



Arabic Language in the Representation of Digital Communication Through WhatsApp Stickers

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Abstract: *The development of digital communication has transformed how students express meaning, emotions, and cultural values in academic interactions. In this context, the use of Arabic-language stickers in WhatsApp has emerged as a linguistic phenomenon that integrates verbal, visual, and religious elements in student academic communication. This study employs a qualitative approach with thematic analysis to examine the meanings and communicative functions of Arabic stickers in students' WhatsApp conversations. The data consist of screenshots of interactions between students and lecturers using stickers such as Fi Amanillah, Maas Salamah, and Kullu 'am wa antum bi alfi khair. The findings show that Arabic stickers function not only as visual elements but also as a medium for expressing religiosity, politeness, and academic solidarity, and as a substitute for nonverbal cues in digital communication, enabling messages to be conveyed concisely, effectively, and with pragmatic and cultural depth. These findings highlight the integration of digital linguistics, language pedagogy, and academic communication, where Arabic stickers represent multimodal language resources that expand meaning-making in virtual spaces, can be utilised as context-based Arabic learning media to enhance pragmatic and cultural competence, and contribute to the development of communication ethics, social closeness, and interaction efficiency in Islamic higher education environments. Thus, this study explicitly contributes to digital linguistics through multimodal discourse analysis of online communication, to language pedagogy through implications of digital-based Arabic learning, and to academic communication through the reinforcement of polite, meaningful, and effective interaction in digital academic settings.*

Keywords: *Academic Interaction, Arabic Language, Digital Communication, Religious Identity WhatsApp Stickers,*

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought major changes in the way humans interact, including in the academic sphere. (Rahmawati & Sari, 2023) Instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp are now widely used as a means of academic communication between lecturers and students as well as among peers. (Wirianti, 2023) The various features available facilitate the delivery of information, task clarification, and even scientific discussions quickly and efficiently. One feature that attracts attention is stickers, which not only function as a complement to text messages but also serve as a form of nonverbal communication that carries contextual meaning. (Adawiyah et al., 2024) Through stickers, users can express attitudes, emotions, and even signal the nuances of academic relationships such as politeness, respect, or familiarity in digital interactions. (Roosyidah & Febriana, 2022)

In the realm of culturally based academic communication, the Arabic language holds an important role as a representation of linguistic and religious identity. (Fuadah et al., 2025) The use of Arabic-language stickers in academic conversations on WhatsApp reflects the expression of distinctive religious values and scholarly ethics, (Najiyah & Supriadi, 2025) while also showing how this language adapts from its traditional and liturgical functions toward a more dynamic use within digital academic spaces. (Khasanah, 2024) This phenomenon demonstrates that Arabic does not merely function as a tool of scholarly communication, but also as a symbol of intellectual and spiritual identity that enriches academic communication practices in the digital era. (Syahid, 2025)

Several studies have examined the role of stickers in digital communication. Meanwhile, (Ningsih et al., 2023) investigated the meanings and wordplay found in WhatsApp stickers used by students of Indonesian Language and Literature Education. This study reveals the presence of linguistic creativity and the use of humor as a

form of linguistic expression in digital spaces. Another study was conducted by (Sinta et al., 2025) which highlights the use of Arabic-language stickers in the digital culture of Arabic Language Education students. The study explores the forms, types, and functions of Arabic-language stickers in online communication, and emphasizes their role in shaping students' linguistic and religious identity.

However, most previous studies still focus on aspects of humor, emotion, and language creativity, without further examining the potential use of stickers in the context of academic communication. (Ramadhan et al., 2024) This limitation forms the basis for this study to examine how Arabic-language stickers function as a medium of academic communication, both between lecturers and students and among fellow students. Although not explicitly designed as a learning medium, the use and creation of Arabic-language stickers implicitly require an understanding of the language, thereby supporting the mastery of Arabic and enriching the practice of religious communication in the digital era.

The phenomenon of the use of Arabic in WhatsApp stickers can also be seen from the development of various applications and platforms that provide Arabic-language stickers. (Mariyam, 2021) Applications such as "WASSticker - ملصقات واتساب عربية" offer a variety of stickers containing Islamic greetings, prayers, and distinctive Middle Eastern expressions, which in an academic context can be used as markers of politeness, conversation openers, or brief responses in classroom communication. In addition, platforms such as Pinterest also provide a wide variety of inspirations for Arabic-language stickers, including common greetings like "Assalamualaikum" and "Waalaikumussalam," which are frequently used in everyday interactions, such as academic conversations in class groups or student discussion forums. The existence and use of these stickers demonstrate that digital media not only serves as a practical tool for communication but also facilitates smoother academic interactions that require at least a basic competence in the Arabic language. (Mustofa, 2020)

Based on the description above, this study aims to analyze the representation of the Arabic language in WhatsApp stickers, focusing on their meanings and communicative functions in academic interactions, particularly how these stickers are used to support conversations, communication ethics, and the effectiveness of message delivery in educational settings. This study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the field of digital linguistics and to serve as a useful resource for students in understanding the use of Arabic in academic communication within digital spaces.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with thematic content analysis to examine the representation of the Arabic language in WhatsApp stickers as a means of digital academic communication,

both between lecturers and students and among fellow students. (Maspur, 2022) This approach was chosen because it allows the exploration of meanings and communicative functions that emerge in sticker-based digital interactions.

This type of research is (library research), with the main data sources consisting of Arabic-language WhatsApp stickers and literature related to digital linguistics and academic communication. The research objects include stickers that contain elements of the Arabic language and are used in academic conversations, selected based on contextual relevance, frequency of use, and their communicative functions. The focus of the research is directed at the representation of the Arabic language in WhatsApp stickers and how these stickers play a role in supporting the smoothness of academic communication in educational settings, including the meaning and function of message delivery in digital interactions. (Hamidah et al., 2021)

Data collection was carried out by gathering Arabic-language WhatsApp stickers used in academic conversations, reviewing supporting literature on digital linguistics and academic communication, and observing the use of stickers in academic group conversations. (Kheryadi & Suaidi, 2023) Data analysis follows the model of (Matthew B. Miles & Huberman, 1994) and Huberman which includes the processes of data collection, data condensation, thematic presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data condensation was conducted by selecting, grouping, and focusing the stickers based on themes, contexts of use, and their communicative functions, while the data presentation was arranged in the form of a narrative description that illustrates the patterns of sticker use and their meanings in digital academic communication. In the final stage, conclusions were drawn to formulate how Arabic-language stickers function as supports for academic communication in digital spaces. (Widari et al., 2025)

The validity of the data was obtained through peer discussion, which involves discussions with colleagues to assess the consistency of interpretations, the accuracy of theme categorization, and the precision of the analysis regarding the use of stickers in academic communication. This technique was chosen because it is considered appropriate for validating qualitative findings that rely on interpretative analysis, ensuring that the research results can be academically accountable.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Before delving into the detailed elaboration, the initial findings indicate that the use of Arabic-language WhatsApp stickers not only functions as a means of expression but also plays a role in clarifying the flow of academic communication, accelerating responses, and maintaining the order of interactions in the digital learning process. (Mukaromah et al., 2022) To understand these findings more comprehensively, the following discussion

will be explained in detail through two sub-sections that have been organized.

