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ENHANCING ARABIC LANGUAGE LEARNING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH PLAYING, STORYTELLING, AND SINGING (PSS) STRATEGIES¹

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: This study aims to explore the application of the PSS (Playing, Storytelling, and Singing) strategy in Arabic language learning for early childhood education. It seeks to emphasize how such engaging methods can enhance children's motivation and language acquisition during their developmental golden age.

Methodology: This research adopts a qualitative library research approach by critically reviewing books, journal articles, and previous studies related to the PSS strategy. Data collection was conducted through documentation, and analysis was carried out using content analysis techniques to identify relevant patterns and themes.

Main Findings: The findings indicate that the PSS strategy is effective in enhancing Arabic language skills in early childhood, both receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing). Specific examples such as "Chain Whispering" and "Snakes and Ladders" for playing, "Expressing the Picture" and "Say What I Drew" for storytelling, and thematic Arabic songs for singing, have shown positive impacts on vocabulary mastery, speaking fluency, and overall engagement in language learning.

Application of this Study: The study provides valuable pedagogical insights for Arabic language educators, curriculum developers, and early childhood education practitioners in designing interactive and developmentally appropriate Arabic language learning strategies.

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Novelty/Originality of this Study: This study offers a comprehensive framework for implementing the PSS strategy specifically in Arabic language learning, combining theory and practice with practical teaching steps, media examples, and classroom activities tailored to young learners.

Significance: The research contributes to the growing body of knowledge in early childhood Arabic language education by highlighting innovative, enjoyable, and child-centered strategies that align with both linguistic and developmental needs, ultimately fostering deeper interest and long-term language competence among learners.

Keywords: Arabic Language Learning, Early Childhood Education, PSS Strategy, Playing, Storytelling, Singing, Language Skills Development, Child-Centered Learning

INTRODUCTION

Language is an important communication tool in human life, from toddlers to the elderly. Arabic is one of the international languages that has a high position after English. Like other languages, Arabic functions as a tool for communication, transfer, and expression, both orally and in writing. Mastering Arabic is a very urgent need for Muslims. Because, Arabic is the language of the Qur'an which is none other than the source of Islamic teachings (Mualif, 2022).

Given the importance of good Arabic language skills, the Indonesian government has set a curriculum for all educational institutions in the country. This encourages Muslims to master Arabic from an early age, either through formal or informal education. Arabic language teaching, although imbued with important religious and cultural values, can be used as a vehicle to spread and internalize the values of friendship between fellow teachers, fellow students, and between teacher and students (Akmaliyah et al., 2021; Fowler, 2023).

In learning a language, including Arabic, the most effective way is through habituation. Meanwhile, habituation will be effective if done early or at a young age. Because, at that age children experience a golden age where their development occurs rapidly, starting from the development of language, intelligence, skills, and others (Baharun & Sahri, 2022).

Based on previous research results, Arabic language learning for early childhood has several obstacles. Among them is the lack of supporting media to encourage the teaching and learning process. These things cause boredom and students are less than optimal in absorbing the material because most of the teaching process still uses monotonous strategies (Putri, 2019).

Arabic language learning in early childhood is an introductory phase so that children have high motivation to learn it in the future (Aziz et al., 2022; Salim & Mohamed, 2023). To provide a deep impression at this phase, of course, an interesting learning strategy is needed that follows the child's development pattern. Among the learning strategies that have been proven effective in learning Arabic for children is PSS (Playing, Storytelling, and Singing) (Aldena, 2021; Tasya, 2021).

Through this research, the researcher will explain the application of the PSS strategy in Arabic language learning for children, starting from the definition to the steps of its implementation. This is expected to add broader and deeper insight to Arabic language teachers. So, they can apply these strategies to improve children's Arabic language skills.

MATERIALS AND METHODS ADOPTED

This is a type of library research, namely research conducted through reading, reviewing, recording, and then processing research data (Zed, 2004: 1; Anggito & Setiawan, 2018). The

stages carried out in this research are selecting and critically reviewing data sources or references related to the PSS strategy by formulating critical attention to important points of information about the PSS strategy. This is done to obtain complete and objective information. The approach used is a qualitative approach. The data source in this study is books and the results of previous studies related to PSS strategy. The documentation is used for data collection techniques in this study. The data analysis technique uses a content analysis approach, making it easier to obtain meaning from the collected data. This approach allows researchers to identify patterns, themes, and concepts in the text that can be used to conclude data (Bengtsson, 2016; Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Language Development in Children

Early childhood is generally children under the age of 6 years. Through the National Education System Law, the government defines early childhood as children with an age range of 0-6 years. Early childhood is preschool children aged between 3-6 years (Pérez-Ferra et al., 2020; Teng et al., 2021). NAEYC (The National Association For The Education Of Young Children) and experts in general determine the limits of early childhood, namely children aged 0-8 years (Dew et al., 2014).

