

Acquiring Arabic As A Second Language Among Senior High School Students

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Abstract

Arabic language learning is widespread across schools, institutes, and universities. However, understanding the motivations and methods for learning Arabic as a second language is essential for effective language education. This study aims to explore Arabic language acquisition as a second language, specifically focusing on motivations and teaching methods. This research seeks to provide insights into enhancing Arabic language learning experiences by examining the support structures and instructional approaches. This study employs a qualitative research methodology, utilizing a case study approach. The study aims to uncover patterns and themes regarding Arabic language learning motivations and instructional strategies through systematic review and analysis of these materials. The research findings shed light on the significance of Arabic language acquisition as a second language in the context of support from school leaders and teachers and diverse teaching methods contributing to the effectiveness of Arabic language instruction. Additionally, initiatives such as language revitalization committees and language programs play a crucial role in promoting Arabic language learning. This study underscores the importance of understanding motivations and employing effective teaching methods to enhance Arabic language acquisition in educational settings.

Keywords: Arabic Language; Language Acquisition; Second Language; School

INTRODUCTION

Language is essential for human interaction and plays a crucial role in communication and societal development. Arabic, as a Semitic language, is a medium of communication and a carrier of rich cultural and religious heritage (Pujiati et al., 2025; Timothy & Daher, 2009). However, acquiring Arabic as a second language remains a significant challenge for learners due to its complex morphology, syntax, and phonology (Abourehab & Azaz, 2023; Alhamami & Almosa, 2023; Chan, 2024). Despite the extensive research on language acquisition, studies on Arabic as a second language are relatively limited compared to other widely spoken languages, such as English and French (Saidat, 2018). This gap in research is particularly crucial for non-native learners, as the linguistic structure of Arabic presents unique cognitive and pedagogical challenges (Yibing et al., 2024). Furthermore, traditional teaching methods often fail to address the diverse needs of learners, highlighting the need for innovative and evidence-based instructional approaches (Farhah et al., 2024; Oudeh, 2019; Rusli et al., 2024). Understanding the process of Arabic language acquisition is vital in enhancing language

teaching methodologies, particularly for high school students in institutions such as Darul Ulum Senior High School, where Arabic is taught as a second language (Huda et al., n.d.). By integrating insights from psycholinguistics, education, and applied linguistics, this study aims to fill the gap in research and contribute to more effective Arabic language acquisition strategies.

Language acquisition, particularly second language acquisition, has been extensively studied across various linguistic contexts. Research highlights the significance of psycholinguistics in understanding language acquisition, emphasizing the cognitive processes involved (Deshors et al., 2022; Szymanski & Kalra, 2019). Studies have focused mainly on widely spoken languages such as English, French, and Spanish, leaving Arabic underrepresented in second language acquisition research (Hickey et al., 2025; Pentón Herrera, 2024). The challenges of Arabic language acquisition stem from its complex morphological, syntactical, and phonological features (Abdeldeen & Fu, 2022; Belbouah et al., 2023; Maulana et al., 2024). These linguistic complexities necessitate tailored pedagogical approaches to facilitate learning (Sokip, 2020). However, existing studies often fail to address the diverse learner demographics and unique educational needs (Khuryati et al., 2023; Liang et al., 2020). Additionally, Arabic is a psychological and social tool, shaping thought and cultural transmission (Alhirtani, 2018; Hamdan et al., 2023). A rich linguistic environment fosters intellectual growth, while linguistic limitations can hinder academic progress (Karlik, 2023). These gaps highlight the necessity of a multidisciplinary approach to Arabic language acquisition, integrating insights from linguistics, psychology, and education to develop effective teaching strategies (Castellucci et al., 2022; F. Fabbro et al., 2022).

