

Introduction of Arabic Vocabulary to Early Childhood through Community Service Program at PAUD An-Nur Serba Jadi IV, Sunggal District, Deli Serdang

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ABSTRAK

Teaching young children foreign languages, particularly Arabic, optimizes their developmental potential. This community service program aims to implement and analyze effective strategies for introducing Arabic vocabulary that children can memorize and articulate proficiently. The activities are participatory and involve local residents at PAUD An-Nur Serba Jadi IV, Sunggal District, Deli Serdang. The strategies employed include introduction, approaches, routine activities, the use of visual media, memorization through singing and movement, individual and group evaluations, and the provision of rewards. The program results indicate a 53% increase in the recognition of Arabic vocabulary, with a breakdown showing a 12% increase in Cycle 1 and a 65% increase in Cycle 2. The enjoyable learning-through-play method, which aligns with the characteristics of early childhood, has proven effective in enhancing vocabulary recognition and memorization. Recommendations for future community service initiatives include expanding the vocabulary scope, extending the duration of activities, and fostering collaboration with students' parents to create a conducive Arabic-speaking environment for children. Collaboration between academics, education practitioners, and policymakers is also necessary to optimize foreign language education from an early age.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education; Arabic Vocabulary; Community Service

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Introduction

Education is a fundamental aspect of human life that significantly influences knowledge acquisition and personality formation.¹ Education should commence early, including language education that facilitates everyday communication.² The early childhood period, often referred to as the "Golden Age," is regarded as the most optimal phase of development during which the brain and body of a child undergo rapid growth, significantly influencing the formation of personality.³

Mastery of foreign languages, such as Arabic, can be achieved through habituation and practice, which involve a learning process from an early age.⁴ The Penfield brain mechanism theory posits that early childhood is an optimal stage for providing linguistic stimulation in addition to the mother tongue.⁵ The concept of the Critical Period posits that optimal language acquisition occurs from birth to adolescence,⁶ During the period when a child's brain exhibits high plasticity, it is significantly more adept at absorbing new languages than that of an adult.⁷

Introducing foreign languages at an early age also offers cognitive and socio-emotional benefits.⁸ Multilingual children demonstrate superior executive control capabilities, particularly in managing attention and resolving cognitive conflicts.⁹ They also tend to exhibit higher mental flexibility and creativity levels than monolingual children.¹⁰ Regarding social-emotional aspects, the ability to speak a foreign language facilitates cross-cultural communication and fosters empathy and understanding of differing perspectives.¹¹

However, introducing foreign languages to young children must utilize methods that align with their developmental characteristics. Young children learn through concrete experiences and social interactions; therefore, methods incorporating play activities, singing, and visual media are more effective than traditional teacher-centered approaches.¹² The selection of vocabulary relevant to children's daily lives is also crucial for motivating and facilitating the learning process.¹³

Considering the significance of early introduction to the Arabic language, students from the As-Sunnah Islamic College (STAI) have undertaken a community service program to provide Arabic

¹ Elihami Elihami and Abdullah Syahid, "Penerapan Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Membentuk Karakter Pribadi Yang Islami," *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan* 2, no. 1 (2018): 79–96.

² Emmi Silvia Herlina, "Membaca Permulaan Untuk Anak Usia Dini Dalam Era Pendidikan 4.0," *Jurnal Pionir LPPM Universitas Asahan* 5, no. 4 (2019): 332–42.

³ Loeziana Uce, "The Golden Age : Masa Efektif Merancang Kualitas Anak," *Bunayya : Jurnal Pendidikan Anak* 1, no. 2 (2017): 77, <https://doi.org/10.22373/bunayya.v1i2.1322>.

⁴ Slamet Riyadi and Rozaanah Rozaanah, "Simplification of Arabic Preparatory Classes through Daurah Mukatsafah in Higher Education," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 7, no. 1 May (2023): 203, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v7i1.6366>.

