and lethargy"; interpreted as symbolic renewal.

and by scholarship on religious self-cultivation (Lickona 2004; Mahmood 2005).

The experiential power of Arabic is further observed in wuquf at Arafah, where sermons and supplications employ rhetorical forms of confession (i'tiraf), hope (raja'), and servitude ('ubudiyyah). These terms denote acknowledgement of one's moral limits, hope in God's mercy, and worshipful dependence on God, and they are relevant to education because they translate theological awareness into reflective character formation. The linguistic patterns evoke tears and repentance, inviting pilgrims to engage in deep reflection. Read descriptively through Lickona's knowing-feeling-doing sequence, rather than normatively through American virtue content, this illustrates how values may be internalized affectively and practically, not merely taught at a cognitive level (Lickona 2004). Arabic facilitates this by engaging both the heart and the body, allowing pilgrims to feel and enact virtues such as patience, gratitude, and surrender to God.

3.3.2 | Arabic in Ritual Acts as Embodied Pedagogy

Each Hajj ritual illustrates the pedagogical role of Arabic. The tawaf, performed with praises such as Subhanallah, Alhamdulillah, and Allahu Akbar, embodies love and loyalty toward God. It physically orbits around the Ka'bah while verbally centering God in one's consciousness, aligning devotion in word and deed. Similarly, sa'i from Safa to Marwa carries theological significance because it reenacts Hajar's perseverance and trust in God while connecting bodily effort with hopeful supplication. The ritual of stoning the jamrah integrates Arabic phrases of rejection, like Allahu Akbar, raghman lil-shaytan, transforming a physical act into a moral declaration of resistance against evil and temptation. This rhetorical symbolism instills courage and self-discipline, resonating with Islamic pedagogy and with Lickona's framework of "knowing, feeling, and doing" the good when the latter is used as a limited descriptive heuristic rather than a source of Islamic norms.

The act of tahallul, accompanied by prayers for acceptance, marks renewal and humility. By shaving hair and uttering supplications, pilgrims embody detachment from pride and the renewal of spiritual identity. Meanwhile, ihram garments dissolve social distinctions, as all pilgrims appear equal before God regardless of status, wealth, or race. This linguistic and symbolic act connects with the Prophet's Farewell Sermon emphasizing equality, justice, and fraternity, reaffirming that no superiority exists except through piety. Together, these practices illustrate that Arabic in Hajj operates at the intersection of ritual, rhetoric, and pedagogy.

The analysis demonstrates that Arabic expressions in Hajj function as symbolic pedagogy across the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Cognitively, they impart theological and ethical knowledge; affectively, they stir emotions of repentance, gratitude, humility, and love; psychomotor-wise, they guide disciplined ritual actions. Interview insights reinforce this interpretation: Dr. Fauzi described the talbiyah as "a spiritual proclamation of surrender," Prof. Aisyah highlighted its affective resonance that unites pilgrims emotionally, and Ust. Bilal

emphasized that the cadence of Arabic recitation can move even non-speakers of Arabic. The author interprets these testimonies as showing that Arabic in Hajj rituals serves as a pedagogical force that may unite, discipline, and transform pilgrims when supported by adequate guidance.

The novelty of this study lies in highlighting Arabic as both symbolic and educational medium, bridging rhetorical theory, empirical insights, and Islamic pedagogy. Its contribution is two-fold: first, it expands understanding of sacred language as more than liturgical formality, showing it as a dynamic instrument of moral education; second, it offers a replicable framework for incorporating sacred language into character education. Through this lens, Hajj can be studied not only as a ritual obligation but also as a living context of character formation, where Arabic expressions serve as tools for internalizing Islamic values and reinforcing a global identity rooted in humility, sincerity, and unity.

3.4 | Standing at Arafah and Spiritual Contemplation: Arabic as a Medium of Introspection and Spiritual Character Formation

3.4.1 | Wukuf, Sermons, and Spiritual Values

The wukuf at Arafah is the climax of the Hajj pilgrimage. The Prophet Muhammad stated, “Al-Hajju ‘Arafah” (“Hajj is Arafah”), emphasizing its centrality. During this ritual, millions of pilgrims gather in simplicity, facing God in prayer and contemplation. From the perspective of rhetorical symbolism, wukuf represents a liminal space—a transition where the soul stands vulnerable before its Creator. Arabic sermons and supplications intensify this moment with expressions that are reflective, emotionally charged, and deeply resonant with pilgrims’ existential awareness. The prayers recited at Arafah often include Qur’anic verses, istighfar, talbiyah, and intimate supplication; however, personal du’a may also be made in a pilgrim’s own language. Phrases such as *Allahumma innaka ‘afuwwun tuhibbul ‘afwa fa’fu ‘anni* and *Rabbana dzalamna anfasana wa in lam taghfirlana wa tarhamna lanakunanna minal khasirin* embody confession (i’tiraf), hope (raja’), and servitude (‘ubdiyyah). This linguistic style encourages humility and cultivates values like patience, gratitude, and hope. Standing for hours in the plain of Arafah under heat and hardship is a physical and spiritual exercise in patience, and the rhetoric of sermons emphasizes gratitude, self-reflection, and renewal. The Arafah sermon, delivered in Arabic and broadcast globally, employs classical rhetorical devices such as repetition, rhetorical questions, and analogies to stir hearts and awaken collective consciousness. For example: *Ayyuhal muslimun, hal nadzartum fi hayatikum?* (“O Muslims, have you reflected on your life?”). Understanding and appreciating this aspect of the Hajj experience can deepen the spiritual and communal impact of the pilgrimage, thereby enhancing its educational and transformative potential (Moscatelli 2024).

