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### Critical Tracing of Arabic Language Acquisition in Indonesian Context

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#### ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore how Arabic phonological, vocabulary, and grammatical are acquired. A qualitative approach was used to deeply explore that acquisition. The results showed that the strategy of acquiring phonological aspects carried out by drilling audio listening activities, either in the form of lectures from native speakers directly or in the form of murottal, Netflix, YouTube, and online radio; while the vocabulary acquisition strategy is done by using an Arabic dictionary both online and offline, as well as reading more books, and news through online portals. Grammatical elements are acquired by directly reading nahwu and shorof books such as Jurumiyah, Nahwu Wadhih, and Al-arabiyah baina yadaik practicing directly by studying Arabic sentences and practicing I'rab. The findings show that the language acquisition process using various strategies can provide language acquisition of phonological, vocabulary, and grammatical aspects. Practical implications and further research to explore more diverse variables and more complex research methods are provided.

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#### Keyword

Arabic Language Acquisition; Phonology; Vocabulary; Grammar

#### مستخلص البحث

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف كيفية إتقان علم الأصوات والمفردات والقواعد في اللغة العربية. يتم استخدام نهج نوعي لاستكشاف عملية الاستحواذ. وأظهرت النتائج أن استراتيجيات اكتساب الجوانب الصوتية تم تنفيذها من خلال حفر أنشطة الاستماع الصوتي، سواء في شكل محاضرات من متحدثين أصليين مباشرة أو في شكل مورتال و نيتفليكس و يوتيوب و راديو عبر الإنترنت. بينما يتم تنفيذ استراتيجيات اكتساب المفردات باستخدام القواميس العربية سواء عبر الإنترنت أو خارجها، بالإضافة إلى قراءة المزيد من الكتب والأخبار من خلال بوابات الإنترنت. يتم الحصول على العناصر النحوية من خلال القراءة المباشرة لكتب النحو والشروف مثل الجرمية والنحو الواضح والعربية بين يديك والتي يتم ممارستها مباشرة من خلال دراسة الجمل العربية وممارسة التعريب. تظهر النتائج أن عملية اكتساب اللغة باستخدام استراتيجيات مختلفة يمكن أن توفر اكتساب اللغة من الجوانب الصوتية والمفردات والقواعد. يتم توفير الآثار العملية والمزيد من البحث لاستكشاف المزيد من المتغيرات المتنوعة وطرق البحث الأكثر تعقيداً.

اكتساب اللغة العربية؛ علم الأصوات؛ المفردات؛ القواعد

كلمات أساسية

## INTRODUCTION

Language acquisition is one of the strategies in mastering language naturally. However, experts have different opinions regarding the process of language acquisition. As it is said that language is only obtained naturally without interfering with the environment (Gleitman et al., 2019), On the other hand, some say that language ability is one of the abilities dominated by environmental factors (Bahruddin & Febriani, 2020). In addition, the process of language acquisition also occurs in childhood. This was stated by Suzuki, Nakata, and Dekeyser (2019) that language acquisition is different from learning. However, Krashen (2009) revealed that language can be acquired in adulthood.

Various studies have revealed that language acquisition is influenced by various factors, one of which is gesture and age (Lüke et al. 2017; Montrul 2019). This factor is because there is a positive relationship between gestures because behavior is very closely related to the development of communication. In addition, the need for physical activity that is able to encourage active students to acquire vocabulary is also in the spotlight. Research reveals that there is a very significant difference in the language acquisition of active and non-active students (Kosmas & Zaphiris, 2020). However, the process of language acquisition is associated with their learning experiences that are relevant to the learning theme. Previous research also offers a social aspect for the development of student collaboration in acquiring a foreign language (Pathan et al., 2018).

Student involvement provides a great opportunity for the development of their language acquisition from an early age. The push for technology-based programs can also provide opportunities for students' language acquisition (Boyd et al., 2018). They are active and acquire language from a learning environment that supports the thought process and produces Arabic in particular (Susanto et al., 2022). However, it is necessary to choose the right strategy to improve students' language acquisition, such as active learning (Jenny, 2017). It also pays attention to the number of students in one class, so there is no gap in guiding them to acquire a foreign language and produce it (Al-amery, 2020). Thus, it is necessary to integrate approaches and strategies in acquiring foreign languages. This is supported by Gleitman et al. (2019) that the elaboration of strategies can provide opportunities for students' cognitive development in acquiring their language.