Despite extensive research on language acquisition, Arabic as a second language remains underexplored, particularly in secondary education contexts (Abdeldeen & Fu, 2022; Prayogi & Shobron, 2020). Existing studies focus on widely spoken languages such as English and French, neglecting the unique linguistic and pedagogical challenges of Arabic's complex morphology, syntax, and phonology (Arifin et al., 2022; Belbouah et al., 2023). Prior research has identified that Arabic learners face specific difficulties related to verb conjugations, noun case markings, and script differences, which are not commonly addressed in broader second language acquisition studies (Kiadan, 2024). Additionally, the influence of sociolinguistic factors, such as dialectal variations and formal-informal language use, adds another layer of complexity for Arabic learners yet remains overlooked in pedagogical frameworks (Saidat, 2018). Furthermore, the psychological dimension of Arabic learning, particularly students' cognitive load, and memory constraints in processing Arabic's intricate grammar, requires further exploration to develop effective instructional strategies (Faxritdinovna, 2021; Shishova, 2020). This study addresses the gap by investigating the acquisition of Arabic as a second language among Darul Ulum Senior High School students. By integrating psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, and educational perspectives, the research aims to inform evidence-based teaching approaches tailored to Arabic language learners (Ding, 2021; Mohammed, 2020).

Languages such as English, French, or Spanish, despite their significance in religious, cultural, and academic contexts. A deeper understanding of Arabic language acquisition is necessary to address linguistic challenges unique to Arabic, including its complex morphology, syntax, and phonology, which pose difficulties for non-native learners (Crysmann, 2017). Many existing studies focus on European languages, leading

to a lack of pedagogical strategies tailored to the needs of Arabic learners (Alosh, 1995; Belnap, 1995). Additionally, psycholinguistic factors, such as memory constraints and cognitive load, influence second language acquisition and require further investigation in Arabic learning contexts (Castellucci et al., 2022). Furthermore, empirical research on effective teaching methods for Arabic remains scarce, necessitating a multidisciplinary approach integrating linguistics, psychology, and education to enhance Arabic language instruction (Alhawary, 2018; A. Fabbro et al., 2019). Therefore, this study is essential for filling the research gap by investigating Arabic language acquisition among Darul Ulum Senior High School students. It will contribute to developing evidence-based teaching methodologies and improve understanding of Arabic's cognitive and pedagogical aspects as a second language.

This study aims to investigate the acquisition of Arabic as a second language among students at Darul Ulum Senior High School. The primary objective is to examine the linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural factors that influence Arabic language acquisition in this context (Almohawes, 2024; Gadaleta, 2024). The study also seeks to identify the challenges students face in learning Arabic and explore effective pedagogical strategies that could enhance their learning experience (Robert & Meenakshi, 2024). Prior research has predominantly focused on widely spoken languages such as English, French, or Spanish, leaving Arabic language acquisition underrepresented in linguistic studies (Trueswell, 2023). Given the complexities of Arabic morphology, syntax, and phonology, understanding the specific challenges faced by learners is crucial for developing targeted instructional approaches (Bihari Dash, 2022). Furthermore, the study hypothesizes that students' linguistic background, exposure to Arabic in various domains, and teaching methodologies significantly impact their proficiency in Arabic as a second language (Adepoju, 2019; Mirza et al., 2022). By integrating insights from psycholinguistics and second language acquisition theories, this research will contribute to the development of more effective Arabic language teaching strategies tailored to the needs of non-native speakers (Faxritdinovna, 2021; Khan et al., 2021).

METHOD

This study focuses on acquiring Arabic as a second language among senior high school students at Darul Ulum Senior High School East Java, particularly in the Department of Religious Sciences 3. The selection of this issue stems from the increasing importance of Arabic language proficiency in religious and academic contexts, necessitating an in-depth understanding of factors influencing students' acquisition processes (Farikha & Fauji, 2024; Saja et al., 2023). By investigating students' reading skills and linguistic development, this study aims to provide insights into effective teaching methods and potential challenges in Arabic language acquisition (Aqeela et al., 2023; Moghazy, 2021). Since Arabic plays a significant role in religious education and communication within Islamic institutions, understanding its acquisition process is crucial for curriculum development and pedagogical improvement (Amar, 2023).