1. Representation of the Arabic Language in WhatsApp Stickers in Academic Interactions

Based on the documentation of WhatsApp conversations in academic interactions, various Arabic-language stickers were frequently used by students and lecturers in situations such as group discussions, the delivery of academic information, responses to achievements, and expressions of farewell when continuing with academic activities. The presence of these stickers does not merely function as complementary visual elements but actively represents religious meaning, social identity, and nuanced politeness strategies within the context of digital academic communication. (Sarro et al., 2025) To understand the construction of meaning and their communicative functions more systematically, the following provides an analysis of each sticker based on the context of its appearance and use in academic conversations:

a. Religiusitas Religiosity in Academic Farewell Acts: "Maas Salamah"

The use of the *Ma'a as-salāmah* (مع السلامة) sticker in the research data appears in the context of a student saying goodbye to a class group because they are going to the library to continue group work. Lexically, this expression means "may you be with safety," which in the Arabic oral tradition is used as a farewell greeting. However, in digital academic interactions, its meaning experiences an expanded function.

The conversation context found is as follows:

A: "guys nanti referensi jurnal terbaru jangan lup dipake ya" (Guys, don't forget to use the latest journal references.)

E: "Siap, nanti aku cari tambahan." (Got it, I'll look for some additional ones.)

A: "Jam 2 kita kerkom." (We'll have the meeting at 2 PM)

D: "oke aku sekarang ke perpustakaan dulu ya." (We'll have the meeting at 2 PM)

E: (mengirim stiker: مع السلامة) (sends sticker: مع السلامة)

A: "Siap, hati-hati." ("Alright, take care.")

The use of this sticker shows that the expression *Ma'a as-salāmah* functions not only as a formal farewell greeting but also as a form of support and politeness in students' digital communication. This sticker helps clarify the speaker's intent while also providing a warmer emotional nuance in the conversation. The use of this sticker shows that the expression *Ma'a as-salāmah* functions not only as a formal farewell greeting but also as a form of support and politeness in students' digital communication. This sticker helps clarify the speaker's intent while also providing a warmer emotional nuance in the conversation.

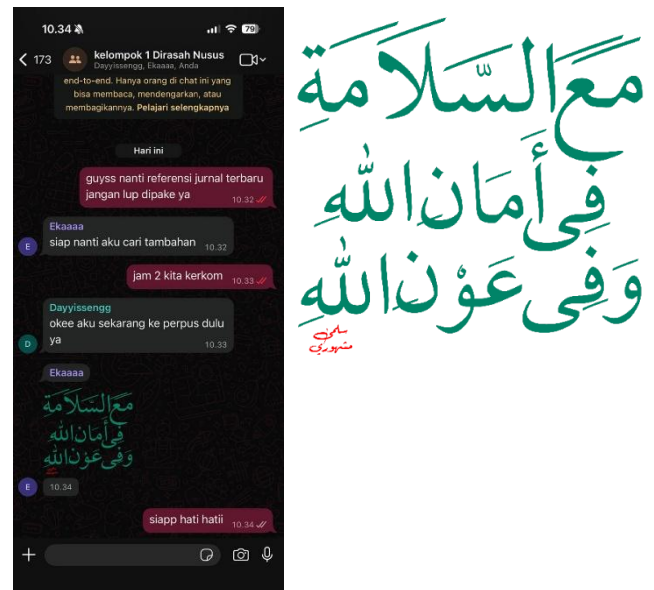


Figure 1. Sticker "Ma'as Salamah"

In the conversation, the sticker not only marks the temporary end of participation in the discussion but also frames the farewell act within a religious value. Pragmatically, the student performs a speech act of saying goodbye, refined through the symbol of a prayer for safety. The use of Arabic in the form of stickers demonstrates a positive politeness strategy, namely an effort to maintain good relationships and group harmony. (Kholilah, 2025) Instead of using a neutral expression like "oke saya keluar dulu," the student chooses a religious symbol that conveys respect and warmth. Moreover, the context of "going to the library for group work" shows that Arabic in stickers is integrated into routine academic activities. Religiosity does not appear only during moments of worship or celebration but becomes part of everyday communication practices. The representation formed is that of a religious student identity who is academically productive. (Nisa, 2025) Stickers function as substitutes for nonverbal expressions lost in digital communication, such as a smile or a friendly tone of voice when saying goodbye. (Nasir et al., 2025)

b. Language Hybridity Through the "Waduh" Sticker Transliterated into Arabic

The sticker reading "Waduh" transliterated into Arabic letters is used in group discussion situations when students face sudden revisions from the lecturer or discover errors in an almost completed assignment draft. Its occurrence tends to be in informal conversations among students within group work chats, rather than in direct communication with the lecturer. The situation found in the data occurred when one group member shared a screenshot of a lecturer's message containing additional revisions, even though the presentation was scheduled for the next day. The spontaneous reactions of the group members were expressed through sending the "Waduh" sticker in Arabic script as an expression of shock combined with light humor.

The excerpt of the conversation is as follows:

A: "rekk barusan ustadz ngirim revisi." (Guys, the teacher just sent the revisions.)

D: (mengirim stiker: ودوه - 'Waduh' dalam huruf Arab)

(sends sticker: ودوه 'Waduh' in Arabic script)

D: "Apa revisinya?" (What are the revisions?)

A: "nanti aku kirim yaa." (I'll send them later.)

A: "nanti kita kerkom atau cukup zoom aj?" (Should we have the meeting in person or is Zoom enough?)

