

Arabic Vocabulary Acquisition Through Food Knowledge in Lower Grades at Sanggar Bimbingan Srimuda, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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Abstract: This study aims to improve Arabic vocabulary acquisition in lower grade students through a food knowledge-based approach at Srimuda Guidance Centre, Kuala Lumpur. Arabic as the language of the Qur'an is very important to learn from an early age, but its learning is often considered difficult by children due to non-contextualised methods. To overcome this, this research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation during the learning activities that took place in three sessions. Each session involved the introduction of food vocabulary in Arabic through activities such as matching pictures, drawing favourite foods, role-playing as sellers and buyers, to simple quizzes. The results showed that students were more enthusiastic and able to remember and mention at least five food vocabulary words in Arabic correctly. The use of real media and interactive activities is proven to make children understand and absorb new vocabulary faster because it is in accordance with their cognitive development stage. This study concludes that learning Arabic vocabulary with a food theme approach can be an effective, fun and contextualised method for early childhood. The implication of this study can be used as a reference in developing Arabic language teaching methods in non-formal and formal educational institutions at the early age level.

Keywords: Arabic Vocabulary; Contextual Learning; Food Knowledge

1. Introduction

Arabic is a very important language in the Islamic world because it is the language of the Holy Qur'an. Mastering Arabic means getting closer to understanding the teachings of Islam directly and deeply (Tambusai et al., 2024). However, the process of learning Arabic is often considered difficult, especially for children at an early age or lower grades. The difficulty arises because the methods used are not in accordance with the learning needs of children who are still at the concrete-operational stage according to Piaget's developmental theory. Early childhood children understand concepts more easily through something tangible, such as objects around them, rather than abstract or memorized words that are not contextually meaningful to them (Nisa' et al., 2023).

One approach that is gaining attention in early childhood Arabic language learning is context-based learning of everyday life, such as food. Food is a close part of children's lives. They recognize, like, and even have an emotional attachment to certain foods. Therefore, making food as a medium or context in the introduction and acquisition of Arabic vocabulary is a very suitable and effective strategy (Putri et al., 2024).

At Srimuda Guidance Studio, which is one of the non-formal educational institutions engaged in fostering children from underprivileged backgrounds in urban areas, Arabic

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language learning is one of the teaching focuses (Junaidah, 2023). However, in practice, there are still various obstacles such as lack of student interest in learning, monotonous teaching methods and the gap between the material taught and students' daily experiences. For this reason, innovation in learning approaches is needed so that Arabic vocabulary material can be absorbed better and more enjoyable for students.

Through the introduction of various types of food commonly consumed by children, such as rice, fruits, vegetables, cakes and drinks, children not only learn to recognize the names of these foods in Arabic, but also practice pronunciation, associate meaning and build connections with the target language naturally (Imrang & Dkk, 2020).

Vocabulary learning through food can also be packaged in a variety of fun activities, such as mentioning the name of food in Arabic, playing the role of being sellers and buyers in the food market, drawing food while mentioning its name, to making simple songs from the names of food in Arabic. This approach not only improves vocabulary acquisition, but also develops students' affective and psychomotor aspects (Fajriah, 2015).

Based on the above background, this study aims to examine in depth how the mastery of Arabic vocabulary can be improved through the food knowledge approach in lower grade children at Srimuda Guidance Studio. This research is expected to contribute to the development of early childhood Arabic language learning methods in a creative, contextual and fun way.

2. Literature Review

Vocabulary is an important component in language learning. According to (Walidain & Buhaerah, 2023)), vocabulary is the basis of mastering a language because without sufficient vocabulary, one cannot understand texts, speak, or write effectively. In the context of Arabic, vocabulary mastery has more value than just a means of communication, because Arabic vocabulary also contains deep cultural and religious values.