The wukuf functions as an affective and psychomotor learning experience. It cultivates *tawadhu’* (humility), *muhasabah* (self-reflection), and *niyyah* (commitment to change), showing a limited structural parallel to Lickona’s sequence of knowing, feeling, and doing while retaining Islamic revelation and pedagogy as the normative basis of these virtues. Wukuf thus acts as

a spiritual learning space where values are directly experienced and embodied. With millions of pilgrims from diverse nations, Arabic serves as a unifying language of solidarity. Shared recitations such as *Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik* create a chorus of devotion that transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries, demonstrating Arabic’s role as a global spiritual medium (Goni et al. 2020).

3.4.2 | Arabic, Global Diversity, and Character Education

The Hajj is one of the world’s largest religious gatherings, uniting Muslims across nations and cultures. Amidst this diversity, Arabic is the principal ritual language, serving as a unifying medium of character. It conveys values such as sincerity, humility, and obedience universally. Research by Alnabulsi et al. discusses the impact of the Hajj experience on self-change and the embodiment of communal identity. They note that the Hajj fosters unity among Muslims, transcending cultural differences through the shared language of Arabic (Alnabulsi et al. 2020). Drawing on Kenneth Burke’s idea of symbolic screens, Arabic shapes perceptions and emotions toward Islamic values, functioning as both liturgical medium and educational tool. Prayers express transnational moral values—compassion, responsibility, mercy—that resonate across cultural boundaries. Communal recitations generate unity beyond language, fostering ummah consciousness and tolerance. Arabic phrases such as *Subhanallah*, *Alhamdulillah*, and *La ilaha illallah* reaffirm Muslim identity and reinforce solidarity, acting as a shared spiritual code. The work of Hassan et al. explores how religious tourists report heightened levels of satisfaction and a sense of equality during Hajj, which further reinforces feelings of unity and tolerance through shared experiences in worship (Hassan et al. 2022). In modern character education, Arabic can be contextualized not just as grammar but as a vehicle for spiritual and intercultural formation. Contextual instruction in supplications and ritual expressions allows students to internalize values more effectively than through abstract lessons.

The Hajj may function as a setting of global Islamic character formation where discipline, obedience, and unity are cultivated on a massive scale. Through rituals conducted in Arabic—*talbiyah*, the Arafah sermon, *tawaf*, *sa’i*, stoning the *jamrah*, and *tahallul*—Muslims undergo collective reinforcement of noble values. These include sincerity, patience, cross-cultural brotherhood, social awareness, self-control, and hope in divine mercy. Arabic thus serves as a transnational pedagogy for moral education that transcends geography, language, and culture.

Figure 2 presents the symbolic roles of Arabic in Hajj as identified in this study. At its core, Arabic is shown as a sacred, unifying, and transformative medium where spirituality, prophetic heritage, and Muslim unity intersect. The dimension of spiritual connection highlights Arabic’s role in fostering devotion and surrender through phrases like “*Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik*.” Prophetic heritage emphasizes its continuity with the language of Ibrahim and Muhammad, ensuring authenticity and transmission of values across generations. Finally, global Muslim unity underscores Arabic’s function as a common code that bridges diverse cultures and languages during Hajj. Taken