The use of the "Waduh" sticker in Arabic script demonstrates students' linguistic creativity in combining the local language with Arabic symbols in digital communication. This sticker functions not only as an emotional expression in response to surprising situations but also as a means of easing the group discussion atmosphere, keeping it relaxed even under academic pressure. (Inderasari et al., 2023)

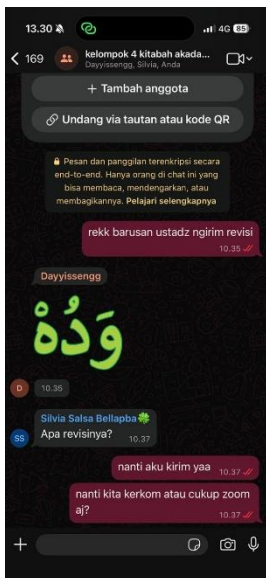


Figure 2. Sticker "Waduh"

In the conversation, the "Waduh" sticker functions as a spontaneous affective expression depicting shock and mild panic. However, the use of Arabic script adds an additional dimension of visual humor and linguistic creativity. Semiotically, a hybridity occurs between Indonesian as the core meaning and Arabic script as the symbolic form. (Jabeen et al., 2025) In this context, Arabic no longer functions as a marker of sacred religiosity, (Alnosairee & Sartini, 2021) but undergoes a process of domestication and recontextualization into a medium for casual expression.

Its communicative function is to ease the tension of academic situations that may cause stress. Instead of long complaints or explanations, the sticker simplifies emotions into a visual symbol that is easily understood by peers. This shows that Arabic-language stickers are not only related to religious values but also function to strengthen group solidarity. The use of the "Waduh" sticker in Arabic script reflects the flexibility of Arabic in

digital spaces and students' creativity in balancing academic formality with social familiarity.

c. Prayers Through the "Kullu 'am wa antum bi alfi khair" Sticker

The *Kullu 'am wa antum bi alfi khair* (كل عام وأنتم بألف خير) sticker appears in a conversation among fourth-semester students. One student announced their marriage and temporarily paused their studies, which was emotional news for the group. Despite this, the student continued to encourage friends to complete their bachelor's degree.

The excerpt of the conversation is as follows:

D: "Ditunggu kabar sarjananya buat semua." (Waiting for the graduate news for everyone.)

A: (mengirim stiker: كل عام وأنتم بألف خير) (sends sticker: كل عام وأنتم بألف خير)

The use of this sticker shows that the expression *Kullu 'am wa antum bi alfi khair* in students' digital communication functions not only as a congratulatory greeting during annual celebrations but also as a form of prayer, well-wishing, and emotional expression in specific situations.



Figure 3. Sticker "Kullu 'Am wa Antum bi Alfi Khair"

In this situation, the expression *Kullu 'am wa antum bi alfi khair* lexically means "may you be in a thousand blessings every year." Conventionally, this expression is used during annual celebrations such as religious holidays. However, in the conversation among fourth-semester students, its meaning undergoes a significant contextual shift. In this case, the sticker is not employed in a formal religious celebration but rather as a heartfelt expression of prayer and moral support for the continuation of their peers' studies. This particular situation clearly demonstrates a process of meaning reappropriation, where a traditional religious expression is creatively repurposed as a symbolic marker of academic solidarity.

Pragmatically, sending this sticker softens the statement regarding the decision to temporarily pause studies. The use of Arabic introduces a spiritual dimension

that carries a prayer, so the message conveyed does not stop at announcing a personal decision but develops into a form of blessing and collective well-wishing. This demonstrates that Arabic in WhatsApp stickers functions as a symbolic device to maintain social harmony while also strengthening a sense of togetherness amid differing life choices.

This phenomenon shows that in educational settings, digital communication serves not only as a medium for exchanging academic information but also as a space for expressing religious values and emotional solidarity. The *Kullu 'ām wa antum bi alfi khair* sticker represents the integration of religious identity, moral support, and social cohesion among fourth-semester students in maintaining friendships, even amid changes in the educational path of one of their members. (Berutu, 2023)

d. Religious Politeness Strategy in Lecturer-Student Interaction Through the “Mā syā'a Allāh tabāarakallāh” Sticker

The *Mā syā'a Allāh tabāarakallāh* (ما شاء الله تبارك الله)

sticker in the research data appears in the context of interaction between a lecturer and students via the WhatsApp story feature. The situation began when a student uploaded a story with the caption “nunggu dosen kaya nunggu hilal,” a humorous expression describing the long wait for the lecturer’s presence in an online lecture. The expression is casual and metaphorical, referring to the process of waiting for the hilal, which is associated with a highly anticipated moment. The story was then commented on by the lecturer using the *Mā syā'a Allāh tabāarakallāh* sticker, which literally means “what Allah wills, may it be full of blessings.”

The subsequent conversation continued via private messages as follows:

Mahasiswa: (story) “nunggu dosen kaya nunggu hilal” (Waiting for the lecturer is like waiting for the crescent moon.)

Dosen: (mengirim stiker: ما شاء الله تبارك الله) (sends sticker: ما شاء الله تبارك الله)

Dosen: “Mohon maaf ya kalau tadi harus menunggu.” (Sorry if you had to wait earlier.)

Mahasiswa: “Na’am ustad, tidak apa-apa, syukron katsir.” (Yes, sir, it’s okay, thank you very much.)

Dosen: “Dimaafkan ya.” (You’re forgiven.)

The use of the *Mā syā'a Allāh tabāarakallāh* sticker functions not only as a literal religious expression but also as a lighthearted and humorous communicative response to the student’s story. The sticker reflects an appreciative attitude as well as the lecturer’s engagement in students’ digital communication space. (Cahyani et al., 2025) In addition, the response was accompanied by an apology from the lecturer, demonstrating professional awareness and an effort to maintain good interpersonal relationships between the lecturer and students in online

communication that remains relaxed while still respecting academic etiquette.



ما شاء الله
تبارك الله

Figure 4. Sticker “Mā syā'a Allāh tabāarakallāh”

The lecturer’s use of the *Mā syā'a Allāh tabāarakallāh* sticker demonstrates a particularly interesting pragmatic function. Instead of giving a reprimand or formal response, the lecturer chose a religious symbol with a positive nuance. The sticker can be understood as a relaxed, non-defensive response while still maintaining authority and warmth in the academic relationship. In this situation, the expression *Mā syā'a Allāh tabāarakallāh* does not function merely as a religious statement but also serves as a mitigation strategy to ease potential tension caused by the student’s humorous comment about the lecturer’s delay.