Arabic vocabulary includes nouns (isim), verbs (fi'il) and adjectives (sifat). For children, the introduction of early vocabulary focuses more on concrete objects that they can see and touch. This is in accordance with children's cognitive development approach, where they more easily understand words that can be directly related to real objects (Habibillah, E I; Fahyuni, 2024).

According to (Akhriani et al., 2018), learning Arabic vocabulary must be done gradually and structured with an approach that is tailored to the age and ability level of students. One approach that is highly recommended in vocabulary learning for children is context-based learning that can help children understand words in their real use.

Food as a learning medium is very effective to use because it is part of children's daily lives. They have an emotional attachment to food, so they can absorb food-related information more easily. In addition, each food has a shape, color, taste and smell that can stimulate many senses at once and this makes the learning process more enjoyable and memorable (Robbani & Romadhoni, 2021).

According to research conducted by (Hulfah et al., 2023), learning Arabic vocabulary through food themes can significantly improve students' language skills because students feel closer to the material being studied. Kinesthetic and multisensory learning activities, such as touching, smelling and tasting food, are also proven to increase children's vocabulary absorption.

Lower grade children (aged 6-8 years) are still in the early stages of learning a second language. At this age, they tend to have a short attention span and get bored easily. Therefore, learning Arabic at this age needs to be packaged in an interesting, interactive and fun form. Children will learn better through the process of "enactive representation" or action

representation, which is learning through concrete activities before moving to the symbolic or abstract stage.

Mastery of Arabic vocabulary through food knowledge is not only linguistically appropriate but also psychologically and pedagogically supported. Activities such as recognizing, naming and constructing simple sentences with food vocabulary in Arabic will form a holistic and enjoyable learning experience

3. Proposed Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study research type. The case study was chosen to explore in depth how the process of learning Arabic vocabulary through food knowledge is applied to lower grade children at Srimuda Guidance Studio. This approach allows researchers to gain a holistic understanding of the learning situation in a specific social and cultural context (Saputra et al., 2022).

The research was conducted at Srimuda Guidance Center, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, a non-formal education institution that provides learning services for children from underprivileged families. The research subjects were lower grade students (aged 6-8 years) who participated in Arabic language learning activities as well as the teachers/facilitators who taught the activities.

Data in this study were collected using several main techniques, namely participatory observation to directly observe the learning process and students' responses to the food theme, semi-structured interviews with teachers, students and parents to explore their understanding of vocabulary and the effectiveness of the methods used and documentation in the form of activity notes, student work, photos of learning and teaching materials. All data collected were analyzed descriptively qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing, in order to find patterns that emerged in learning Arabic vocabulary based on food knowledge.

4. Results and Discussion

Arabic Vocabulary Learning Process through Food Knowledge at Srimuda Guidance Center Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Arabic vocabulary learning activities through the theme of food knowledge are carried out at the Srimuda Guidance Studio, Kuala Lumpur which is an informal learning place for Indonesian children living in Malaysia. This activity is part of the service program of the Jam'iyah Mahmudiyah Langkat Institute students in improving the Arabic language skills of lower grade children (grades 1-3 SD equivalent) with a contextual and fun thematic approach.

Activity Preparation

Before the implementation of learning begins, several stages of preparation are carried out to support the smooth process of activities and ensure that learning will be easily understood by children:

- Coordination with the studio manager was carried out to determine the schedule for the implementation of activities, the number of participants and the readiness of space and supporting facilities in the studio.
- Development of teaching tools based on the theme of food, such as a list of food vocabulary in Arabic accompanied by colorful pictures, word cards and props in the form of artificial food from recycled materials.

- Simulation of teaching methods, which is an internal microteaching activity by students so that the vocabulary introduction process can be done interactively by taking into account children's learning styles, including visual and kinesthetic ones.

Implementation of Learning

Activities were conducted in three large meetings over two weeks in the following order:

Theme Introduction

At the beginning of the meeting, the children were introduced to the topic of food. The activity began by displaying pictures of various popular foods, such as fruits, bread, milk, rice and fresh drinks, while asking the name of the food in Indonesian and Arabic. The service students provoked the children's curiosity with questions such as:

“What's your favorite food?”