⁵ Wilder Penfield and Edwin Boldrey, "Somatic Motor and Sensory Representation in the Cerebral Cortex of Man as Studied by Electrical Stimulation," *Brain* 60, no. 4 (1937): 389–443, <https://doi.org/10.1093/brain/60.4.389>.

⁶ Catherine E. Snow and Marian Hoefnagel-Hohle, "The Critical Period for Language Acquisition: Evidence from Second Language Learning," *Child Development* 49, no. 4 (1978): 1114, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1128751>.

⁷ Elissa L. Newport, Daphne Bavelier, and Helen J. Neville, "Critical Thinking about Critical Periods: Perspectives on a Critical Period for Language Acquisition," *Language, Brain, and Cognitive Development*, 2018, 481–502, <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/4108.003.0038>.

⁸ L U Faridah, "Pengenalan Bahasa Arab Untuk Anak Sejak Dini," *Prosiding Konferensi Nasional Bahasa Arab* 3, no. 3 (2017): 411–19.

⁹ Gregory J. Poarch and Janet G. van Hell, "Executive Functions and Inhibitory Control in Multilingual Children: Evidence from Second-Language Learners, Bilinguals, and Trilinguals," *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 113, no. 4 (2012): 535–51, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2012.06.013>.

¹⁰ Jennifer Sandoval-Guzman, "Creativity, Openness to Experience and Cognitive Flexibility among Bilinguals and Monolinguals" (Azusa Pacific University, 2022).

¹¹ Wing Shuen Lau, "Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction and Social–Emotional Teaching Practices for Linguistically Diverse Learners in the United States" (Seattle Pacific University, 2023).

¹² Fernanda Elizabeth Calle Reinoso, "Using Artistic Chants in the Astonished Learning Environment: Building Children's English Vocabulary" (Universidad Nacional de Educación, 2023).

¹³ Calle Reinoso.

language instruction to preschool children at PAUD An-Nur Serba Jadi IV over nine days. This program aims to implement and analyze effective strategies for introducing Arabic vocabulary, ensuring that the children can memorize and articulate it proficiently. The outcomes of this program are anticipated to contribute to the development of foreign language teaching methods that are appropriate for the characteristics of early childhood learners.

Program Implementation Method

This community service program is participatory, with local residents identifying issues, collecting and analyzing data, and applying the information to resolve problems.¹⁴ This approach is collaborative and oriented towards social change. The implementers and participants work together as equal partners in the program implementation process.¹⁵

The Arabic vocabulary introduction activities are for early childhood at PAUD An-Nur, owned by Mrs. Afri Winda (Mrs. Ayu), in Sunggal District, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra. The program subjects are 17 children aged 3-6 years. The implementation of activities is divided into two cycles, each consisting of 4-5 meetings with a duration of 60 minutes per meeting.

The data collection techniques are participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observations are made during activities to observe children's responses and development in memorizing vocabulary. Interviews are conducted with the school principal and teachers to obtain information about the children's characteristics and initial abilities. Documentation in photos and videos of activities is used as evidence and evaluation materials.

The collected data is analyzed descriptively, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative analysis is done by categorizing observation and interview data to identify themes related to effective learning strategies. Quantitative analysis is done by calculating the percentage of children who can memorize vocabulary in each cycle to determine the increase in vocabulary mastery.

The community service procedure includes planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection.¹⁶ At the planning stage, implementers develop lesson plans, select vocabulary to be introduced, and prepare learning media such as picture cards and songs. Action implementation is carried out according to the plan by applying the designed learning strategies. Observations are made during the action to collect data, which is then analyzed collaboratively between the implementers and teachers at the reflection stage. The reflection results modify the action plan in the next cycle.

¹⁴ Slamet Riyadi et al., "Action Based Community Development by STAI As-Sunnah," *Al-ArkhabiiL: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 3, no. 2 (2023): 15–27, https://doi.org/10.51590/jpm_assunnah.v3i2.503.

¹⁵ Slamet Riyadi et al., "Andragogy and Edutainment Approach: A Cross-Generational Solution for Improved Worship Practices," *Al-ArkhabiiL: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 4, no. 3 (2024): 11–20.