The lecturer’s subsequent apology illustrates the presence of two-way communication ethics in the digital educational space. Meanwhile, the student’s response, “Na’am ustad, It’s okay, syukron katsir,” reflects the use of Arabic as a form of respect and politeness toward academic authority. This interaction demonstrates relational balance: the lecturer maintains a professional position while also opening a space for humanized communication.

Furthermore, the *Mā syā'a Allāh tabāarakallāh* sticker can be understood as a meaningful representation of the integration of religious values into digital academic communication practices. Arabic, in the form of stickers, functions not only as a symbolic device that can soften implicit criticism and preserve relational harmony but also as a medium that actively reinforces a culture of mutual respect and politeness between lecturers and students in educational settings, while simultaneously fostering a more engaging and humanized online learning environment. This highlights how digital tools can blend cultural, emotional, and pedagogical dimensions to enhance academic interactions. (Winata, 2022)

e. Appreciative Speech Acts in Lecturer-Student Communication Through the “Jazākumullāhu khairan” Sticker

In the research data, the *Jazākumullāhu khairan* (جزاكم الله خيرا) sticker appears in the context of formal communication between students and lecturers regarding

the delivery of academic information. The conversation occurred when a student contacted the lecturer to request permission to send a circular for activities during the month of Ramadan. The conversation began with greetings and an apology as an initial form of politeness, demonstrating hierarchical awareness within the academic relationship.

The excerpt of the conversation is as follows:

Mahasiswa: "Assalamualaikum wr. wb. ustad, afwan ustad, izin mengirimkan surat edaran selama bulan Ramadhan." (Assalamualaikum wr. wb. Sir, excuse me, may I send the circular letter for Ramadan?)

Dosen: (mengirim stiker: جزاكم الله خيرا) (sends sticker: جزاكم الله خيرا)

The lecturer's use of the *Jazākumullāhu khairan* sticker functions as a form of appreciation and gratitude for the student's initiative in sharing information about activities. The use of this sticker shows that Arabic religious expressions can be an effective way to express thanks while maintaining politeness and warmth in digital interactions between lecturers and students..(Putri & Sudiyana, 2024)

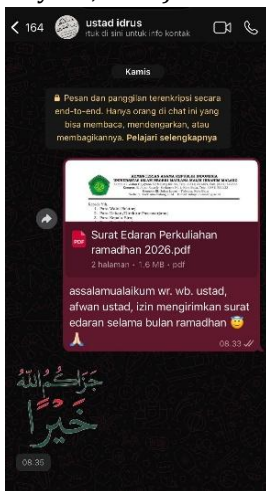


Figure 5. Sticker "Jazakumullahu Khair"

In this situation, the lecturer's response using the *Jazākumullāhu khairan* sticker does not merely mean "thank you" but functions as a form of appreciation framed within a prayer. Lexically, the expression means "may Allah reward you with goodness." The use of the plural form "-kum" indicates that the appreciation is directed not only to the message sender personally but also to all parties involved in the preparation or distribution of the circular. This demonstrates a semantic expansion, transforming simple expression of thanks into a collective prayer with religious legitimacy.

Pragmatically, the deliberate choice of this sticker clearly demonstrates a positive politeness strategy in academic communication. While the lecturer maintains their position of authority, the response is neither rigid nor purely administrative in nature. Rather than simply writing a formal statement such as "okay" or "please go ahead," the lecturer opts for a religious symbol that

effectively conveys appreciation, encouragement, and blessings. This example illustrates that, within digital communication spaces, Arabic expressed through stickers functions as a versatile symbolic instrument that not only reinforces ethical conduct but also softens hierarchical relations and actively affirms religious identity within the educational environment, thereby enhancing both relational warmth and mutual respect.(Arsita et al., 2025)

The use of the *Jazākumullāhu khairan* sticker in this conversation represents the integration of academic formality, politeness values, and spirituality in lecturer-student communication practices on WhatsApp.

f. The Role of Symbolic Validation in Lecturer-Student Communication Through the "Tamām" Sticker

In the research data, the *Tamām* (تمام) sticker appears in the context of administrative communication between the course representative and the lecturer in charge. The conversation occurred when a student representative conveyed an official announcement regarding the schedule of in-person classes to the lecturer. The message was informative, formal, and focused on confirming the timing and details of the learning sessions.

The excerpt of the conversation is as follows:

Mahasiswa: "Izin mengingatkan dari kami selaku PJ matkul Nahwu kepada seluruh mahasiswa kelas A2. Bahwa pada hari Selasa, 30 September 2025 pada pukul 06.30-09.00 WIB akan ada perkuliahan secara Luring."

(Permission to remind, on behalf of us as the person in charge of the Nahwu course, to all students of class A2: On Tuesday, September 30, 2025, from 06:30 to 09:00 WIB, there will be an offline lecture.)

Mahasiswa: "Walaikumussalam siap mbak Eka." (Wa'alaikumussalam, okay, Mbak Eka.)

Dosen : (mengirim stiker: تمام) (sends a sticker: تمام)

The *Tamām* sticker functions as a form of symbolic validation, indicating that the information conveyed has been received, understood, and approved by the lecturer. Semantically, the word *tamam* means "good," "done," or "completed," yet in digital communication practices, its use often represents a brief response signaling agreement or confirmation. Moreover, the sticker serves to streamline communication by providing a concise, non-verbal acknowledgment that reinforces clarity, reduces potential misunderstandings, and maintains the efficiency of administrative exchanges in academic settings.(Alalmay, 2025)

This sticker shows how a simple Arabic symbol can emphasize administrative communication while facilitating interaction between lecturers and students without lengthy responses.

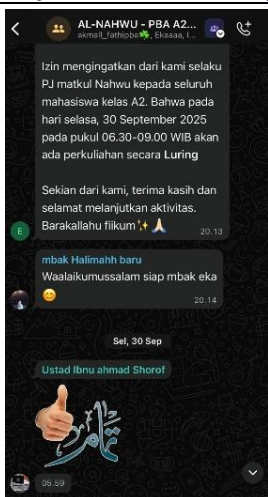


Figure 6. Sticker “Tamām”

Semantically, *Tamām* means “good,” “done,” or “enough.” In this conversation, the sticker functions as a form of confirmation and validation of the information conveyed. The lecturer does not provide a lengthy explanation because the student’s message is already clear and requires no further clarification. With a single concise symbol, the lecturer indicates that the information has been received, understood, and approved.

