

Introducing Arabic Letters to Improve Early Childhood Language Skills

Sabrina Awaliyah Rohmah

Biqi Ashafah Zain

sabrinaawaliyahrohmah@gmail.com

biqizain@isimupacitan.ac.id

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya

Institut Studi Islam Muhammadiyah Pacitan

ABSTRACT The development of language skills in early childhood is a fundamental aspect that needs to be stimulated from an early age, including in learning the Arabic language. This study aims to examine the role of introducing Arabic letters in comprehensively improving the language abilities of young children. The method used is a literature study by analyzing various national and international scientific articles and journals relevant to the topic of introducing hijaiyah letters and early childhood language development. The findings show that introducing Arabic letters through learning methods suited to the characteristics of early childhood such as learning through play, singing, and multisensory approaches, supported by the use of varied and interactive learning media can enhance children's language skills, including listening, speaking, early reading, and vocabulary acquisition. Thus, the early introduction of Arabic letters can serve as an important foundation for the development of literacy and language abilities in young children.

KEYWORDS: *Arabic Language; Early Childhood; Language Skills*

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INTRODUCTION

Language development in early childhood is a crucial foundation for all aspects of their cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Good language abilities from an early age not only facilitate effective communication but also prepare children to acquire reading and writing skills, which are fundamental to future academic success (Anggita et al., 2023a). In the context of globalization and the relevance of Arabic as a language of religion and knowledge, mastering Arabic in early childhood is becoming increasingly important not only for religious purposes but also to enrich children's linguistic and intellectual skills (Sitorus et al., 2025).

Arabic language learning, particularly the acquisition of its basic elements, often poses specific challenges for children in non-Arabic environments. Although many children are introduced to Qur'anic recitation through Iqro' or the Qur'an, the emphasis is generally placed on reading skills and recognizing hijaiyah letters rather than developing comprehensive Arabic language proficiency (Ramadhani et al., 2022). As a result, hijaiyah letters may feel unfamiliar compared to Latin letters, potentially hindering deeper understanding of the Arabic language. Furthermore, differences in script forms and phonological systems between Arabic and Indonesian, which uses Latin letters, may lead to pronunciation and comprehension errors, requiring special attention in the learning process.

The introduction of Arabic letters or hijaiyah letters in early childhood is a fundamental step in building their Arabic language skills. Recognizing symbols, pronouncing letters and syllables, and forming words are essential stages in early reading development (Sa'ida, 2022). According to Anggita et al. (2023b), early introduction to letters is highly important because it facilitates children's ability to recognize letters, thereby preparing them to acquire reading and writing skills. Thus, effective introduction to hijaiyah letters becomes a prerequisite for developing more complex Arabic language skills.

Various learning methods and media have been developed to introduce hijaiyah letters to young children. Several studies, such as those conducted by Aisyah et al. (2022) and Nurajijah (2025), demonstrate the effectiveness of using flash-card media in improving children's recognition of hijaiyah letters. This medium is considered important in strengthening early childhood knowledge. In addition, according to Sari et al. (2020), the implementation of the Iqro' method has also been proven to provide basic understanding of hijaiyah letters and facilitate accurate recognition of letters both sequentially and randomly. The Iqro' method is easy to understand and apply, making it highly relevant in teaching hijaiyah letters to children.

Although various methods for teaching Arabic letters have been developed, further research is still needed to determine the most effective strategies for introducing Arabic letters that directly enhance all aspects of early childhood language ability. Aisyah et al. (2022) state that many studies focus on letter recognition or early reading, yet few have comprehensively examined the impact on holistic language development listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In fact, learners' initial competencies have significant implications for Arabic language learning in these four aspects, and the role of Arabic metalinguistic awareness in reading and comprehension development has not been fully understood (Bin Sawad et al., 2022).

Previous studies indicate that introducing Arabic or hijaiyah letters in early childhood plays an important role in supporting children's language development. Karomah et al. (2025), through their research on the development of the Alphabet Arabic Book learning media, found that visually-designed learning tools appropriate to early-childhood characteristics were effective in improving their recognition of hijaiyah letters. Mastery of letters as language symbols not only supports early reading skills but also forms an important foundation for overall language development, including listening and speaking abilities. These findings reinforce that early introduction to Arabic letters when delivered through appropriate media and methods can be an effective strategy for enhancing early childhood language ability.