This research employs a qualitative case study approach, which allows for an in-depth exploration of students' Arabic language acquisition experiences within their real-life learning environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The data used in this study consists of both primary and secondary data. Primary data include interviews and classroom observations that capture students' spoken interactions, learning behaviors, and challenges in acquiring Arabic (Hasan et al., 2023; Sharaan et al., 2024; Yusriani, 2022).

Secondary data involve school records, curriculum materials, and relevant documents that provide context regarding the institution's Arabic language teaching framework (Bingham et al., 2025; Silverman, 2023). The qualitative approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena by examining students' real-life experiences and contextual influences (Yin, 2023).

The data sources in this study were carefully selected to ensure credibility and relevance. Primary data were obtained through direct engagement with students and teachers via semi-structured interviews and participant observations (Hamilton & Finley, 2019). Secondary data, such as attendance records and curriculum guides, were collected from the school's administrative records to supplement and triangulate findings (Flick, 2022). The data collection methods included interviews, observations, and documentation, ensuring a rich and holistic dataset. Interviews provided insights into students' perceptions and challenges, while classroom observations captured real-time language acquisition dynamics (Silverman, 2023). Documentation analysis helped contextualize students' learning progress and institutional support structures (Blackham, 2024; Sadeghi & Smith, 2024).

The data analysis followed a thematic approach to identify patterns and themes related to Arabic language acquisition. The process began with data reduction, filtering out irrelevant or redundant information to focus on key research issues (Nkurunziza et al., 2023). Next, the data were displayed in structured formats, such as coding matrices and thematic maps, to facilitate pattern recognition (Adarkwah et al., 2023). Finally, conclusions were drawn by interpreting recurring themes and cross-referencing data sources to ensure validity and reliability (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This systematic approach comprehensively understood the factors influencing Arabic language acquisition at Darul Ulum Senior High School East Java.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Process Of First and Second Language Acquisition

During interviews with students and teachers at Darul Ulum Senior High School, several insights were gathered regarding first and second language acquisition.

"Students naturally acquire their first language through daily interaction with their families, while acquiring Arabic as a second language requires structured learning and practice."

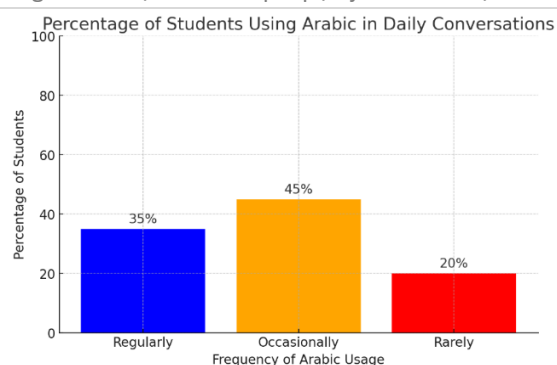
To support this, the following table presents a comparison between first and second language acquisition among students:

Table 1: Comparison of First and Second Language Acquisition

Aspect	First Language Acquisition	Second Language Acquisition
Learning Environment	Natural, family-based	Formal education, classroom
Acquisition Process	Subconscious, effortless	Conscious, requires effort
Influencing Factors	Innate ability, family interaction	Motivation, exposure, teaching methods
Speed of Acquisition	Rapid during early childhood	Varies based on learner's ability

Additionally, the following graph illustrates the percentage of students who feel comfortable using Arabic in daily conversations at school. The survey, conducted among 100 students, revealed that only 35% of students regularly use Arabic outside of the classroom, indicating challenges in second language acquisition.

Graph 1. Percentage of Students Using Arabic in Daily Conversations



The data above highlights key differences between first and second language acquisition. First language acquisition occurs naturally, driven by innate abilities and continuous exposure from birth. In contrast, acquiring a second language, such as Arabic, requires structured learning, motivation, and consistent exposure. The survey results indicate that while students study Arabic in school, only a minority use it in daily conversations, suggesting a gap between formal instruction and practical usage.

The analysis of the collected data reveals several key trends in the process of first and second language acquisition among students. By examining both qualitative and quantitative findings, we can identify patterns that influence students' ability to acquire and use Arabic as a second language. The following three tendencies highlight the main challenges and factors that affect language learning in this context.