The acquisition of a second language is an additional language acquisition after the foundation of the basic structure of the mother tongue. Second language acquisition is also focused on the adult age level (Oliver & Azkarai, 2017). However, guarding against mother tongue interference is also considered when one is acquiring a second language (Slabakova, 2017). The acquisition of a second language is also obtained through aspects of sound, vocabulary, and grammar. Such as the stage of mastering a language for a person. On that basis, each student has a different language acquisition strategy, even in the same

environment (Mac, 2017). They have style, ability, and language acquisition according to their skill level. So Gass (2018) indicates that there is a model mapping in language acquisition. The variety of strategies in language acquisition becomes a study that focuses on how a student acquires all elements of language.

Based on Krashen's argument, the research aimed to analyze and explore language acquisition strategies of Islamic Institution of Sabili Bandung students in the virtual learning period. It aimed to trace and map Arabic phonological acquisition strategies from aspects of sound, vocabulary, and grammar critically. Thus, the results of this study served to map out how teaching materials and materials can be designed with strategies developed by teachers through analysis of learner needs.

## METHOD

Based on the research objectives, the researchers used a descriptive qualitative research design. This method is particularly useful in studying L2 learning and teaching (in this context is language acquisition) as it is complex. To uncover its complexity, the researchers not only needed to examine how acquisition process is going and what factors affect it, but also obtained further in depth understanding and examination of individual learners and their behaviors and experiences (Nassaji, 2015). Thus, the presence of researchers as the main instrument of data collection and it was conducted for 1 semester in the academic year 2020-2021

The research subjects were students majoring in economics and Islamic religious education. They are students who follow the Arabic language course program for one year. The selection of research subjects was taken randomly. It aimed to explore the data needed by the indicators of the research instrument.

Research data were obtained through questionnaires, observation, and documentation. The research subjects were randomly assigned to 20 students and presented as pseudonyms, while observations were made to see the implementation of Arabic learning and focus on how students acquire Arabic through various strategies, as well as documentation. The research location was an online-based Arabic learning situation at the Islamic Institution of Sabili Bandung. The process of extracting data was carried out in various forms, namely the researchers observed the Arabic learning process through observation, then the researchers distributed questionnaire containing a set of questions related to the topic of Arabic acquisition and divided into three main topics of discussion, namely phonological, vocabulary, and grammatical acquisition. After that, the researchers looked at the construction of the Arabic Learning Plan to identify the stages in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning Arabic.

The analysis technique used triangulation based on several steps, namely the researchers collected data through primary and secondary sources on the implementation of Arabic language acquisition, then the researchers reduced the data needed to answer research questions, then the researchers presented the data that has been obtained and draws conclusions after the existence of data analysis process (Rahardjo, 2020).

To validate research results, peer review discussions with colleague's triangulation techniques was carried out. Hammarberg, Kirkman, and Lacey, (2016), stated that peer review is a principal process to enhance the validity of qualitative research as reviewers assess the study together and hand in hand to gain adequate data to publish. Besides, three triangulations are used; triangulation of data, investigator triangulation, and methodological triangulation.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

### Strategy for Acquiring Language Elements of Sound (Phonological Acquisition)

Sound is an element of language. The sound of language occurs because of vibrations in the vocal cords that are passed by air currents. Air currents are transmitted to certain speech organs located in the oral cavity or nasal cavity, where certain language sounds are produced. The place where the sound of language occurs is called the place of articulation and the process that occurs is called the articulation process and the tool used is called the articulator (Marlina, 2019).

In the process of acquiring language in children, it was noted that the first thing that children judged from their environment was the sound that he imitated and repeated, after that they learned to write only after they entered the education level (school) (Ryoe, 2020). Humans, in various languages, environments and cultures, learn to speak before writing. Historians have revealed that writing existed several thousand years after speaking, while references to human roots and the majority of languages spoken in the world have not yet been written. Primitive society had an unwritten language but could communicate with an unknown written language (Hamid et al., 2022). This fact is confirmed by the illiterate living in villages and rural areas, they live in spoken language without using written language. In addition, there are many linguistic phenomena that assert that sound is the basis of language, including the so-called phonetic phenomena that define the meaning of words or sentences by pronunciation (Syahid, 2015).