Therefore, this study aims to examine in depth how the introduction of Arabic letters can significantly improve early childhood language skills in a comprehensive manner. We will analyze the effectiveness of this approach in developing children's basic language abilities and identify the supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation, so that this research may contribute meaningfully to the practice of Arabic language education.

METHOD

The method used in this study is a literature review. The literature review was conducted by examining and analyzing various scholarly sources relevant to the topic of introducing Arabic letters and improving the language abilities of early childhood learners. Data sources were obtained from scientific journals and research articles published nationally and internationally through databases such as Google Scholar and other online journal portals. The selected literature was screened based on thematic relevance, year of publication, and its connection to early childhood language development.

The collected data were then analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach to identify concepts, methods, and findings from previous research related to the effectiveness of introducing Arabic letters in enhancing the language skills of young children. The results of this analysis served as the basis for drawing conclusions and providing recommendations for the development of learning practices suited to the characteristics of early childhood.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Effective Learning Methods

Effective learning methods for introducing Arabic letters to improve early childhood language skills have been widely studied. Several studies show that the *Iqro'* method is effective in introducing Arabic letters, where children learn to pronounce the letters individually under the guidance of a teacher using the *Iqro'* book (Cahyanti & Katoningsih, 2023). Similarly, the *Tilawati* method, supported by the use of hijaiyah letter flash cards, has also been found to improve reading ability among children aged 4 to 5 years (Cahyanti & Katoningsih, 2023).

More interactive approaches, such as singing particularly through popular children's song applications have also been found effective in improving children's Arabic vocabulary mastery (Rahmatannisa et al., 2023). Demonstration methods using visual media such as "letter trees" also play an important role in enhancing children's ability to recognize hijaiyah letters (Suwarni et al., 2022).

Another important aspect is the simultaneous teaching of letter names and sounds, supported by mnemonic aids and integrating letter instruction with writing activities to provide more comprehensive learning. This ensures that children do not merely memorize the letters, but also develop correct pronunciation (Aulia & Sari, 2023).

Introducing Arabic letters to young children works best when the learning experience feels natural, enjoyable, and part of their daily lives. Children at an early age respond more to warmth, encouragement, and play than to formal instruction. That is why I believe that methods such as *Iqro'* or *Tilawati* are effective not simply because of their structure, but because they provide a clear and patient rhythm of learning, guided closely by a caring teacher. When a child sits with a teacher and practices letter sounds slowly and repeatedly, they gradually build familiarity and confidence. What matters most is not speed, but the sense that learning is a comfortable process where mistakes are allowed and gently corrected.

In addition, visual and interactive tools such as hijaiyah flash cards or letter trees make learning more meaningful. Children are naturally curious, and colourful shapes attract their attention. When letters are displayed in creative forms, children feel engaged rather than pressured. They begin to see Arabic letters not as strange symbols, but as friendly shapes they can recognize and remember. I have also noticed that learning becomes deeper when children are encouraged to touch, move, or hold learning materials, because they feel physically involved in the process rather than just watching passively.

Music is another powerful bridge to learning. Songs stay in a child's memory long after the lesson ends. When Arabic letters or words are introduced through cheerful melodies, children repeat them without being asked. Singing also creates a joyful environment where learning and happiness happen together. This is especially important because children associate emotions with learning experiences. If they feel happy while learning Arabic letters, they are more likely to develop a positive relationship with the language as they grow older.

Writing practice, in my opinion, should also be introduced gently alongside letter recognition. Children enjoy drawing, and writing letters can become an extension of that activity. Allowing them to slowly trace and shape letters with their own hands helps them feel proud of their progress. Instead of focusing on neatness at first, it is better to emphasize encouragement and appreciation. Each small achievement, such as writing a single letter correctly, deserves recognition, because it strengthens motivation from within.

Most importantly, I believe that early Arabic literacy should be built through patience, warmth, and consistency. Children learn best when they feel safe and supported. A calm and kind teacher or parent can create a learning environment that nurtures both skill and emotional comfort. Rather than forcing mastery, guiding children step-by-step allows them to grow at their own pace. When Arabic letters become part of stories, songs, conversations, and shared moments, the learning process becomes natural and lasting.

In the end, effective Arabic letter learning is not only about methods or materials, but about how closely adults connect with children during the process. When guidance is sincere, loving, and engaging, children do not simply learn to recognize letters—they begin to enjoy the journey of learning itself.