Pragmatically, the use of the *Tamām* sticker demonstrates communication efficiency within the hierarchical structure of academia. The response is both affirmative and final, implicitly closing the administrative conversation without creating ambiguity. Compared to a longer sentence such as “Okay, thank you for the information, please proceed,” the sticker is more concise while retaining the same illocutionary force as an acceptance speech act.

Furthermore, the use of Arabic in sticker form reflects a religious academic identity, even though in this context its function is more administrative than spiritual. *Tamām* serves as a subtle yet effective discourse control symbol, allowing the lecturer to maintain authority confidently without resorting to dominant expressions. This sticker also demonstrates that, in digital academic communication, brief symbols can carry strong legitimacy as markers of formal approval.

Based on this discussion, *Tamām* represents the transformation of a simple word into a pragmatic instrument that emphasizes validation, efficiency, and the stability of professional relationships in lecturer–student interactions within digital spaces.

g. Illocutionary Function of Prayer in Lecturer–Student Relations Through *Allāhumma yassir lanā umūranā wa haṣṣil maqāṣidanā, āmīn yā rabbal ‘ālamīn*

In the research data, the *Allāhumma yassir lanā umūranā wa haṣṣil maqāṣidanā, āmīn yā rabbal ‘ālamīn* (اللهم يسر لنا أمورنا وحصل مقاصدنا آمين يا رب العالمين) sticker prominently appears in the context of personal yet formal academic communication that still operates within the structured lecturer–student relationship framework. The



conversation specifically occurred when a student respectfully contacted the lecturer to request permission to send photos related to an assignment or other academic documentation, highlighting both adherence to protocol and the incorporation of religious expression as a communicative strategy.

The excerpt of the conversation is as follows:

Mahasiswa: “Assalamualaikum ustadz izin mengirim foto.” (Assalamualaikum, sir, may I send the photo?)

Dosen: “Thanks very much.” (Thanks very much.)

Dosen: (mengirim stiker: اللهم يسر لنا أمورنا وحصل مقاصدنا آمين (يا رب العالمين (Amiin ya rab al alamin)

This prayer sticker expresses hope and asks for goodness and blessings in academic interactions. It requests Allah’s help for ease, guidance, and achieving goals. The sticker responds to the student’s message while showing how religious values support lecturer–student communication and strengthen closeness in digital academic spaces.

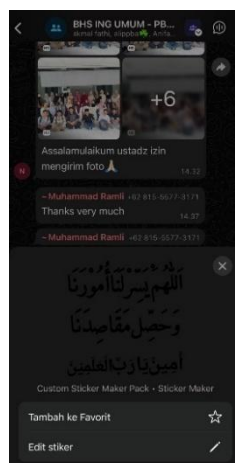
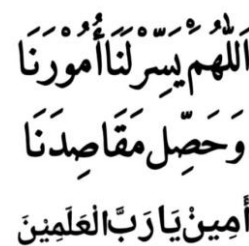


Figure 7. Sticker “Allāhumma yassir lana umurona”

Based on this situation, the lecturer’s initial response of “Thanks very much” demonstrates professional and administrative acknowledgment. However, the subsequent sending of the prayer sticker expands the communicative meaning. Lexically, the expression means, “O Allah, make our affairs easy and help us achieve our goals, Aamiin, O Lord of the worlds.” This prayer carries a collective orientation, marked by the use of the pronoun *lana* (our), indicating that it refers not only to the lecturer or the student individually but to both as part of the academic community.

Pragmatically, this sticker functions as a spiritual solidarity strategy.(Rohmah & Farisah, 2025) In the context of personal academic exchanges, digital stickers serve as powerful and meaningful tools for conveying subtle nuances beyond plain text. The lecturer not only responds administratively but also thoughtfully frames the activity as part of a process that requires ease, guidance, and blessing. This approach helps reduce the hierarchical distance between lecturer and student, as



both sincerely seek God's assistance in achieving their academic goals. Arabic in the sticker thus functions as a shared and collective medium, effectively connecting professionalism with spirituality. Moreover, the use of such religious expressions consistently reinforces a sense of community, empathy, and mutual encouragement, further highlighting the multidimensional and dynamic role of language in academic interactions.

Furthermore, the use of prayer in seemingly simple contexts, such as sending photos, demonstrates that digital academic communication is not limited to the exchange of technical information. It also becomes a space for the internalization of religious values integrated into educational practices. (Baidawi, 2022) The *Allāhumma yassir lanā umūranā wa haṣṣil maqāṣidanā, āmīn yā rabbal 'ālamīn* sticker is not merely a linguistic ornament but a pragmatic instrument that fosters a collaborative, ethical, and meaningful atmosphere within lecturer-student relationships.

Viewed collectively with *Jazākumullāhu khairan* and *Tamām*, this sticker reinforces the pattern of representation that Arabic in academic WhatsApp communication functions as symbolic legitimization, a booster of ethical conduct, and a binder of solidarity within the educational environment, while simultaneously fostering a subtle sense of shared religious identity and mutual respect among participants, enhancing both interpersonal rapport and the perceived formality of the academic interaction. (Hasyim & Said, 2024)

Based on the analysis of each sticker above, a pattern can be derived regarding the representation of meaning and communicative functions of Arabic in digital academic interactions. To provide a more systematic overview of the sticker forms, usage contexts, and the resulting pragmatic functions, the research findings are presented in the following summary table:

Table 1: Representation and Communicative Functions of Arabic Stickers in Academic Interactions

No	Sticker	Meaning and Function in Academic Interactions
1	مع السلامة (<i>Ma'a as-salāmah</i>)	Used when students say farewell to go to the library for group work. Lexically, it means "may you be with safety," and pragmatically functions as a softened parting act to maintain harmony in group interactions.
2	ودود ("Waduh" in Arabic script)	Appears when sudden revisions occur in group assignments. This particular expression conveys spontaneous surprise while also serving as collective humor that helps ease tension in academic activities.
3	كل عام وأنتم بألف خير (<i>Kullu 'ām</i>)	Used in conversations when a student gets married and wishes to offer encouragement and

No	Sticker	Meaning and Function in Academic Interactions
	<i>wa antum bi alfi khair</i>)	positive support to their peers. Lexically, it means "may every year be filled with goodness," and pragmatically, it functions as a collective prayer of solidarity that is reinterpreted to convey moral and academic support within the student community.
4	ما شاء الله تبارك الله (<i>Mā syā'a Allāh tabārakallāh</i>)	Used by the lecturer as a response to a student's story. Lexically, it is a religious expression that conveys praise and prayers for blessings, while pragmatically, it serves to mitigate potential tension, maintain a sense of warmth, and foster a positive, humanized lecturer-student relationship.
5	جزاكم الله خيرا (<i>Jazakumullahu Khair</i>)	Appears when a student sends a Ramadan event circular to the lecturer. Lexically, it means "may Allah reward you with goodness," and pragmatically, it functions as an appreciative speech act that demonstrates politeness within the hierarchical academic relationship.
6	تمام (<i>Tamām</i>)	Used by the lecturer in response to a student's announcement of the offline class schedule. Lexically, it means "good" or "completed," and pragmatically, it functions as symbolic validation as well as a form of efficiency in administrative communication.
7	اللهم يسر لنا أمورنا وحصل مقاصدنا (<i>Allāhumma yassir lanā umūranā wa haṣṣil maqāṣidanā</i>)	Used in conversation when a student requests permission to send assignment photos. The prayer expresses a plea for ease in affairs and the achievement of goals, and pragmatically functions to strengthen spiritual solidarity and warmth within the academic relationship.