“What is 'apple' called in Arabic?”

Each word is shown with a picture and pronounced together, then the children are invited to imitate the pronunciation in unison and individually.

Core Activities

In the core activities, children are invited to do educational games that contain elements of vocabulary learning, among others:

- Children match the food pictures with the corresponding Arabic vocabulary cards.
- One of the children drew his favorite food and his friends guessed the name of the food in Arabic.
- Children role-play as sellers and buyers using the names of foods in Arabic, for example:

“أُرِيدُ تَفَاحًا” (I want an apple)

“كَمْ سِعْرُ الْخُبْزِ” (How much does bread cost?)

This activity makes the learning atmosphere very lively, children not only learn verbally, but also actively move and socialize which strengthens their memory of new vocabulary.

Evaluation and Feedback

At the end of the session, a formative assessment was conducted through a quiz on naming food vocabulary, matching words with pictures and completing a simple crossword puzzle containing food words in Arabic letters. The evaluation results showed that most children were able to name and write at least five food vocabulary words in Arabic correctly.

Types of Arabic Vocabulary that can be Introduced through Food Theme to Lower Grade Students in Srimuda Guidance Studio, Kuala Lumpur

The use of food themes in learning Arabic to lower grade students is very appropriate because food is something that is close to their daily lives. Children are familiar with objects such as fruits, drinks, side dishes and snacks. This makes it easier for them to understand and remember the new vocabulary introduced.

The vocabulary introduced is divided into groups so that children can focus more and not be overwhelmed by new information. The following are the types of Arabic vocabulary that can be introduced through the theme of food:

Names of Fruits (أَسْمَاءُ الْفَوَاكِه)

Fruit is a common type of food consumed and much loved by children. They are already familiar with fruit in Indonesian so it is easy to lead them to recognize it in Arabic. Vocabulary example:

- تَفَّاحٌ (Taffāḥun) - Apple
- مَمْرُوزٌ (Mamrūzun) - Banana
- بُرْتُقَالٌ (Burtuqālun) - Oranges
- عِنَبٌ (Inabun) - Wine
- بَطِّيخٌ (Battīkhun) - Watermelon

This vocabulary is taught with pictures and live demonstrations. For example, the teacher brings a real apple and says its name in Arabic, then the children repeat it together.

Names of Drinks (أَسْمَاءُ الْمَشْرُوبَات)

Drinks are also easily recognizable to students. Simple words such as water, milk and juice can be introduced while practicing how to order drinks simply. Example:

- مَاءٌ (Ma' un) - Water
- لَبَنٌ (Labanun) - Milk
- عَصِيرٌ (Aṣīrun) - Juice
- شَايٌ (Shāyun) - Tea
- قَهْوَةٌ (Qahwatun) - Coffee

Children can be invited to role-play as drink sellers and buyers while saying the vocabulary.

Names of Staple Foods and Side Dishes (الطَّعَامُ وَالْأَكْلَةُ)

This vocabulary includes heavy foods that are commonly eaten daily, such as rice, bread and eggs. Example:

- أَرُزٌ (Arūzun) - Rice
- خُبْزٌ (Khūzun) - Bread
- بَيْضٌ (Bayḍun) - Eggs
- سَمَكٌ (Samakun) - Fish
- لَحْمٌ (Laḥmun) - Meat

The use of pictures and real objects such as bread makes children more interested and not bored.

Taste Properties of Food (الطَّعْمُ)

To enrich vocabulary, students are also introduced to words that describe the taste of food:

- حُلُوٌّ (*Hulmun*) - Sweet
- مَالِحٌ (*Malihun*) - Salty
- حَرٌّ (*Harrun*) - Spicy
- حَامِضٌ (*Hamidun*) - Acid

This vocabulary is taught by touching on taste experiences. The teacher can show sugar (sweet) and salt (salty), then the children smell or taste a little to recognize the meaning of the word.