Supportive Learning Media

Supportive learning media are crucial in introducing Arabic letters and improving early childhood language ability. Teaching aids such as hijaiyah flash cards, illustrated word cards, and visual media more generally have been shown to improve learning concentration, learning outcomes, Arabic vocabulary, and hijaiyah recognition in children (Bastian & Suharni, 2021).

In addition, Sinta et al. (2025) highlight the importance of innovation in interactive and digital media, such as interactive soft books, which enhance children's ability to pronounce hijaiyah letters. Other research has also revealed that the use of interactive multimedia makes the learning process easier and more enjoyable (Rahmat et al., 2023).

Several studies also show that integrating visual, audio, game-based, and digital technology media interactively is highly effective in stimulating children's interest in learning Arabic. Educational applications such as *IcanDO* and pronunciation-based learning games have been found to create enjoyable and effective learning processes (Aljojo et al., 2019). Likewise, digital kinetic storytelling, digital games, and gamification approaches can enhance engagement, motivation, and interaction in Arabic language acquisition (Muhammad Rasyid Ridha, 2025).

Learning media play an essential role in helping young children become familiar with Arabic letters. Children at an early age learn best when something catches their attention, sparks curiosity, and makes them feel relaxed and happy. Simple tools such as hijaiyah flash cards, picture cards, and colourful displays make Arabic letters feel more alive and meaningful. When children see a letter together with a picture or word they can relate to, they begin to understand that letters are not just symbols, but signs that connect to real things in their world. This connection helps them remember more easily and enjoy the learning process instead of feeling pressured.

I believe that learning media also help children focus better. Without visual or interactive support, learning letters can become repetitive and tiring very quickly. But when the same material is presented in a playful and creative way, children stay engaged for longer. For example, when they hold flash cards, match letters with pictures, or arrange cards into simple words, they become active participants rather than passive listeners. This sense of involvement gives them confidence and a feeling of success when they recognize or pronounce a letter correctly.

Digital media and interactive tools also bring an extra layer of excitement. Many children today are already familiar with screens and digital content, so when Arabic letters are introduced through applications, digital books, or simple learning games, they respond with enthusiasm. Instead of forcing them to sit still and concentrate, these tools naturally attract their attention. Children enjoy the animations, sounds, and movement, and without realizing it, they repeat words and letters again and again. This repetition happens naturally through play, not through drills or pressure.

Personally, I see digital storytelling and games as especially powerful. When children follow a simple story that includes Arabic words or letters, they become emotionally connected to the learning moment. They care about the characters, the colours, and the sounds. Learning then becomes part of a meaningful experience, not just a classroom activity. Games also allow children to try, make mistakes, and try again without feeling judged. This helps them develop confidence, which is very important in language learning.

However, I also believe that media alone are not enough. The presence of a patient and caring adult whether a teacher or parent remains central. Learning media simply provide tools, while adults provide warmth, guidance, and encouragement. When adults use these tools creatively, respond to children's questions, and celebrate their small achievements, the learning experience becomes complete and memorable. The goal is not only to introduce letters, but to nurture a positive attitude toward the Arabic language.

In the end, I see learning media as bridges that connect children's natural curiosity with language learning. Whether simple flash cards, colourful books, digital apps, or storytelling games, all of them help make Arabic letters feel friendly and familiar. When children laugh, explore, and enjoy themselves while learning, they build a strong foundation not only in language, but also in confidence and motivation for future learning.

Supporting Factors and Challenges

In the effort to introduce Arabic letters to young children, several supporting factors and challenges must be considered. A key supporting factor is early childhood itself, as children under five possess a high capacity to absorb information and learn new languages quickly. According to Alramamneh et al. (2023), parental involvement and positive attitudes toward reading and early literacy activities strongly predict children's Arabic literacy success, as parents play an important role through storytelling, encouraging conversation, and teaching songs.

A rich language environment and early exposure to Modern Standard Arabic are also crucial for optimal literacy outcomes. Additionally, motivation, emotional state, and teachers' ability to utilize learning media effectively all serve as determining factors (Irwansyah et al., 2023).

However, there are also significant challenges. The complexity of Arabic orthography is a primary obstacle, including visual similarity among basic letters, positional variations (allography), ligaturing, and the use of non-linear diacritics. Other challenges include a shortage of trained educators, unengaging learning materials, and frequent confusion among children when distinguishing similar-sounding or similar-shaped letters (Tukimin et al., 2019).