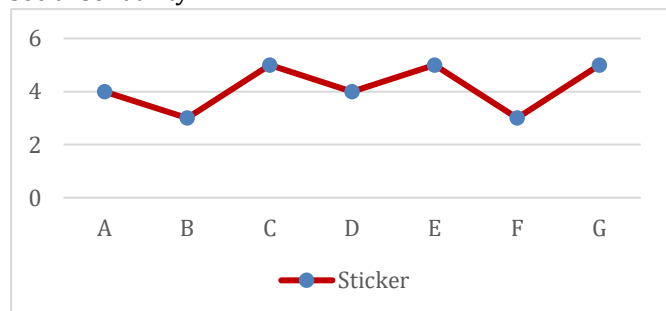
Based on the table, it is evident that the use of Arabic-language stickers in academic WhatsApp interactions is neither singular nor monofunctional, but rather reflects a spectrum of diverse pragmatic functions. Stickers can serve as farewells, affective expressions, solidarity prayers, mitigation strategies, administrative validation, and even as instruments of religious appreciation. (Kintani et al., 2025) In general, Arabic in

stickers not only represents religious identity but also functions as a symbolic device to cultivate politeness, strengthen social cohesion, and maintain hierarchical stability in digital educational communication (Khairanis & Aldi, 2025) Therefore, the representation of Arabic in WhatsApp stickers demonstrates the integration of religiosity, academic professionalism, and the social dynamics of students and lecturers within modern communication spaces.

To further illustrate the variation in communicative functions identified above, the findings can also be visualized through a line diagram representing the relative intensity of each sticker's pragmatic role in academic interactions. This diagram maps the types of Arabic-language stickers on the horizontal axis and their functional intensity on the vertical axis, based on interpretative categorization derived from the analysis. Through this visualization, it becomes evident that stickers containing prayer expressions, such as *Kullu 'ām wa antum bi alfi khair*, *Jazākumullāhu khairan*, and *Allāhumma yassir lanā umūranā*, demonstrate higher pragmatic intensity due to their integration of spiritual, social, and emotional dimensions. Meanwhile, stickers such as *Ma'a as-salāmah* and *Mā syā'a Allāh tabārakallāh* occupy a moderate level, reflecting their role in maintaining politeness and relational harmony. In contrast, *Waduh* (in Arabic script) and *Tamām* tend to show lower intensity as they primarily function in expressing immediate reactions and ensuring communicative efficiency. This line diagram thus reinforces the argument that Arabic-language stickers operate across multiple layers of meaning, ranging from practical communication to deeper symbolic and relational functions within digital academic discourse.

2. Communicative Functions of Arabic Stickers in Supporting Academic Communication Ethics and Effectiveness

Based on the analysis of documented WhatsApp conversations between students and lecturers, it was found that the use of Arabic-language stickers not only represents religious identity but also contributes significantly to enhancing the effectiveness of digital academic communication. Functionally, these stickers operate across three main dimensions: (1) reinforcing communication ethics, (2) promoting message efficiency and clarity, and (3) stabilizing hierarchical relations and social solidarity.



Note:

A = Ma'as Salamah

B = Waduh

C = Kullu 'Am

D = Ma syaa Allah

E = Jazakumullah

F = Tamam

G = Allahumma Yassir

Figure.8 Pragmatic Intensity of Arabic Stickers

The line diagram illustrates the variation in the intensity of pragmatic functions of Arabic-language stickers used in academic WhatsApp interactions. It shows a fluctuating pattern, indicating that not all stickers carry the same communicative weight. Stickers categorized as prayers and well-wishing expressions occupy the highest points on the graph, reflecting their complex role in combining spiritual meaning, emotional support, and social solidarity. These expressions function beyond simple communication, serving as symbolic acts that strengthen interpersonal bonds and convey deeper values within academic discourse. Meanwhile, stickers related to politeness and mitigation appear at a moderate level, as they primarily function to maintain relational harmony and soften interactions between participants, especially within hierarchical contexts such as lecturer-student communication. In contrast, stickers used for spontaneous reactions or administrative confirmation are positioned at lower levels, as their functions tend to be more practical, immediate, and efficiency-oriented. Overall, the diagram demonstrates that the use of Arabic in WhatsApp stickers is dynamic and context-dependent, reflecting a continuum of communicative purposes ranging from instrumental to highly symbolic functions in digital academic environments.

a. Reinforcing Digital Ethics and Politeness

In lecturer-student interactions, communication ethics constitute a fundamental aspect. The use of stickers such as *Jazākumullāhu khairan*, *Mā syā'a Allāh tabārakallāh*, and *Allāhumma yassir lanā umūranā wa haṣṣil maqāṣidanā* demonstrates that Arabic functions as a tool for positive politeness strategies. For instance, when a student sends a Ramadan circular, the lecturer responds with the *Jazākumullāhu khairan* sticker. Pragmatically, this response is not merely a thank-you expression but a form of appreciation framed as a prayer. This function softens hierarchical relations and avoids creating a rigid or purely administrative impression. (Risdianto et al., 2023)

Similarly, in the context of a humorous student story ("nunggu dosen kaya nunggu hilal"), the lecturer used the *Mā syā'a Allāh tabārakallāh* sticker before offering an apology. This strategy functions as tension mitigation. The response maintains academic authority while simultaneously creating a humanized atmosphere. These findings indicate that Arabic stickers serve as ethical instruments that soften the illocutionary force of speech acts such as appreciation, acknowledgment, or clarification.