¹⁶ Rozaanah et al., "Optimizing Surau as an Education Center in the Pandemic Period," *Al-ArkhabiiL: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 2, no. 1 (2022): 32–41, https://doi.org/10.51590/jpm_assunnah.v2i1.207.

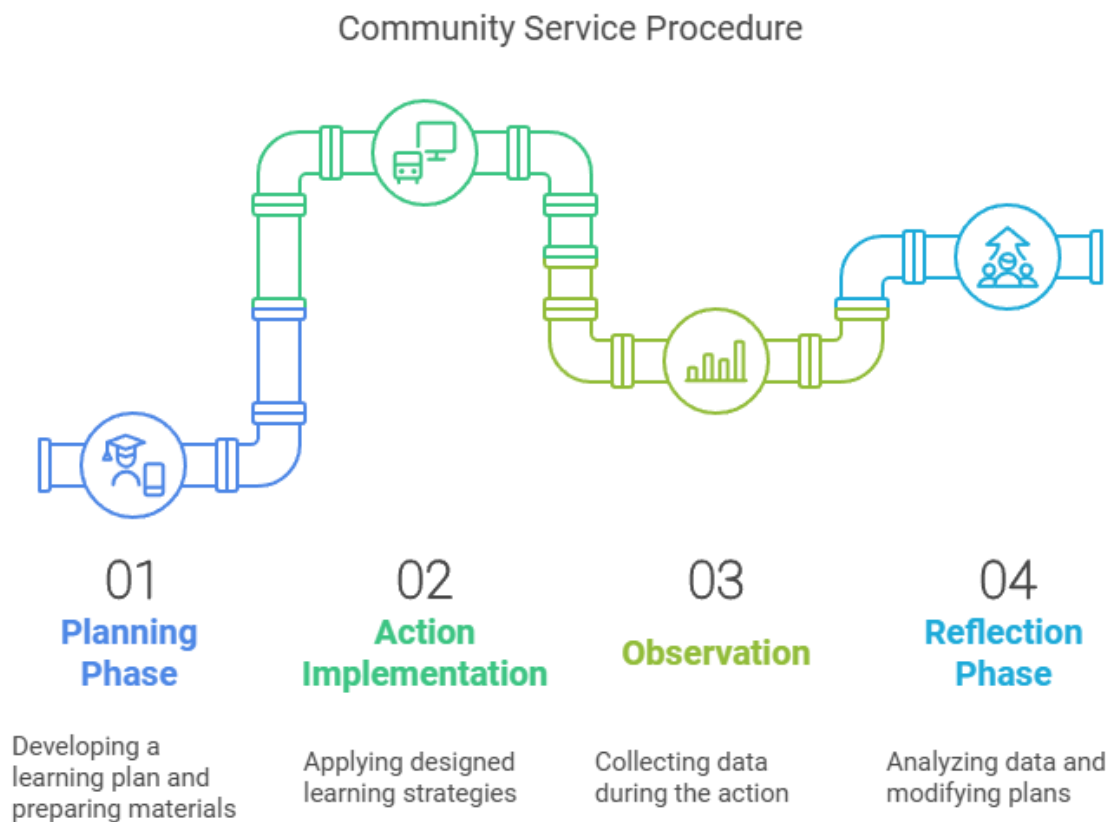


Figure 1: Community Service Procedure

Results and Discussion

The community service program, which involves introducing Arabic vocabulary to early childhood at PAUD An-Nur, implements one of the Tri Dharmas of Higher Education. The Tri Dharma includes three main pillars that academics must implement: education, research, and community service.¹⁷ Through this program, academics from the As-Sunnah Islamic College (STAI) strive to apply their knowledge and competencies to benefit the community, especially in foreign language education for early childhood.