1. First Language Acquisition is Unconscious, While Second Language Acquisition Requires Intentional Learning – Students acquire their native language effortlessly through daily interactions, whereas learning Arabic requires formal instruction and practice. This aligns with Chomsky's Innateness Hypothesis, which suggests that humans have an innate ability for language learning but still require structured input for second language development.
2. Limited Use of Arabic Outside the Classroom – Despite Arabic being a mandatory subject in Islamic schools, only 35% of students actively use it outside the classroom. This indicates that language exposure and daily practice are crucial but currently insufficient for fluency.
3. External Factors Play a Crucial Role in Second Language Mastery – Factors such as motivation, teaching methods, and exposure significantly influence students' ability to acquire Arabic. Those who engage in additional Arabic practice at home or in religious settings show better proficiency compared to those relying solely on classroom instruction.

Arabic Language Acquisition in Senior High School

To illustrate the Arabic language acquisition process in Indonesian Islamic schools, the following excerpt from an interview with a language teacher at Darul Ulum Senior High School provides insight into the curriculum and teaching methods:

"Students at our school engage in Arabic lessons for 12 sessions per week, with four lessons dedicated to language skills, four to grammar, and four to heritage book reading. Each session lasts 45 minutes, and we encourage students to practice speaking Arabic outside the classroom," said Mr. F.A., an Arabic teacher at Darul Ulum Senior High School.

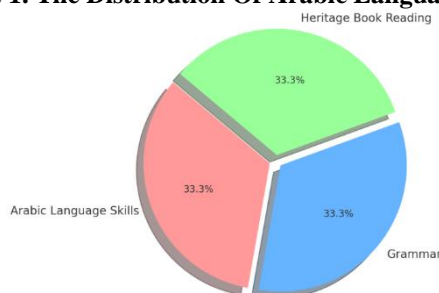
The table below summarizes the Arabic language learning structure at Islamic schools in Indonesia:

Table 2: Arabic Language Learning Structure in Islamic Schools

Subject	Lessons per Week	Duration per Lesson	Total Minutes per Week
Arabic Language Skills	4	45 minutes	180 minutes
Arabic Grammar	4	45 minutes	180 minutes
Heritage Book Reading	4	45 minutes	180 minutes
Total	12	45 minutes	540 minutes

Additionally, the following pie chart represents the distribution of Arabic language learning time across different skills:

Chat 1. The Distribution Of Arabic Language Learning



The data indicates that Arabic language acquisition in Indonesian Islamic schools follows a structured approach, focusing on language skills, grammar, and heritage book reading, with a total of 540 minutes allocated per week. The curriculum, set by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, ensures that students receive equal exposure to different aspects of the Arabic language. Furthermore, learning is not limited to the classroom; students are expected to continue practicing Arabic at home and within the school environment to reinforce their oral proficiency.

Three significant trends emerge regarding Arabic language acquisition in Islamic schools:

1. **Balanced Curriculum Approach** – Arabic language education in Islamic schools maintains an equal distribution of lessons between language skills, grammar, and heritage book reading, ensuring students receive comprehensive training in all essential linguistic aspects.
2. **Limited Exposure in Public Schools** – Unlike Islamic schools, public schools in Indonesia do not offer Arabic language lessons, limiting the opportunities for students outside religious institutions to acquire Arabic as a second language.
3. **Integration of Oral Learning Methods** – Due to the oral nature of Arabic learning exercises, students must actively participate in speaking and listening activities, which enhances their language retention and fluency. This suggests that immersive and interactive learning methods play a crucial role in successful Arabic language acquisition.

Teaching Methods, Resources, and Factors Influencing Arabic Language Acquisition

To gain a deeper understanding of how Arabic is taught, a language teacher at Darul Ulum Senior High School shared their experience regarding instructional methods and resources:

"We use a combination of methods, including the direct method, where students observe and repeat words, and the question-answer method to enhance

comprehension. Additionally, multimedia tools like videos and images help create an engaging learning environment," said Mr. F.A., an Arabic teacher at Darul Ulum Senior High School.