Short Sentences and Simple Expressions

In addition to nouns, students are also taught short expressions to practice using words in context. Example:

- أُريدُ تَفَاحًا (*Urdu tuffahan*) - I want an apple.
- أُحِبُّ العُسل (*Uhibbu al-'asala*) - I love honey.
- لَذِيذٌ جَدًّا (*Ladhidhun jiddan*) - Very tasty!

These types of vocabulary are very suitable for lower grade children because they are in line with their daily experiences. Vocabulary is taught through a play, sing and role-play approach, so that children do not feel like they are learning but still receive the material well.

Changes in Students' Arabic Vocabulary Mastery after Participating in Food Knowledge-Based Learning at Srimuda Guidance Center, Kuala Lumpur

After students participated in Arabic vocabulary learning activities with the food theme approach for several meetings, there were quite real changes in their abilities. These changes can be seen from several aspects, namely: the ability to recognize vocabulary, pronunciation, writing and also interest in learning.

Vocabulary Recognition Ability

Before the activity started, most of the students only knew 1-2 common Arabic words, such as “Allah”, “kitab”, or “masjid”. But after participating in this activity, they were able to recognize at least 5 to 10 new vocabulary words related to food. They can name fruits and drinks in Arabic when shown pictures or real objects.

For example, when the teacher showed a picture of a watermelon, many students immediately said:

“بطيخ! بحماس” (Watermelon! with vigor.)

This shows that they are starting to link pictures, meanings and Arabic words together.

Ability to Pronounce Correctly

At the beginning of the activity, many students still had difficulty pronouncing certain Arabic letters such as “خ” (khā’), “ع” (‘ain) and “ق” (qāf). But after repetition and practice together, they began to get used to it and their pronunciation got better.

For example:

- They used to say “‘asalun” as “asalun” without the letter ‘ain.
- Now, after guidance, they are able to pronounce it more correctly: “‘A-sa-lun”.

These phonetic skills are enhanced by the learning approach of singing, role-playing and regular repetition of words.

Writing Skills in Arabic Letters

Writing Arabic letters is a challenge for lower grade students, as they are different from the Latin alphabet. However, writing activities are still introduced in simple forms, such as copying words from cards or thickening letters.

Increased Interest and Confidence

The most noticeable change is the increase in students' enthusiasm for learning and courage in trying to use Arabic. At the beginning, many of them were shy and hesitant to speak. But after a few sessions, they began to greet each other with small Arabic words such as:

- “أحب التفاح” (I love apples)
- “هل تريد خبز” (You want bread?)

Some children have even started writing food labels in Arabic and sticking them in the center's kitchen as an exercise. This shows that learning not only increases vocabulary, but also builds confidence to use the language in real contexts.

6. Conclusions

The learning process of Arabic vocabulary about food at Srimuda Guidance Studio is done in a fun way and in accordance with daily life. Before the lesson begins, good preparation is done, such as coordination with the studio manager and preparation of teaching materials. In the implementation of learning, children are introduced to vocabulary through pictures, games and role-play activities. This makes it easier for them to remember and understand the vocabulary learned. The evaluation results show that the children can mention and write Arabic vocabulary better.

The types of vocabulary taught are in line with children's daily lives, such as the names of fruits, drinks, staple foods and food flavors. By using pictures and real objects and role-playing, children remember the vocabulary more easily. Vocabulary such as the names of fruits, drinks and staple foods are very easy to understand because they are already familiar with these objects.

After following this lesson, the children experienced significant improvement in mastering Arabic vocabulary. They can recognize, pronounce and write more vocabulary. In addition, they are also more confident to use Arabic, such as greeting friends or talking about food in Arabic. Food-themed learning has proven to be effective in helping children master Arabic.

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