The program's implementation begins with communication and licensing with PAUD An-Nur, owned by Mrs. Afri Winda. Activities are carried out for nine days, from March 18-22 and March 25-28, 2024. The academics also request permission to stay at the At-Taqwa Mosque during the activities, demonstrating their commitment to being directly involved with the local community.

¹⁷ Hasan Hamzah Lubis, "Strategi STAI As-Sunnah Tanjung Morawa Dalam Menangkal Radikalisme," *WARAQAT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 6, no. 2 (2021): 84–95, <https://doi.org/10.51590/waraqat.v6i2.200>.

The main strategies applied in introducing Arabic vocabulary are the singing method combined with movements, the use of visual media such as picture cards, and a communicative approach that emphasizes interaction and active participation of children. The singing method is chosen because it aligns with the characteristics of early childhood, which enjoy music and rhythm. Singing can create a fun learning atmosphere and help children remember vocabulary more easily.¹⁸

The use of movements in singing also aligns with the principles of early childhood learning involving physical and kinesthetic activities. Movements help children concretize the meaning of vocabulary and enhance their memory.¹⁹ This is supported by Information Processing theory, which states that information involving various sensory modalities (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) will be processed more deeply in the brain, thus increasing retention.²⁰

Visual media, such as picture cards, are also used to help children associate vocabulary with their visual representations. According to Dual Coding theory, verbal and visual information will be processed through two different cognitive systems, thus enhancing understanding and memory retention.²¹ Picture cards also attract children's attention and motivate them to participate in learning actively.

The communicative approach applied emphasizes interaction and contextual use of language. Children can practice the learned vocabulary through songs, games, and simple conversations. This approach aligns with the principles of natural language learning, where children learn language through meaningful interactions relevant to their lives.²²

The introduction of Arabic vocabulary is carried out by considering the routines and habits in PAUD An-Nur. The academics follow the usual learning activities before introducing new material, such as reading iqra, writing hijayah letters, and coloring. This is done to create a smooth transition and avoid boredom in children.

¹⁸ Calle Reinoso, "Using Artistic Chants in the Astonished Learning Environment: Building Children's English Vocabulary."

¹⁹ Calle Reinoso.

²⁰ Joshua Cuevas and Bryan L Dawson, "A Test of Two Alternative Cognitive Processing Models: Learning Styles and Dual Coding," *Theory and Research in Education* 16, no. 1 (September 2017): 40–64, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878517731450>.

²¹ Z K Morfogen, *Recombining Art and Language: Dual Coding and the Reciprocal Relationship in Art Therapy (M.A.)*. Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, vol. 2818556551 (Hofstra University, 2023), <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/recombining-art-language-dual-coding-reciprocal/docview/2818556551/se-2?accountid=28426>.

²² David M. W. Powers and Christopher C. R. Turk, *Machine Learning of Natural Language, Machine Learning of Natural Language* (Springer Science & Business Media, 1989), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4471-1697-4>.



Figure 2: anak-anak PAUD An-Nur

Technically, vocabulary introduction is done by attaching pictures on the board accompanied by Latin-Arabic writing and its meaning. Children are introduced to *mufrodāt* (vocabulary) through songs sung with rhythm and movements that correspond to the meaning of the words. The song used has the theme of "Baiti" and contains vocabulary of objects around the house such as *baitun* (house), *mishbahun* (lamp), *sariirun* (bed), and so on.

The song is sung repeatedly, both individually and together. This repetition aligns with the principles of early childhood learning that require repetition to consolidate new knowledge.²³ Memorization evaluation is carried out gradually, from asking children to sing the song individually and forming groups based on memorization levels to asking questions and giving rewards as motivation.

²³ Calle Reinoso, "Using Artistic Chants in the Astonished Learning Environment: Building Children's English Vocabulary."

The results of observations and evaluations show an increase in children's ability to memorize and mention Arabic vocabulary. In the first cycle, 12% of children can memorize more than 3 vocabularies, increasing to 65% in the second cycle. The total increase in memorization ability reaches 53%. This increase indicates the effectiveness of the singing method, the use of visual media, and the communicative approach in learning foreign languages in early childhood.

