

## CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS IN LEARNING ARABIC AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN INDONESIAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: LESSONS FROM THE JORDANIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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### ABSTRACT

This comparative study examines the challenges of Arabic language learning in Indonesian elementary schools and explores effective practices from Jordan that can be adapted to the Indonesian context. Employing a qualitative approach with case study design, the research involved observations, interviews, and document analysis in selected elementary schools in East Java, Indonesia, and Amman-Irbid, Jordan. The findings reveal significant pedagogical gaps between the two countries, with Indonesian schools predominantly using traditional grammar-translation methods while Jordanian schools implement communicative-integrative approaches. Key challenges identified in Indonesia include inadequate teacher competence in both linguistic and methodological aspects, limited learning resources and technology, and low student motivation due to insufficient contextualization. The study demonstrates that teacher quality emerges as the most critical factor in learning effectiveness, alongside the necessity for cultural contextualization and meaningful learning experiences. Drawing from Jordanian best practices, this research proposes comprehensive strategies categorized into short-term, medium-term, and long-term solutions, emphasizing teacher capacity development, curriculum reform, technological integration, and Indonesia-Jordan institutional collaboration. The study concludes that improving Arabic learning quality requires a paradigm transformation from traditional to communicative-contextual approaches, creative adaptation of international best practices to local contexts, and sustained investment in teacher professional development supported by systemic policy frameworks.

**Keywords:** Arabic language learning, elementary education, comparative study, teacher competence, communicative approach, Indonesia-Jordan collaboration

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# TANTANGAN DAN SOLUSI DALAM PEMBELAJARAN BAHASA ARAB SEBAGAI BAHASA ASING DI SEKOLAH DASAR INDONESIA: PELAJARAN DARI SISTEM PENDIDIKAN YORDANIA

## ABSTRAK

Studi perbandingan ini mengkaji tantangan pembelajaran bahasa Arab di sekolah dasar Indonesia dan mengeksplorasi praktik-praktik efektif dari Yordania yang dapat diadaptasi ke dalam konteks Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan desain studi kasus, penelitian ini melibatkan observasi, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen di sekolah dasar terpilih di Jawa Timur, Indonesia, dan Amman-Irbid, Yordania. Temuan menunjukkan adanya kesenjangan pedagogis yang signifikan antara kedua negara, dengan sekolah-sekolah Indonesia sebagian besar menggunakan metode grammar-translation tradisional, sementara sekolah-sekolah Yordania menerapkan pendekatan komunikatif-integratif. Tantangan utama yang diidentifikasi di Indonesia meliputi kurangnya kompetensi guru dalam aspek linguistik dan metodologis, keterbatasan sumber belajar dan teknologi, serta motivasi siswa yang rendah akibat kurangnya konteksualisasi. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa kualitas guru muncul sebagai faktor paling kritis dalam efektivitas pembelajaran, bersamaan dengan kebutuhan akan konteks budaya dan pengalaman belajar yang bermakna. Mengambil contoh dari praktik terbaik di Yordania, penelitian ini mengusulkan strategi komprehensif yang dikategorikan ke dalam solusi jangka pendek, menengah, dan panjang, dengan penekanan pada pengembangan kapasitas guru, reformasi kurikulum, integrasi teknologi, dan kolaborasi institusional antara Indonesia dan Yordania. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa peningkatan kualitas pembelajaran bahasa Arab memerlukan transformasi paradigma dari pendekatan tradisional ke pendekatan komunikatif-kontekstual, adaptasi kreatif praktik terbaik internasional ke konteks lokal, serta investasi berkelanjutan dalam pengembangan profesional guru yang didukung oleh kerangka kebijakan sistemik.

**Kata kunci:** Pembelajaran bahasa Arab, pendidikan dasar, studi perbandingan, kompetensi guru, pendekatan komunikatif, kerja sama Indonesia-Yordania

## A. INTRODUCTION

The teaching and learning of Arabic as a foreign language has garnered increasing global attention, particularly in countries with significant Muslim populations. Arabic is not merely viewed as a communication tool but also as a language of religion, culture, and heritage. As an international language used by several communities around the world, Arabic is also included in the sciences that are not only studied by Muslims, but many countries use Arabic as their official language (national language) (Pane, 2018). Various nations have developed Arabic language learning systems tailored to their local contexts, each facing unique challenges and implementing diverse solutions. Jordan, as an Arab nation with a well-developed education system, has implemented effective approaches to Arabic language instruction from the elementary level, emphasizing communicative skills and cultural understanding. The Jordanian model has been recognized for its systematic curriculum design, qualified teacher preparation, and integration of modern pedagogical approaches that balance traditional language teaching with communicative competence development (Hasan, 2024).