Introducing Arabic letters to young children is a process that requires awareness of both supporting factors and real challenges in the learning environment. One of the biggest advantages is the natural ability of young children to absorb language. Children under five are still in a stage where words, sounds, and symbols are quickly stored and remembered. When they are exposed to Arabic sounds and letters regularly in a relaxed and enjoyable way, they respond openly and enthusiastically. Their curiosity is still fresh, and they tend to imitate easily, which makes this period a very meaningful time to introduce Arabic script.

Another major supporting factor is the role of parents. From my perspective, parents are the closest companions in a child's learning journey. When parents bring Arabic into daily life such as singing short songs, reading simple texts aloud, or casually mentioning letter sounds the child feels that Arabic is part of normal life rather than a difficult school subject. Simple interactions, such as asking a child to repeat a letter sound or pointing out a letter shape, can strengthen memory in a natural way. When parents show enthusiasm and patience, children usually mirror that positive attitude. This emotional bond between parent and child makes the learning atmosphere warm and supportive.

The learning environment also plays a big role. A home, school, or early childhood center that exposes children to Arabic text through posters, books, labels, or digital content helps them become familiar with the shape of letters before they even formally learn them. When children frequently see the same shapes in different places, they begin to recognize patterns and feel comfortable with them. A supportive teacher adds another layer of guidance. Teachers who are creative, gentle, and attentive can turn learning sessions into joyful exploration rather than rigid instruction. Their skill in presenting materials makes a big difference in how children respond.

Learning media also serve as a bridge to spark interest. Colourful flash cards, illustrated books, digital games, and storytelling all give life to letters that might otherwise feel abstract. In my opinion, the more meaningful the media, the more deeply children will connect with what they learn. When a child hears a sound, sees a corresponding image, and maybe even acts it out physically, the learning becomes full-bodied and memorable. Emotional comfort is also key. Children who feel safe, supported, and appreciated are much more open to participating and experimenting with new sounds and shapes.

However, despite all these supporting factors, there are undeniable challenges. One of the main difficulties lies in the Arabic script itself. Many letters look very similar, differing only in

dots or slight changes in shape. To an adult, these differences may seem obvious, but for a small child, they can be extremely confusing. It is easy for a child to mix up letters again and again, even after repeated practice. When letters also change shape depending on their position in a word, the level of difficulty increases further. For a young learner, this can feel overwhelming if not introduced gently and gradually.

Another challenge is pronunciation. Arabic contains sounds that do not exist in many children's native languages. Producing these sounds requires tongue placement and mouth movement that feel unfamiliar. This sometimes makes children shy or hesitant, especially if they feel embarrassed when they cannot pronounce a sound correctly. If the environment is not encouraging, this insecurity can quickly grow into reluctance to participate.

There is also the issue of learning resources and teachers. In some places, there are not enough educators who specialize in Arabic for early childhood. Teaching young children requires patience, creativity, and the ability to break concepts down into very small steps. When materials are monotonous or too formal, children lose interest easily. A child who is bored or pressured will resist rather than engage. Likewise, when class sizes are large, individual attention becomes difficult, and some children may fall behind without being noticed.

Digital distractions present another layer of challenge. Children today are surrounded by entertainment-oriented technology. Competing with bright animations and fast-paced content can make traditional letter learning feel slow. If digital tools are not designed thoughtfully, they can draw children's attention away from meaningful learning rather than support it.

Despite these challenges, I believe they can be addressed with patience and awareness. For example, instead of forcing accuracy too early, adults can celebrate small progress such as recognizing a letter shape or attempting a sound. Mistakes can be welcomed as part of normal learning rather than treated as failure. Visual similarities between letters can be turned into playful comparisons instead of stress points. Teachers and parents can introduce letters gradually, focusing on familiarity first and precision later.

The emotional state of the child must always come first. Children who feel pressured or judged rarely enjoy learning. But when they feel free to explore and laugh at their own mistakes, progress comes naturally. In my opinion, the heart of teaching Arabic letters is not perfection in recitation, but building a friendly relationship between the child and the language.

Ultimately, the effort to introduce Arabic letters to young children is a journey that involves family, teachers, environment, and the children themselves. The process may be full of repetition, misunderstanding, and confusion, but it is also rich with joy, discovery, and growth. When adults provide warmth, encouragement, and creative learning experiences, the challenges become manageable. And when children feel supported, they do not just learn letters they build confidence, curiosity, and positive memories associated with the Arabic language that may stay with them throughout life.