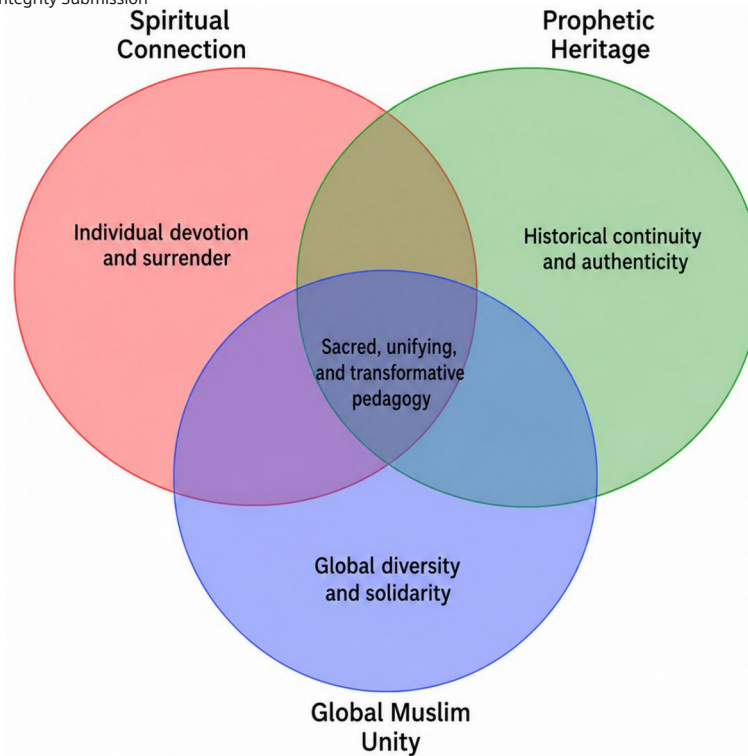


FIGURE 2 | Symbolic roles of Arabic in Hajj as identified in interview analysis, illustrating its function in sustaining spiritual connection, prophetic heritage, and global Muslim unity. [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/te.12408)]

together, these overlapping symbolic roles demonstrate that Arabic not only preserves ritual authenticity but also serves as a transnational pedagogy that cultivates shared identity, global diversity, and collective moral values.

3.4.3 | Internalization Through Repetition and Ritual

Repetition is central to the pedagogy of Hajj. Continuous recitation of Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik, Subhanallah, and Allahu Akbar symbolizes habituation of values. Each repetition deepens emotional resonance, allowing values such as sincerity, patience, and obedience to be cognitively understood, emotionally felt, and physically enacted. Arabic phrases function as forms of dhikr and Qur'anic repetition, embedding themselves in consciousness and shaping spiritual awareness (Al-Daghistani 2022; Akova 2022). This shows a structural parallel to Lickona's cognitive, affective, and behavioral sequence: pilgrims understand the meanings, experience the emotions, and embody the actions. The use of Arabic can preserve a shared liturgical register, but meaning is not transmitted automatically or without cultural mediation; non-Arabic-speaking Indonesian pilgrims require translation, explanation, and locally sensitive guidance. This qualification prevents Lickona's categories from being treated as culturally neutral or as a substitute for Islamic accounts of worship and virtue.

The impact of repetition extends beyond the pilgrimage. Pilgrims often return with heightened patience, discipline, humility, and social awareness, carrying the internalized lessons into family, community, and professional life. Collective recitations also create solidarity, strengthening moral identity and shared

awareness in the ummah. When millions together proclaim Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik, they generate powerful spiritual and moral resonance. Arabic becomes a carrier of values, ensuring that Hajj is not only ritual but also a transformative educational experience when accompanied by understanding, guidance, and reflection. Through repetition and symbolic action, words become awareness and recitations become character. This illustrates that Arabic in Hajj is a dynamic pedagogical instrument that integrates spirituality, morality, and education into a comprehensive model of character formation.

4 | Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Arabic language in the Hajj ritual functions as more than a liturgical element; it is a symbolic and rhetorical medium that can support the internalization of Islamic character values. Through its repetitive, reflective, and emotionally resonant structures, Arabic expressions shape spiritual awareness and foster key character traits such as sincerity, patience, humility, gratitude, and moral courage. Each ritual—from the talbiyah to wuquf, tawaf, sa'i, jamrah, and tahallul—carries pedagogical potential, reinforcing values across the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of education. The study also highlights that amidst the diversity of pilgrims from across nations, Arabic serves as a unifying instrument that transcends cultural and linguistic boundaries. By reinforcing values of equality, solidarity, and ukhuwah Islamiyah (Islamic brotherhood), Arabic contributes to shaping a global Islamic identity grounded in shared rituals and spiritual experiences. This symbolic role affirms Arabic as both a language of revelation and a medium of universal moral education.

The research gap addressed lies in the limited exploration of Arabic as a pedagogical and rhetorical force within Hajj rituals. The novelty of this study is its integration of rhetorical-symbolic theory, empirical interview insights, and character education frameworks to reveal how sacred language functions in value formation. The scientific contribution is a comprehensive framework showing that Arabic in Hajj preserves ritual authenticity and may advance Islamic character education as a transformative, contextually relevant, and globally unifying strategy. At the same time, these outcomes are not automatic: they depend on meaningful instruction, adequate Hajj guidance, and the pilgrim's reflective engagement. Lickona's contemporary American framework is therefore used only as a limited descriptive scaffold, subordinated to Islamic normative sources and adapted through Indonesian Muslim educational contexts; it is not presented as culturally neutral or theologically equivalent to Islamic pedagogy. Therefore, appreciating and teaching the symbolic meanings of Arabic in Hajj should be a priority for Islamic educators, policymakers, and spiritual leaders, while remaining clearly distinguished from the legal and devotional goals of Hajj itself. Such an approach provides a replicable model for embedding moral values into education, ensuring that the Hajj continues to serve not only as a spiritual obligation but also as a living pedagogy for holistic character formation.

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Ethics Statement

The study involved expert interviews. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, including permission to disclose their names and professional roles. Institutional ethics approval was not required for this low-risk expert-interview study, but confidentiality, voluntary participation, and respectful representation of religious practices were maintained throughout the research process.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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