b. Efficiency and Clarity in Message Delivery

Similarly, in an administrative context, stickers such as *Tamam* carry a strong affirmative illocutionary function. When students convey information about offline class schedules, the lecturer responds solely with the *Tamām* sticker. Semantically, it means “good” or “done,” but pragmatically it functions as confirmation of message receipt, formal validation, and closure of the administrative conversation. The use of a single symbol can replace a lengthy sentence without reducing the clarity of meaning. This demonstrates that stickers support the principle of communication efficiency in digital settings, especially in situations that do not require additional elaboration. (Sukmawati & Hidayat, 2024)

This effectiveness is also evident in the use of the *Ma'a as-salāmah* sticker when students take leave to continue group work in the library. The sticker clarifies the intent of the farewell without the need for a lengthy narrative, while also conveying a nuance of prayer for safety. This demonstrates that Arabic-language stickers function as a substitute for nonverbal cues (intonation, facial expressions, smiles) that are absent in online communication. (Sukmawati & Hidayat, 2024)

c. Spiritual Solidarity and Academic Social Cohesion

Another dimension identified is the function of spiritual solidarity. The stickers *Kullu 'ām wa antum bi alfi khair* and *Allāhumma yassir lanā umūranā wa haṣṣil maqāṣidanā* demonstrate that Arabic is used to foster a sense of togetherness. In the case of fourth-semester students who decided to marry and temporarily postpone their studies, sending the *Kullu 'ām wa antum bi alfi khair* sticker functions as a collective prayer. Its religious meaning is reappropriated to serve as both academic and moral support.

Meanwhile, the collective prayer sticker *Allāhumma yassir lanā umūranā wa haṣṣil maqāṣidanā* contains the pronoun “lana” (us), which implicitly unites the lecturer and students as subjects jointly seeking ease in the academic process. Here, hierarchical distance is reduced through the religious symbol. The sticker not only conveys a message but also creates an emotional and spiritual atmosphere that strengthens social cohesion within the educational environment. (Sagara et al., 2024)

d. Tension Reduction and Academic Humor

Meanwhile, transliterated stickers such as “Waduh” in Arabic script demonstrate the flexibility of Arabic in non-sacred contexts. Its use in sudden revision situations functions as both an affective expression and collective humor. Instead of expressing complaints explicitly, students employ a visual symbol that is mutually understood. This strategy alleviates academic stress and helps maintain stable group interactions.

Based on the theoretical framework and empirical findings presented, the discussion of this study is subsequently focused on the following key aspects:

1. Arabic as a Strategy of Religious Politeness in Academic Interaction

Research findings indicate that the use of stickers such as *Ma'a as-salāmah*, *Jazākumullāhu khairan*, and *Mā syā'a Allāh tabārakallāh* functions as a strategy of religious politeness in digital academic communication (Alqahtani, 2024) According to Geoffrey Leech's theory of politeness in *The Pragmatics of Politeness* (2014), positive politeness aims to maintain social harmony by demonstrating empathy, appreciation, and solidarity toward the interlocutor. Arabic expressions of prayer fulfill this principle, as they carry affective dimensions and symbolic respect. (Abed et al., 2023)

From the speech act perspective, John Searle (1969) classifies utterances such as *Jazākumullāhu khairan* as expressive speech acts because they convey gratitude, whereas *Tamām* falls under representative speech acts as it indicates agreement or acceptance of information. Therefore, stickers are not merely visual symbols but possess a clear illocutionary force within the structure of academic communication.

These findings align with the study by (Ardiansyah, 2025) which demonstrates that religious symbols in digital Islamic education communication function to soften hierarchical relationships between lecturers and students. From a semiotic perspective, stickers can be understood as signs that possess a relationship between the signifier and the signified, as explained by Ferdinand de Saussure (dalam Bertens, 2001; Tinarbuko, 2018).

The visual form of stickers containing religious expressions such as *Jazākumullāhu khairan* or *Mā syā'a Allāh tabārakallāh* functions as a signifier that presents meanings of appreciation, prayer, and respect as its signified. Stickers are not merely visual elements in WhatsApp conversations but act as media of signification that convey concepts of politeness and empathy in digital interactions. (Karjo & Rahmadhito, 2023) From a pragmatic perspective, the use of such stickers can also be analyzed through speech act theory (Austin, 1962) and (J. Searle, 1969), in which prayers are classified as expressive speech acts conveying the speaker's attitude or feelings. Therefore, in the context of academic communication on WhatsApp, religious stickers serve not only as expressions of personal piety but also as symbolic legitimization that reinforces professional ethics and maintains politeness norms in lecturer–student interactions. (Azmi et al., 2021)

2. Multimodalitas dan Hibriditas Bahasa dalam Ruang Digital

The phenomenon of the “Waduh” sticker written in Arabic script shows the presence of linguistic hybridity. According to multimodality theory (Kress, 2010a) digital communication creates meaning through a combination of text, visuals, symbols, and social context. In this interaction, the Arabic script not only conveys lexical meaning but also constructs a religious identity and collective humor.

From a sociolinguistic perspective (Blommaert, 2007) explains the concept of *indexicality*, which holds that

the meaning of language depends on the social context of its use. Arabic script, traditionally associated with sacredness, undergoes a domestication of meaning in digital spaces, becoming a symbol of casual expression, humor, and familiarity.

Research by (Pujiati et al., 2025) found that students at PTKI use Arabic symbols on social media as representations of flexible religious identity. This finding aligns with the present study, which shows that religious expressions appear not only in text but also through WhatsApp stickers containing phrases such as *Mā shā'a Allāh* or *Lā ilāha illā Allāh*. In student interactions, stickers with *Mā shā'a Allāh* are used to express admiration or appreciation for something perceived as good, often accompanied by visual symbols like hearts that reinforce emotional and spiritual meaning. The use of such stickers indicates that in informal digital communication contexts, Arabic retains a strong religious connotation. Therefore, WhatsApp stickers serve not only as a medium of emotional expression but also as symbols of religious identity representing Islamic values within the dynamics of students' digital communication. (Yus, 2025) This demonstrates that digital communication practices among PTKI students are not completely detached from religiosity; rather, they constitute a new space for the internalization and representation of religious values.

3. Reappropriation of Prayer Meaning in Academic Solidarity

The use of *Kullu 'ām wa antum bi alfi khair* outside the context of religious holidays demonstrates a shift in pragmatic meaning. From the perspective of linguistic hermeneutics, Paul Ricoeur (Indraningsih, n.d.) explains the concept of meaning distanciation, whereby texts and symbols can generate new meanings when placed in contexts different from their original setting. In this study, the religious prayer is reappropriated as a symbol of academic support, for example, when students face exams, thesis defenses, or academic announcements. Its meaning is no longer confined to religious celebrations but expands into a collective symbol of solidarity.