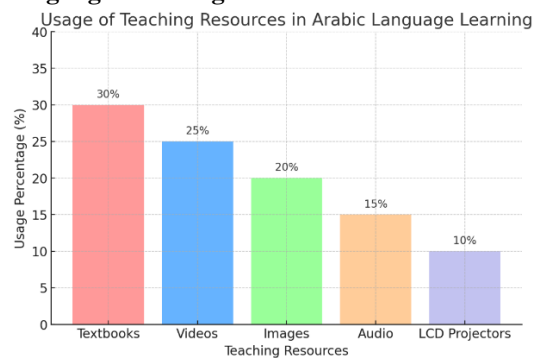
The table below outlines the teaching methods and resources used in Arabic language instruction:

Table 3. Teaching Methods and Resources for Arabic Learning

Teaching Method	Description
Direct Method	Students observe and repeat words using real objects.
Auditory-Oral Method	Students listen to Arabic conversations and respond verbally.
Question-Answer Method	Teachers ask students questions to reinforce vocabulary.
Multimedia-Based Learning	Videos, slides, and images are used to enhance learning.

Additionally, the bar chart below visualizes the frequency of resource usage in Arabic language teaching:

Chart 2. Usage In Arabic Language Teaching



The data highlights that Arabic language teaching at Darul Ulum Senior High School incorporates a blend of instructional strategies. Teachers employ the direct method, auditory-oral techniques, and question-answer interactions to facilitate learning. Multimedia tools, such as videos and images, further support student engagement. Additionally, essential resources like textbooks, dialogue recordings, and projectors play a significant role in the learning process.

Three significant trends emerge from the data regarding Arabic language teaching at Darul Ulum Senior High School:

1. **Combination of Traditional and Modern Methods** – Teachers use a mix of direct instruction, listening exercises, and multimedia integration to ensure a comprehensive learning experience. This suggests that a diverse teaching approach enhances student comprehension.
2. **High Dependence on Visual and Audio Resources** – The frequent use of videos, images, and audio recordings indicates that multimedia tools are essential in reinforcing Arabic language acquisition, especially for listening and speaking skills.
3. **Influence of External and Internal Factors** – Student motivation, linguistic ability, and formal exposure significantly impact Arabic language learning success. This highlights the need for a supportive environment and consistent practice beyond the classroom.

The findings from this study highlight significant patterns in Arabic language acquisition at Darul Ulum Senior High School. First-language acquisition occurs naturally through interaction with family members, whereas second-language acquisition, particularly Arabic, requires structured instruction and consistent exposure (Robert & Meenakshi, 2024). The study reveals that while Arabic is mandatory in Islamic schools,

only 35% of students actively use it in daily conversations. Additionally, Arabic learning is structured into 12 weekly lessons evenly distributed among language skills, grammar, and heritage book reading (Baharudin & Din, 2022; Bin-Tahir et al., 2018). Teaching methodologies include direct, auditory-oral, and multimedia-based learning, supported by various resources such as textbooks, videos, and images. Integrating these elements aims to enhance students' linguistic competencies but faces challenges related to motivation and practical application outside the classroom.

The limited use of Arabic outside the classroom can be attributed to multiple factors, including insufficient language exposure, lack of motivation, and reliance on classroom instruction (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Students naturally acquire their first language due to constant interaction and necessity, whereas acquiring Arabic requires an active effort. The structured curriculum provides ample learning opportunities; however, lacking a language-rich environment beyond school settings hinders fluency. According to Krashen (2019), meaningful language acquisition occurs when students are consistently exposed to comprehensible input in varied contexts (Malik et al., 2021). The data suggests that while classroom instruction provides a strong foundation, external reinforcement through immersion and communication in real-life settings is necessary to bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practical usage.