Childhood development based on Montessori's thinking (Montessori, 2008, p. 272) is as follows. At the age of 0-3 years, children have sensory sensitivity skills and unconscious absorption occurs through the experience of the five senses. From the age of 0,5-3 years, children begin to develop their language, speak, and communicate (Boysson-Bardies, 2001). At the age of 2-4 years, muscle movements in children begin to be well coordinated. Children begin to make many movements because they are interested in small objects around them. At the age of 3-6 years, children experience a strengthening of sensory perception and speed of sensory perception (Shiel et al., 2012; Wake et al., 2011). At the age of 4 years, children begin to develop sensitivity to writing. So, at the age of 4-6 years, children's reading senses can function well (Maphalala et al., 2014).

According to Patmonodewo (2008, p. 29), "Language development in children begins with expression through sound then expression through communication, starting from the use of movements and gestures then developing into the use of clear and precise speech". Thus, the development of the language process in children begins at the age of 0 years unconsciously through acquisition or mastery activities. Then, along with the growth and development of the child, the process is continued with conscious language acquisition through learning activities (Seefeldt, 2008, p. 17).

Language learning for children aims to improve their language skills, both receptive and productive. Receptive language skills are language skills that are applied to understand something conveyed through spoken and written language. Receptive language skills include listening and reading skills. Meanwhile, productive language skills are language skills that are applied to convey information, both in writing and orally. Productive language skills include writing and speaking skills (Istiqomah et al., 2022).

According to Wilhelm Froebel the Father of Early Childhood Education (1852), the educational curriculum for children includes the arts of skills in construction, singing, playing, language, and arithmetic (Madyawati, 2016, p. 10).

Arabic Language Learning Strategies for Children

Arabic learning strategies for early childhood are methods or a series of ways to learn Arabic for children to achieve learning goals. Two strategies can be utilized in learning Arabic for early childhood, namely: a) direct learning strategies which include: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies (Halimah, 2022), and b) indirect learning strategies which include: metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies (Tasya, 2021).

Several principles that must be noticed in learning Arabic for children are as follows. (Ramadhan, 2017; Yassin et al., 2020):

1. Child-oriented.
2. Learning through play.
3. Conducive environment.
4. Using integrated learning.
5. Develop various life skills.
6. Using various educational media and learning resources.
7. Implemented gradually and repeatedly.
8. Learning Arabic through vocabulary.

Among the learning strategies that meet the principles above and have proven effective in learning Arabic for children, namely the PSS (Playing, Storytelling, and Singing) strategy (Ahmad, 2020; Aldena, 2021; Isbah et al., 2022). Based on the results of previous studies, the PSS strategy can develop social-emotional intelligence in early childhood (Anggraini et al., 2023; Aprianti, 2017; Sadiana, 2016).

Playing Strategies for Learning Arabic

Language games as expressed by G. Gibbs are activities in which students help each other or compete with each other to achieve predetermined goals with certain rules. Language games aim to have fun and practice language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), literature, and language elements (vocabulary and grammar) (Mushtofa, 1983).

Many types of games can be applied in learning Arabic, including Chain Whispers and Snakes and Ladders (Nurlaila & Rahman, 2018).

Chain Whispering

It is called chain whispering because in this game the participants have to line up like a chain and then whisper the message they have received in sequence (Juniati et al., 2022). This game aims to practice listening skills (*maharah istima'*) and strengthen memorization of vocabulary (Herman et al., 2022; Rosalinda, 2021). Amiruddin, Mannahali, & Muthmainnah (2022), Mutia (2023), and Alzulmi, Hidayat, & Usman (2024) stated in their research results that chain whispering is effective in improving listening skills.

The chain whispering game used as an example here is the whispering verb (*hims al-fi'l*), where the message that is whispered is specifically in the form of a verb. The aim is to train four Arabic language skills at once (reading, speaking, listening, and writing) and strengthen memorization of the vocabulary (Istiqomah & Hidayah, 2020).