In Indonesia, Arabic language learning at the elementary level faces distinctive challenges. Despite being the country with the world's largest Muslim population, Arabic language instruction is often limited to religious contexts and has not optimally developed students' comprehensive linguistic competencies. Elementary schools, particularly madrasah ibtidaiyah (Islamic elementary schools), include Arabic in their curriculum, yet learning outcomes remain far below expectations. Limited learning time can also result in students and educators being

less able to properly practice Arabic language skills, such as listening, reading, speaking, and writing Arabic. The lack of qualified teachers, conventional teaching methods, and limited learning resources are major obstacles. Many teachers rely on memorization and translation methods that fail to engage students or develop practical communication skills. These methods are irrelevant to the needs of today's students, who were born in an era of rapid technological development that requires them to be more adaptive to the use of technology (Muslimah, 2021). The limitation of qualified teachers, conventional teaching methods, and minimal learning resources constitute major obstacles. Many teachers rely heavily on rote memorization and translation methods that fail to engage students or develop practical communication skills. Furthermore, the sociolinguistic context of Indonesia presents particular challenges, as students have extremely limited exposure to Arabic outside the classroom, unlike students in Arab countries or even other Muslim-majority nations where Arabic may be more present in daily life through media, religious practices, or cultural connections. Therefore, mastery of the material and teaching methods by teachers is very important, as well as being able to motivate students in supporting the success of the student learning process, which is supported by the availability of supporting facilities in learning activities (Ikbal, 2018).

Several studies have explored Arabic language teaching in Indonesia, revealing that instruction remains predominantly grammar-oriented and focused on vocabulary memorization with minimal communicative practice. Research has documented the prevalence of teacher-centered approaches where students passively receive information rather than actively engaging in language use. Fatkhurohman said that in Indonesia, Arabic language learning generally emphasizes receptive skills rather than productive skills, because Arabic is learned and understood as a religion language rather than a means of communication (Fatkhurrohman, S.Ag., 2017). Studies in Jordan, conversely, have demonstrated the success of communicative and integrative approaches in teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, with particular emphasis on meaningful interaction and authentic language use. However, comparative research between Arab and non-Arab countries in language learning has been largely limited to secondary and tertiary levels, leaving a significant gap in understanding elementary-level challenges and solutions (Demusti, 2024).

To date, limited research has deeply explored the specific challenges of Arabic language learning in Indonesian elementary schools and how best practices from Arab countries like Jordan can be adapted to the Indonesian context. Comparative studies focusing on the elementary level involving perspectives from both countries remain scarce. This research seeks to fill that gap by identifying concrete challenges and offering practical solutions based on lessons from the Jordanian education system. The study recognizes that while Jordan offers valuable insights as a native Arabic-speaking country with advanced educational infrastructure, successful adaptation requires careful consideration of Indonesia's unique sociolinguistic, cultural, and educational contexts.

This research aims to achieve three primary objectives. First, to identify the main challenges faced by teachers and students in learning Arabic as a foreign language in Indonesian elementary schools, encompassing pedagogical, institutional, and motivational dimensions. Second, to analyze effective Arabic language learning practices in Jordanian elementary schools that have potential for adaptation within the Indonesian context, examining curriculum design, teaching methodologies, teacher preparation, and learning resources. Third, to formulate practical strategies and solutions for improving the quality of Arabic language learning in Indonesian elementary schools based on comparative study with the Jordanian education system, providing both immediate interventions and long-term policy recommendations (Ferdhi Hasan 2025).

This research is expected to make significant contributions to the development of Arabic language learning in Indonesia, particularly at the elementary level. By understanding the challenges faced and learning from Jordan's experience as an Arab country with a well-

developed education system, this research can produce practical recommendations applicable to the Indonesian context. The main argument of this research is that lessons from native Arabic-speaking countries like Jordan can serve as valuable references, but must be adapted to Indonesia's social, cultural, and educational contexts. This research focuses not only on one-way knowledge transfer but on collaborative dialogue that produces contextual and sustainable solutions to improve Indonesian elementary students' Arabic language competencies. The study advocates for a balanced approach that respects Indonesia's educational traditions while incorporating proven international best practices, ultimately aiming to transform Arabic language education from a peripheral subject focused narrowly on religious text comprehension to a dynamic language learning experience that develops genuine communicative competence and intercultural understanding.