The consequences of limited Arabic usage outside the classroom are evident in students' struggles with fluency and comprehension. Without consistent practice, language retention remains weak, leading to difficulty in engaging in spontaneous conversations (Adepoju, 2019). The overreliance on structured lessons without practical reinforcement inhibits the naturalization of the language. As VanPatten and Williams (2021) highlighted, interaction plays a crucial role in second language acquisition, and learners need active engagement rather than passive reception of information (Huda et al., 2020; Muid & Rohman, 2019). Therefore, the findings suggest that increasing opportunities for Arabic communication through peer interactions, extracurricular activities, and digital learning platforms could significantly enhance students' language proficiency and confidence.

Compared to previous studies on second language acquisition, these findings align with the notion that motivation, exposure, and teaching methods are key determinants of language learning success (Jitpaiboon et al., 2024). However, while studies on English as a second language have emphasized the role of social interaction and immersion (Ren et al., 2024), Arabic language learning in Islamic schools still relies heavily on formal instruction. Unlike other second language learning models that integrate interactive technologies and real-world communication tasks (Ashari & Mahfudhoh, 2022), Arabic education in Indonesian Islamic schools remains largely traditional. This suggests that adopting a more communicative approach, similar to English language instruction, could improve students' overall Arabic proficiency.

To address these challenges, policy reforms and methodological innovations should be implemented. Schools should incorporate immersive learning experiences, such as Arabic-speaking clubs, virtual exchange programs, and multimedia-based interaction to enhance language exposure (Jauharoh et al., 2021; Qodri & Maskud, 2021). Additionally, teacher training programs should emphasize interactive and student-centered teaching approaches, moving beyond rote memorization toward active language use (Graham et al., 2024). Policymakers should also consider expanding Arabic education beyond Islamic schools, allowing public school students access to Arabic language

courses. Students can develop greater confidence and competence in Arabic language acquisition by fostering a supportive learning environment both inside and outside the classroom.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights several crucial findings regarding first and second language acquisition among Darul Ulum Senior High School students, particularly in Arabic language learning. First-language acquisition occurs naturally through daily interactions, while second-language acquisition, such as Arabic, requires structured learning, motivation, and continuous exposure. The data indicates that only 35% of students actively use Arabic outside the classroom, demonstrating the challenges associated with second-language acquisition. Furthermore, Arabic education in Islamic schools follows a structured curriculum, with lessons divided into language skills, grammar, and heritage book reading. Teaching methods incorporate direct instruction, auditory-oral learning, and multimedia tools to facilitate comprehension. Despite these efforts, the limited use of Arabic in daily interactions suggests that formal instruction alone is insufficient for achieving fluency, emphasizing the need for additional immersion opportunities.

Conceptually, this study contributes to second language acquisition by reinforcing the importance of motivation, exposure, and interactive teaching methodologies. The findings align with Krashen's theory of comprehensible input, which states that language learning is most effective when students are consistently exposed to meaningful interactions. The study also supports the argument that, while necessary, structured classroom instruction must be complemented by real-world application and communication. Methodologically, this research underscores the significance of combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to understand language acquisition patterns comprehensively. The study provides a holistic view of the factors influencing Arabic language learning by integrating student surveys, interviews with teachers, and curriculum analysis. Theoretically, the results suggest that applying communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches, commonly used in English language instruction, could enhance Arabic proficiency by promoting interactive and immersive learning experiences.

Despite its valuable contributions, this study has certain limitations that future research should address. One key limitation is the study's focus on a single school, which may not fully represent students' diverse experiences in other Islamic schools or public institutions. Expanding the research to include multiple schools with varying teaching methods and student backgrounds would provide a more generalizable understanding of Arabic language acquisition. Additionally, this study primarily relies on self-reported data, which may be influenced by students' perceptions rather than objective proficiency measures. Future studies should incorporate standardized language assessments to evaluate students' actual Arabic competency levels. Another limitation is the lack of exploration into the role of digital learning tools and extracurricular activities in language acquisition. Further research could examine how integrating technology, such as language-learning apps and virtual exchange programs, enhances Arabic fluency. Addressing these gaps could lead to more effective strategies for improving second language acquisition in Islamic schools and beyond.

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