The steps of the game are as follows:

1. The teacher prepares papers containing certain vocabulary words that are considered

unique and interesting. For example, words that have the same final letter as shown in Figure 1.

2. The teacher divides the class into several groups.
3. All groups line up facing the board.
4. The teacher explains the rules of the game and the scoring rules.
5. The front participant in each group holds a marker to write the message he or she heard on the board.
6. The participant at the back of each group prepares to wait for the signal to take the paper containing the message from the teacher's hand.
7. After the count of three, all participants who brought the paper must read and memorize the message quickly and accurately.
8. The messenger begins to whisper his message to the group member standing right after him, after listening and memorizing the message, he passes his message on to the next member in turn and sequence until the last group member.
9. The last participant writes the message he received on the board according to his group's column.
10. The last participant moves to the back of the line to take the message from the teacher's hand and do the same process as before.
11. After all the papers are taken and the game is finished, the teacher carries out corrections and assessments for all groups and then gives prizes to the winning group.

يمزح، يمنح، يمسح، يسمع، يشرح، يفرح، يفتح
يمنع، يركع، يبلع، يقطع، يسمع، يجمع، يشجع
يأكل، يأمل، يعمل، يقول، يغسل، يجعل، يقبل
يلعب، يغضب، يضرب، يكتب، يركب، يحسب، يشرب
يمكر، يشكر، يأمر، يستر، ينصر، ينشر، ينظر

Figure 1: Arabic verbs for playing chain whispering.

Snakes and Ladders (ats-tsa'abin wa as-salalim)

Snakes and Ladders is a traditional game for children played by two or more people. The Snakes and Ladders strategy is a type of attractive game that involves children playing an active role in Snakes and Ladders (A. Said & Budimanjaya, 2016, p. 240). Arabic language learning media in the form of a Snakes and Ladders game used as an example here is a Snakes and Ladders game that was designed by creating innovations as shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Arabic vocabularies for playing Snakes and Ladders
(Source: Google Image Open Source)

The Snakes and Ladders game media can be used to develop aspects of Arabic in the form of vocabulary and grammar, both morphology and syntax. This can be seen from the questions given on the cards that have been prepared. For example, on the Alif (ا) letter card, the command is written to read 3 times and the others imitate (أهلاً وسهلاً welcome), then write it on the paper provided. On the *Tho'* (ط) letter card, the command is written to read 3 times (طبيب doctor), then make a sentence using the word طبيب.

Grammar aspects can also be learned using this game media. For example, on the letter card, it says Nun (ن), read it 3 times (نحن تلميذ we are students). نحن subject (*mubtada'*) and تلميذ predicate (*khabar*) (Mardliyyah & Baroroh, 2019).

The steps of the game are:

1. The teacher divides the groups randomly with each group consisting of 4 or 5 players.
2. The teacher distributes Snakes and Ladders game media and explains how to learn by playing Snakes and Ladders.
3. All players take turns throwing the dice, to determine the order of the players. If the dice that fall show a total of 4, then the student must walk 4 squares on the Snakes and Ladders game board. If the dice shows a total of 6, then the player has the right to throw the dice again.
4. When in a certain letter box, the player takes a card there and then carries out the command on the card. If the box they are aiming for has a picture of a snake, then the player must follow the snake down. If the target box shows a picture of a ladder, the player must follow the ladder up.

5. The winner of this game is the student who completes the most commands and reaches the last point of the Snakes and Ladders game first.
6. After the game is finished, the written work will be checked together and assessed by the teacher.

Based on the previous research, Khomsin & Rahimmatussalisa (2021) stated in their research results that Snakes and Ladders is effective in improving vocabulary recognition skills. Munandar & Friska (2024) stated that Snakes and Ladders is effective in vocabulary mastery. Muid (2024) also stated that Snakes and Ladders is effective in improving speaking skills.

Storytelling Strategies in Learning Arabic

Storytelling in language learning is one strategy to improve speaking skills (Faridah, 2017). Among the storytelling strategies that can be applied in learning speaking skills in Arabic are as follows.

Express the picture (Ta'bir ash-shuwar)

This strategy aims to train students to tell what they see in Arabic, both speaking and writing (Shodiq, 2018). The media used can be projected or non-projected images.

The steps are as follows (Nadiroh et al., 2018):

1. Choose a picture that fits the theme being taught.
2. Show the picture to students, for example by sticking it on the board or using a projector.
3. Ask students to name the objects or parts in the picture in Arabic.
4. Ask each student to make a sentence from the picture orally.
5. Ask each student to make a sentence from the picture in writing.
6. Ask each student to read the results (presentation).
7. Provide clarification on the results of the students' work.