## **B. METHODS**

This research employs a qualitative approach with an interpretive paradigm to deeply understand the phenomenon of Arabic language learning in elementary schools from the perspectives of educational practitioners, including teachers and students, as well as related stakeholders. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the complexity of challenges and solutions in natural and holistic contexts, capturing the nuanced experiences and perspectives that quantitative methods might overlook. This approach enables the research to uncover not just what challenges exist, but why they exist and how various actors understand and respond to them within their specific contexts.

The type of research conducted is a comparative case study examining Arabic language learning practices in Indonesian and Jordanian elementary schools. Case study methodology was selected because it permits in-depth analysis of the specific contexts of each country with their unique characteristics, allowing for rich, contextualized understanding rather than superficial generalizations. The comparative dimension enables identification of similarities and differences, providing a foundation for understanding which practices might transfer across contexts and which require significant adaptation. This design acknowledges that educational practices cannot be understood in isolation from their cultural, institutional, and policy environments.

The research subjects in Indonesia included ten Arabic language teachers from five elementary schools and madrasah ibtidaiyah in East Java, representing both urban and rural settings to capture diverse conditions and challenges. Thirty students from grades four through six participated, as these levels represent students who have had several years of Arabic instruction and can articulate their learning experiences. Three supervisors and principals provided institutional perspectives on curriculum implementation, teacher development, and resource allocation. Two Arabic language education experts from universities contributed theoretical and policy perspectives, contextualizing school-level practices within broader educational trends and debates.

In Jordan, the research involved ten Arabic language teachers from five elementary schools in Amman and Irbid, cities chosen for their mix of urban characteristics and educational infrastructure that reflects national standards. Thirty students from grades four through six participated, providing student perspectives on learning experiences and outcomes. Three education supervisors and principals offered insights into curriculum implementation and teacher support systems. Two Arabic language education experts from Jordanian universities contributed perspectives on pedagogical approaches and policy frameworks that have shaped Arabic instruction for non-native speakers within Jordan's diverse student population.

Data collection employed multiple techniques to ensure comprehensive understanding and triangulation. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers, principals, and education experts to explore challenges, strategies, and experiences in Arabic language teaching and learning. Interview protocols were designed to elicit detailed narratives about daily

practices, specific challenges encountered, strategies employed to address difficulties, and perspectives on what works and what doesn't in their contexts. Focus group discussions with students provided insights into their perspectives on Arabic language learning, difficulties faced, and preferences regarding learning methods. These discussions created safe spaces for students to express opinions that might not emerge in individual interviews or in the presence of teachers, revealing authentic student voices about motivation, engagement, and learning barriers.

Classroom observations involved participatory observation of Arabic language instruction to witness teaching practices, teacher-student interactions, and learning dynamics firsthand. Observations captured not just planned instructional activities but also spontaneous interactions, classroom management approaches, and the actual implementation of stated methodologies. Document analysis examined curricula, syllabi, lesson plans, teaching materials, and education policies related to Arabic language learning in both countries, providing context for observed practices and revealing alignment or misalignment between policy intentions and classroom realities. Documentation through photographs, video recordings of instruction with appropriate permissions, and field notes provided additional layers of data that could be reviewed and analyzed repeatedly.

Data analysis employed thematic analysis, a flexible method suited to identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns across qualitative datasets. All interview and focus group discussion data were transcribed verbatim, preserving the language and expressions used by participants. Researchers engaged in repeated reading of transcripts to achieve deep familiarity with the data, noting initial impressions and potential patterns. Initial coding involved identifying meaningful units and assigning descriptive codes that captured their essence. These codes were then organized into potential themes, grouping related codes into broader patterns. Themes were reviewed and refined through iterative examination, ensuring they accurately represented the data and were distinct from one another. Each theme was clearly defined and named to capture its meaning precisely.

Comparative interpretation involved analyzing themes from Indonesian and Jordanian data to identify similarities, differences, and lessons that could be transferred or adapted. This process required careful attention to context, recognizing that similar surface-level practices might serve different functions or produce different outcomes in different settings. Triangulation involved verifying findings through multiple data sources and methods, checking whether themes identified in interviews were consistent with observations, documents, and student perspectives. NVivo software assisted in the coding and analysis process, enabling systematic organization of large amounts of qualitative data and facilitating comparison across cases and themes.