However, there are some limitations in implementing this program. The amount of vocabulary introduced is still limited due to time constraints. Children need more intensive and continuous exposure to master the vocabulary comprehensively. The evaluation of children's abilities is also limited to receptive aspects (comprehension) and has not optimally covered productive aspects (usage).

Based on these results and limitations, several recommendations can be made for subsequent community service activities. First, the vocabulary scope needs to be expanded while still taking into account the children's level of development and interest. Second, the duration of activities can be extended or integrated into a continuous learning program to provide more intensive exposure. Third, the involvement of parents as learning partners needs to be increased to create a conducive Arabic-speaking environment for children, both at school and home.

Parental involvement has a crucial role in supporting foreign language learning in early childhood. Research shows that parental support, both directly (e.g. helping children practice vocabulary at home) and indirectly (e.g. providing additional learning materials), positively correlates with children's motivation and achievement in foreign language learning.²⁴ Therefore, communication and collaboration between academics, education practitioners, and policymakers is necessary to create a conducive foreign language education ecosystem. The government needs to provide policy support and adequate resources, such as providing competent foreign language teachers, developing learning infrastructure, and increasing public awareness about the importance of mastering foreign languages from an early age.²⁵

In a broader context, this community service program demonstrates the importance of academics in advancing foreign language education in Indonesia, especially at the early childhood level. Academics can contribute through various activities, such as teacher training, curriculum development, learning materials, and classroom action research, to improve the quality of foreign language learning.²⁶

Conclusion

This study evaluates the contribution of STAI As-Sunnah students in the KKN-T program towards increasing enthusiasm for learning the Islamic religion and reading the Quran among children in Ridan Permai Village. Through a descriptive qualitative approach with the ABCD model, the research examines the impact of various student activities, including Quranic memorization circles, recitation workshops, Arabic language learning, practical skill training, and Islamic competitions. The findings reveal a significant increase in children's enthusiasm for learning Islam and reading the Quran after participating in the KKN-T program. The students' engaging and participatory approach, interactive teaching methods, and practical skill-building activities created a conducive learning environment that motivated the children to deepen their religious knowledge and improve their Quranic recitation skills.

²⁴ Nur Fatimatuzzahrah, Lalu Supriadi, and M. Rasyid Ridho, "Pengaruh Kosakata Bahasa Arab Dan Tahfiz Al-Qur'an Terhadap Motivasi Belajar Bahasa Arab Siswa Di Madrasah Aliyah Syaikh Zainuddin NW Anjani Lombok Timur," *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan* 9, no. 3 (2024): 1943–50, <https://doi.org/10.29303/jipp.v9i3.2639>.

²⁵ Fatimatuzzahrah, Supriadi, and Ridho.

²⁶ Riyadi and Rozaanah, "Simplification of Arabic Preparatory Classes through Daurah Mukatsafah in Higher Education."

The study highlights the effectiveness of community-based approaches in enhancing Islamic education and promoting religious literacy in rural areas. It demonstrates the potential of university-community partnerships in addressing educational challenges and leveraging local assets to support children's religious development. The implications of this research extend beyond the specific context of Ridan Permai Village. The findings offer valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and community leaders seeking to improve the quality and accessibility of Islamic education in diverse settings. The study underscores the importance of engaging university students in community development programs and the need for collaborative efforts between educational institutions and local communities. However, the research also identifies challenges that must be addressed to ensure the sustainability and scalability of such programs. These include the need for ongoing training and support for university students, the development of culturally relevant curricula, and establishing long-term partnerships between universities and communities.

Future research could explore the long-term impact of community-based Islamic education programs on children's religious attitudes and practices and investigate the perspectives of parents, community leaders, and religious institutions on the role of university students in promoting Islamic education. In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on community-based approaches to Islamic education. It highlights the significance of university-community partnerships in enhancing religious literacy and enthusiasm for learning Islam and reading the Quran among children in rural areas. The findings provide a foundation for further research and practice in Islamic education and community development.

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