Say what I drew (Qul ma arsamuhu)

This is a method used to tell what is in the picture using Arabic speaking and spelling (Al-Musuwi, 2021).

The steps are as follows.

1. The teacher divides the class into 2 large groups.
2. Each group chooses three concepts to draw something that fits the learning theme.
3. One person from the group representative shows his picture to the opposing group by saying the question sentence "What do you know about this picture? (ماذا ترى عن؟ هذا الرسم؟) Tell me what I drew! (قل ما أرسمه!)".
4. The opposing group discusses how to compose a simple Arabic story from the picture.
5. The opposing group's representative told the story loudly.

6. Next, the opposing group exchanges roles and does what the previous group did.
7. The teacher supervises the progress of the game and provides assessment and evaluation at the end of the game.

Based on previous research, Fadlan (2019) stated that storytelling is effective in improving the language skills of children. Zein & Puspita (2021) stated in their research results that storytelling is effective in improving speaking skills. Endahwati, Bachri, and Izzati (2022) also stated that storytelling is effective in improving language skills, both receptive and expressive.

Singing strategies for learning Arabic

Singing is a method that can be used for early childhood learning. Singing can help remember old vocabulary and add new vocabulary (Nurhidayati et al., 2020). Singing is closely related to music. While music can be a medium to teach the Arabic language in a fun and simple way (O. A. Said, 2023). In other words, to learn with pleasure. In addition, singing Arabic songs can help develop speaking skills with natural intonation (Hasan, 2018).

Things to consider when choosing songs for learning Arabic for children include:

1. The lyrics or words in the song should be clear.
2. The language used in the song is not too difficult.
3. The song themes are chosen to suit the world of children and are related to the subject matter.
4. The song is not too long (Ridwan & Awaluddin, 2019).

Based on the previous research, Rizal et al. (2022) stated that singing is effective in improving language skills. Azzahra (2023) stated that singing is effective in improving vocabulary mastery. Huda and Fauji (2024) also stated that singing is effective in improving understanding of Arabic vocabulary.

The researcher gave an example of a song lyrics in Table 1 that can be applied to learning Arabic on the topic of adverb of place (*dhorof makan*) which is the lyrics that imitate the song My Goat Child.

Table 1: The Song “My Goat Child”

<i>Arabic - Indonesia</i>	<i>Arabic - English</i>
<i>Aina (أين) di mana</i>	Where is <i>aina (أين)</i>
<i>Amama (أمام) di muka</i>	In front of <i>amama (أمام)</i>
<i>Waroa (وراء) di belakang</i>	Behind is <i>waroa (وراء)</i>
<i>Bi jiwari (بجوار) di samping</i>	Beside is <i>bi jiwari (بجوار)</i>
<i>Fauqo (فوق) 'ala (على) di atas</i>	On is <i>'ala (على) above fauqo (فوق)</i>
<i>Tahta (تحت) itu di bawah</i>	Under is <i>tahta (تحت)</i>
<i>Huna (هنا) hunaka (هناك) di sini dan di sana</i>	Here is <i>huna (هنا) there is hunaka (هناك)</i>

CONCLUSION

Arabic language learning for early childhood is an introductory phase so that children have high motivation to learn it in the future. To give a deep impression at that phase, of course, an interesting learning strategy is needed for the child's development pattern. Among the learning strategies that have proven effective in learning Arabic for children is the PSS (Playing, Storytelling, and Singing) strategy.

PSS strategy can improve Arabic language skills, both receptive and expressive: listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills, and writing skills. Examples of playing strategies in Arabic language teaching are whispering verbs (*hims al-fi'l*) and Snakes and Ladders (*ats-tsa'abin wa as-salalim*). Examples of storytelling strategies in Arabic language teaching are expressing the picture (*ta'bir ash-shuwar*) and saying what I drew (*Qul ma arsamuhu*). An example of a singing strategy in Arabic language teaching is a song about the adverb of place (*dhorof makan*) which is the lyrics that imitate the song My Goat Child.

The researcher recommends to other researchers who are interested in similar topics to develop the application of the PSS singing strategy in Arabic language learning for children. This aims to ensure that future development research can produce more mature and perfect learning strategies, especially in the context of improving Arabic language skills for children as beginners.

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