Based on the results of a survey distributed through Google Forms to students of the Islamic Institution of Sabili Bandung, the researchers found that the acquisition of a second language or Arabic in terms of sound elements mostly done by listening. In fact, the sounds of Arabic letters are included in teaching

listening skills. Thus, between the sounds of Arabic letters and listening skills is an inseparable unity. Listening to the sounds of how sounds are articulated plays an important role in learning any language, including Arabic. It is because when a child learns a language, he learns that language through three phases; phase of listening and imitating following speaking. A person has been able to speak using language before he is able to read and write. A little boy just started learning to read and write after he was in school. As expressed by the respondents as follows:

*"Listening to Murottal, Netflix, YouTube, and online radio can train and improve my ability to listen to Arabic sounds" (Interview with Lina, 25 August 2021)*

*"Listening directly from native speakers, the intonation, and accompanied by direct viewing of the text will very quickly improve my Arabic acquisition" (Interview with Annisa, 25 August 2021)*

Looking at the expressions of the respondents above, it can be seen that they use audio and audiovisual as a tool in improving their language acquisition in the element of sound. Audiovisual media or more often referred to as video has a high potential in delivering messages as well as its ability to attract interest in learning a second language. Currently, with the sophistication of technology, the use of audiovisual media is increasingly widespread among the public. Examples of such media are VCD (Video Compact Disk), television broadcasts, online broadcasts such as YouTube which can be accessed through the most common electronic devices such as mobile phones, and can be accessed directly from the language owner or native speaker.

Audio media is a learning media that contains auditory messages and only relies on voice abilities which can stimulate children's thoughts, feelings, attention, and willingness to learn the learning theme. This media relies more on the child's sense of hearing. Because this media only relies on hearing, the main factor in this audio media is the level of audio volume and the clarity of pronunciation of the audio (Asura Useng, 2018). Children's minds and attention are stimulated to imagine what they hear, of course with the help of explanations from people around the child. In other words, because of its auditory nature, this media contains weaknesses that must be overcome by utilizing other media such as a song. If children are introduced to songs that introduce vocabulary or even pronunciation of this second language acquisition, children tend to imitate and imagine the sounds they hear so that they master the language more quickly (Chafidzoh, 2020).

And all of the above is evidence that sound is the basis of language, and maybe this is what prompted Ibn Jinni (1956: 1052) in Marlina who is an Arabic linguist to provide a definition of language as follows: (Marlina, 2019) :

أَصْوَاتٌ يُعَبِّرُهَا كُلُّ قَوْمٍ عَنِ أَغْرَاضِهِمْ

"Language is the sounds spoken by every group of people to convey their meaning"

The definition presented by Ibn Jinni contains several key words that can reveal the nature of language. Al-Rajihi provides an explanation of the elements contained in the definition as follows: First, that Ibn Jinni limits language to only *ashwat* (sound), thus writing is out of this definition, and this shows that Arab scholars only studied spoken language based on sounds. Second, that language has a function, namely to *ta'bir* (express) or communicate what is in the heart to others. Third, that the expression of the people shows that language is used by the community or language is a phenomenon that occurs in a community. Fourth, that language is a tool for *ta'bir* from *aghradh*, which means that language is not only in the form of sound and not just *ta'bir* about anything, but it is expressed about *aghradh* and the word *aghradh* is translated among modern linguists by thinking actively with reason.

### Vocabulary Acquisition

According to Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, vocabulary in Arabic known as *al-mufradat* (English: vocabulary) is a set of words or a treasure trove of words known by a person or other ethnicity or are part of a particular language (Astuti, 2016). Based on this description, it can be described that what is meant by mastery of Arabic vocabulary is a person's ability to use or utilize the words possessed in communicating and interacting with other people using Arabic.

Vocabulary is very influential on other language skills. The amount of vocabulary produced by a person can reflect the intellectual level of that person. Rivers (Nunan, 1991: 117) states that vocabulary is important in order to be able to use a second language. Without a broad vocabulary, one will not be able to use the structure and function of language in communication comprehensively. Based on the results of the research conducted, it can be seen that there are various ways or strategies carried out by Sabili Islamic High School students to acquire Arabic vocabulary well and quickly. This is described as follows:



**Figure 1. Strategies to Acquire Arabic Vocabulary**

Based on the [Figure 1](#), it can be seen that to obtain or enrich the vocabulary of students, many students use online and offline dictionaries as their media in



learning, many as 45.45% of students use dictionaries. And many as 18.18% of students use online news portals as means of processing their language, recording vocabulary they don't understand and students looking for the vocabulary and then memorizing it. And many as 36% of students use books as their learning tool to acquire vocabulary. As one respondent stated as follows:

*"In learning Arabic, I first study vocabulary in order to acquire vocabulary and find out the meaning of various Arabic sentences." (Interview with Iman, 28 August 2021)*

*"When I memorize new vocabulary, then I immediately practice the vocabulary so that it is easy to understand and remember in the future, but I find it difficult to know the original vocabulary in Arabic." (Interview with Asep, 27 August 2021)*

Mastery of Arabic vocabulary is not easy to learn, considering that Arabic is very rich in vocabulary and has many differences with other languages. One of the differences is that when students encounter new vocabulary and look for it in the dictionary, the meaning is not found, so they must first find out the original of the vocabulary. Several studies of vocabulary acquisition and linguistics use have examined vocabulary knowledge and finally admitted that is an aspect that is difficult to learn (Schmitt, 2000; Carter & McCarthy, 2014). This is due to the breadth of aspects of words that need to be mastered, namely the form, meaning and use as well as their functions based on receptive and productive aspects. No wonder this factor causes second or foreign language vocabulary learning to be a big problem for most students (Hidayah, 2020).