DISCUSSION

Patterns and Themes of Effective Arabic Letter-Introduction Strategies for Early Childhood

Based on systematic analysis of relevant literature, several key patterns and themes emerge regarding strategies for introducing Arabic letters effectively to early-childhood learners. These strategies strongly emphasize approaches aligned with children's developmental characteristics namely, learning that is enjoyable, interactive, and multisensory. Studies consistently show that the core principle of early-childhood education is learning through play. This approach allows children to explore, discover, and actively engage with learning materials.

The effectiveness of Arabic letter-introduction is strongly supported by innovative learning media that optimally engage children's senses. Media such as hijayah flash cards found in studies by Syahrizal & Nurhafizah (2023) and Sapitri et al. (2023) are easier for children to remember, attract interest, and increase enthusiasm. Flash cards can also be combined with singing and play-based methods, making learning interactive and enjoyable.

In addition, visual media such as hijaiyah “letter trees” used through demonstration methods have also been shown to improve Arabic letter recognition (Suwarni et al., 2022).

Building on previous studies, Alfina et al. (2023) and Sinta et al. (2025) confirm that soft-book media have been developed and validated as effective tools for introducing hijaiyah letters because they involve visual elements, textures, and sometimes audio allowing children to learn through play. Meanwhile, advancements in technology have also enabled the development of interactive digital media for hijaiyah learning, which increase children’s interest and comprehension (Azzam & Wibawanto, 2022).

Impact on Children’s Language Ability

Early introduction to Arabic letters significantly enhances children’s language abilities and serves as an essential foundation for literacy and communication development. Studies show that through this process, children learn to recognize letters and sounds from meaningful language contexts, as well as identify letter shapes and phonemes key components in early reading and literacy (Nugrahani et al., 2024).

Arabic vocabulary mastery can also be improved through engaging and accessible interactive learning media. Furthermore, multisensory approaches significantly strengthen pre-reading abilities in preschool children, where letter recognition and pronunciation skills are essential components of reading competence. Interactive learning methods help foster children’s interest in learning hijaiyah letters, which is a decisive factor in language acquisition.

Thus, the introduction of Arabic letters not only supports Arabic language mastery itself but also enriches children’s overall language abilities and prepares them for higher-level literacy.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this review provide important pedagogical implications for Arabic language education in early childhood, particularly regarding hijaiyah as the foundation of language ability. Theoretically, these findings align with Jean Piaget’s cognitive development theory, which states that early-childhood learners are in the pre-operational stage, where learning occurs optimally through concrete experiences, visual symbols, play, and meaningful activities. Therefore, Arabic letter-introduction should not rely solely on rote memorization but should be implemented through meaningful play-based learning.

Another key implication concerns multisensory learning approaches. Based on multisensory learning theory, involving visual, auditory, and kinesthetic senses strengthens understanding and memory of language symbols, including hijaiyah letters. The reviewed studies show that learning media such as flash cards, songs, games, interactive soft books, and digital media help children recognize letter shapes and sounds more effectively.

From Vygotsky’s social constructivist perspective, teachers serve not only as instructors but also as facilitators providing scaffolding in alignment with children’s Zones of Proximal Development (ZPD). This implies that teachers must provide gradual guidance, accurate pronunciation modeling, and appropriate learning stimuli. Thus, teacher pedagogical competence becomes a key determinant of success.

Pedagogical implications also extend to institutional management. Early-childhood education institutions need to provide adequate facilities, integrate Arabic learning with holistic language development, and offer ongoing professional training for teachers. Parental involvement in creating home-based literacy environments is also crucial.

Therefore, the introduction of Arabic letters in early childhood carries broad pedagogical significance not only in teaching methods and media but also in teacher roles, institutional support, and home school collaboration.

CONCLUSION

Based on the literature review conducted, it can be concluded that the introduction of Arabic letters plays a significant role in holistically improving early childhood language abilities. Early exposure to hijaiyah letters not only serves as a foundation for beginning reading skills but

also supports the development of listening, speaking, and vocabulary acquisition in Arabic. The success of this process is greatly influenced by learning methods suited to early-childhood characteristics, such as play-based learning, singing, demonstration, and multisensory approaches.

In addition, the use of varied and innovative learning media both conventional and digital has been shown to improve children's interest, motivation, and engagement in learning Arabic. Media such as hijaiyah flash cards, interactive soft books, and educational multimedia provide meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences. Supported by competent teachers, conducive learning environments, and active parental involvement, the introduction of Arabic letters can be effectively implemented as an essential foundation for early literacy and language development in young children.

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