This phenomenon aligns with the findings of (Bimo, 2021) which show that WhatsApp stickers function as nonverbal communication symbols capable of representing emotions, attitudes, and certain social meanings in digital conversations. The study explains that stickers do not merely serve as visual elements that enhance conversation but also act as a medium to convey more complex messages, including prayers, support, and expressions of solidarity. Therefore, the use of Arabic-language stickers such as “ في أمان الله ” or “ كل عام وأنتم بألف خير ” in student interactions can be understood as a form of religious symbolization that expands their communicative function in academic digital communication. These stickers do not simply replace regular text; they act as a medium for religious expression that softens communication and strengthens social bonds among

students in digital spaces. (Rachmawati et al., 2021) This demonstrates that Arabic symbols in sticker form can bridge spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions simultaneously in student communication practices in the digital media era.

4. Symbolic Diplomacy and Mitigation of Hierarchical Tension

The lecturer's response using *Mā syā'a Allāh tabārakallāh* to student humor can be analyzed through (Goffman & Erving, 1993) face-work theory. In social interactions, individuals strive to maintain “face” to avoid relational threats. In this context, the religious sticker acts as a face-saving act, reducing potential tension without requiring a direct reprimand. It allows the lecturer to uphold authority while simultaneously creating a more relaxed and humanized interaction, demonstrating how symbolic communication mediates hierarchical dynamics in academic digital settings.

Research by (Firdiani & Kahar, 2022) demonstrates that the use of emojis in academic WhatsApp groups functions as a form of nonverbal communication, helping to convey emotions and strengthen communicative relationships between lecturers and students. Emojis do not merely complement messages but also soften the delivery of meaning, making academic interactions more fluid and interactive. This aligns with findings by (Habibullah & Xiguang, 2022) which show that digital communication spaces like WhatsApp enable more flexible symbolic diplomacy compared to formal face-to-face communication. Within this communicative dynamic, visual symbols such as emojis and stickers act as pragmatic mediators, helping to maintain a balance between academic authority and interpersonal closeness, so that hierarchical relations between lecturers and students remain intact while fostering a more humanized digital interaction. Efisiensi Administratif dan Validasi Simbolik

The Tamam sticker response demonstrates the function of administrative communication efficiency. From the perspective of educational organizational communication, (Daulay et al., 2023) explain that brief affirmative messages serve as formal confirmations, accelerating the flow of information without reducing clarity of meaning.

Research by (Swarna et al., 2024) shows that the sticker feature on WhatsApp facilitates digital communication by enabling users to convey emotional responses and message meanings quickly, without lengthy textual explanations. Stickers function as nonverbal communication symbols that can represent feelings, reactions, or responses to interlocutors' messages, making conversations livelier and easier to understand. With visual symbols that are immediately mutually understood, users can provide confirmations, reactions, or specific expressions more efficiently than through extended narratives. (Miolo et al., 2025) Therefore, the use of stickers in digital communication not only serves as an

expressive element but also as a pragmatic tool that helps accelerate interaction flow and coordination in WhatsApp-based conversations.

Overall, this discussion demonstrates that the use of Arabic in academic WhatsApp stickers cannot be understood merely as a linguistic variation, but rather as a complex symbolic strategy in constructing ethical communication within Islamic higher education. From the perspective of politeness (Leech, 2014) and speech acts (J. R. Searle, 1969), expressions such as *Jazākumullāhu khairan* and *Tamām* function to maintain relational harmony while also conveying clear illocutionary force. Through the lens of multimodality (Kress, 2010b) and indexicality (Blommaert, 2010), Arabic script appears as a flexible and contextual religious identity. From a hermeneutic perspective (Ricoeur, 1976), prayers undergo reappropriation to become symbols of academic solidarity, and through Goffman's face-work theory (Goffman, 1955) religious stickers serve as instruments of symbolic diplomacy in reducing hierarchical tension. Findings from research over the past five years further reinforce that religious symbols in digital educational communication function to smooth interpersonal relations, strengthen social cohesion, and enhance administrative efficiency without diminishing the underlying ethical and religious values.

Based on the discussion above, Arabic in academic WhatsApp stickers functions as a pragmatic device, a marker of cultural identity, and a mechanism for stabilizing professional relationships within the ecosystem of contemporary Islamic educational communication.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of Arabic WhatsApp sticker usage in academic interactions between students and lecturers, this study demonstrates that stickers function not merely as visual elements in digital communication, but also carry significant representational meaning and pragmatic roles. Representationally, Arabic stickers reflect religious identity, social solidarity, and students' linguistic creativity within digital communication spaces. Expressions such as *Ma'a as-salāmah*, *Jazākumullāhu khairan*, and *Mā syā'a Allāh tabāarakallāh* convey values of prayer, politeness, and appreciation in academic relationships, while stickers like *Tamam* and the transliteration "*Waduh*" in Arabic script illustrate the flexibility of Arabic in both administrative communication and emotional expression.

Additionally, functionally, the use of Arabic stickers contributes to enhancing the effectiveness of digital academic communication. Stickers act as a strategy of religious politeness that softens hierarchical relations between lecturers and students, while also increasing the efficiency of message delivery through concise, easily understood symbols. Moreover, stickers serve as a medium for spiritual solidarity, strengthening social

cohesion and mitigating tension in certain academic situations.

Furthermore, these findings can be enriched by the perspective of technology integration in Arabic language learning, as demonstrated in previous research (Ridha et al., 2026) regarding the integration of the computational morphology platform *sarf.one*. The study reveals that digital technology can function as cognitive scaffolding, helping students overcome linguistic complexity through mechanisms of cognitive offloading, thereby significantly enhancing comprehension compared to conventional methods. In this context, the use of Arabic-language stickers although informal can be viewed as a micro-level practice of cognitive and affective support within the digital ecosystem, as it facilitates rapid, contextual, and repeated meaning-making.

Thus, the use of Arabic stickers in academic WhatsApp communication demonstrates an integration of religiosity, academic professionalism, and the dynamics of modern digital communication. These findings highlight that religiously based linguistic symbols can transform into effective pragmatic communication tools that uphold ethical standards, relational harmony, and smooth interaction within higher education settings.

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