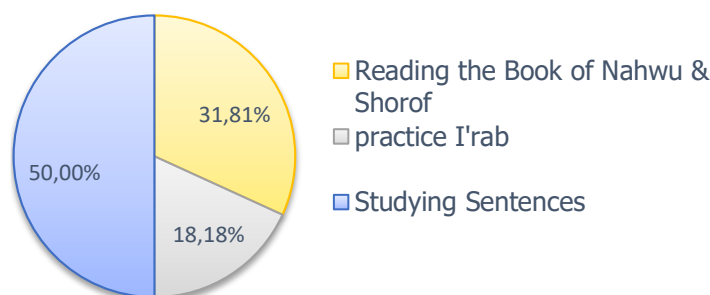
For second or foreign language learner, learning vocabulary knowledge is a difficult aspect. This is due to of the scope which is too broad and it requires a long learning period. Learning vocabulary knowledge takes time and it is a difficult to master it. Vocabulary knowledge can be defined as a rank between the ability to understand words and the ability to activate words automatically for productive purposes (Hidayat, 2018).

### **Grammatical Element Language Acquisition Strategy**

In general, Arabic is studied in almost every religious-based educational institution, even up to university, it's just that most Indonesians learn Arabic only at the grammatical level (Anshari, 2018). Arabic grammar is generally divided into two kinds, namely grammar related to the rules of the line or letter of each end of the word in Arabic or better known as nahwu science, and the second is grammar which discusses and learns about the composition of the letters of each word along with various forms and changes, or better known as the science of Sharaf (Albab, 2015). Although in fact there are many Arabic grammars and each has its own realm of discussion.

In teaching Arabic grammatical levels (Morphemes) both Nahwu grammar and Sharaf grammar must also consider their usefulness in daily conversation. In teaching Nahwu grammar, for example, it must begin with material about perfect sentences, but the details of the presentation material must be taught about isim,

fi'il, and letters. Based on the results, it is showed the strategies used by the students in learning Arabic grammar which is described as follows:



**Figure 2. Strategies for acquiring grammatical elements**

Based on the results in [Figure 2](#), it can be seen that students more often practice direct sentences or practice directly translating sentences to learn Arabic grammar as many as 50% of respondents. As from various studies, it is shown that the qowaid and tarjamah methods are widely used by teachers in learning grammar and show that the use of this method is very effective in improving students' grammatical abilities (Fahmi, 2016;Kasanah & Sauri, 2020;Rodliyah Zaenuddin, 2012). As many as 31.18% of other students study grammar by reading nahwu shorof books such as Jurumiyyah, nahwu wadhah etc. At last, students learn grammar directly with the practice of practicing I'rob, this exercise is difficult to do as a beginner because it requires sufficient knowledge to be able to determine the position of the sentence in detail.

Nahwu-shorof grammar is not a language learning goal, but only a mean to help learners to be able to speak, read and write correctly. In learning nahwu and shorof, it is not enough for students to memorize the rules and then finish, but after that students must be able to apply these rules in reading and writing Arabic texts. In other words, mastery of grammar is a mean of language, not the ultimate goal of learning about language.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study was designed to trace college students' strategy to acquire three aspects of language, namely: sounds, vocabulary, and grammar during the virtual learning period. The results showed various strategies that Arabic language teachers can implement in their class. Implementing Contextual teaching and learning are supposed in language teaching to improve students' acquisition by giving projects to listen to murottal (Quran recitation), Netflix, youtube videos, and online radio as well as native speakers dialogues. This project-based learning is more challenging for students because that forces them



to listen carefully and critically to the objects. In addition, abundance of online learning resources that can be freely accessed is likely to open new avenues to a new direction approach that helps teachers and their students independently acquire language while still under teacher's supervision. However, the traditional approach to learning grammar cannot continue. More broadly, further research is also needed to determine if this strategy can be implemented for all levels of language learners or not. Further research could be conducted to determine the effectiveness of that strategy in different levels of learners and various environmental conditions surrounding them.

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