Research ethics were carefully addressed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who received complete information about research purposes, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their rights as participants. Written consent was secured before any data collection commenced. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by using pseudonyms in all research reports and publications, ensuring that individual participants could not be identified. Participation was entirely voluntary, with participants informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequences. For students as research subjects, parental consent was obtained in addition to student assent, and data collection occurred with teacher accompaniment to ensure student comfort and safety. Institutional permissions were secured from education ministries and relevant authorities in both countries, following all required protocols. The benefits of the research were communicated to participants and participating schools, emphasizing contributions to educational improvement. Data integrity was maintained through secure storage with access limited to the research team, and data used solely for research purposes. The research was designed to respect cultural sensitivities in both



countries, recognizing different norms around education, authority, and appropriate interactions with children. (Hamid et al., 2020)

## **C. RESULTS**

### **1. The Challenges of Arabic Language Learning in Indonesian Elementary Schools**

The research revealed multidimensional challenges in Arabic language learning at Indonesian elementary schools, spanning pedagogical approaches, teacher competencies, infrastructure and resources, and student motivation. These challenges interact in complex ways, creating systemic barriers to effective Arabic language acquisition that cannot be addressed through simple interventions.

Pedagogical challenges emerged as fundamental obstacles to effective learning. The dominance of grammar-translation methods characterized most observed classrooms, with teachers focusing extensively on grammatical rules and vocabulary translation rather than communicative language use. As one experienced teacher in an urban madrasah explained, "We spend most of our time explaining Arabic grammar rules in Indonesian language because students need to understand the structure. We translate texts word by word so they know the meaning. This is what we learned when we studied Arabic, so this is how we teach." This approach resulted in students who could perhaps recite grammatical rules or translate isolated words but struggled to construct simple sentences or engage in basic conversations in Arabic. Minimal variation in teaching strategies was observed, with most lessons following predictable patterns of teacher explanation, student repetition, and written exercises. One rural teacher acknowledged, "I know there are many teaching methods, but honestly I only know how to teach the traditional way. I was never trained in other methods." In the context of Arabic language learning, several aspects must be integrated, including national education goals, student characteristics, and cultural aspects. Therefore, as educators, we must be innovative and always interactive in implementing the curriculum.

The excessive focus on reading classical texts and memorizing decontextualized vocabulary created additional difficulties. Students were often asked to memorize long vocabulary lists without meaningful context or practical application. A fifth-grade student shared during a focus group, "Every week teacher gives us fifty new Arabic words to memorize. We write them many times and recite them, but I don't know when we would ever use these words. I forget them after the test." This mechanical memorization failed to develop deeper linguistic understanding or communicative ability. Speaking and writing practice received minimal attention in most classrooms observed. In ten observed lessons across five schools, only two included any speaking activities beyond simple repetition, and none included authentic writing tasks beyond copying exercises. A student expressed frustration common among peers, "We never actually speak Arabic in class except to repeat after teacher. How can we learn to speak if we never practice speaking?"

Teacher competency challenges significantly impacted instructional quality. Seventy percent of Arabic language teachers in the research sample did not possess adequate educational backgrounds in Arabic language education. Many had studied Islamic studies or general education with limited focus on Arabic linguistics or language pedagogy. One teacher candidly admitted, "My bachelor's degree was in Islamic education, not specifically Arabic language. I learned some Arabic for reading religious texts, but I was never trained how to teach Arabic as a foreign language to children." This gap in professional preparation manifested in classroom practices that reflected teachers' own learning experiences rather than current pedagogical best practices. Essentially, teacher education and learning are interrelated and require teacher professionalism through teacher training that provides special opportunities for institutions as the main location for professional development for teachers in Jordan.

The limitation in teachers' Arabic speaking proficiency created particularly acute challenges. Only forty percent of teachers demonstrated sufficient fluency to conduct basic conversations in Arabic. A supervisor observed, "How can we expect students to speak Arabic when many teachers themselves are not comfortable speaking the language? Teachers use Indonesian for nearly all classroom communication, using Arabic only for vocabulary items or short phrases." This limited modeling of actual language use deprived students of crucial exposure to authentic Arabic. Minimal ongoing training and professional development for teachers meant that those who began with limited preparation had few opportunities to develop their competencies. One teacher lamented, "The last training I attended was five years ago, just a one-day workshop. We need continuous support to improve our teaching, but there is no regular program for Arabic teachers."

Limited access to current literature and resources on Arabic language teaching methodologies further constrained teacher development. Teachers in rural areas particularly struggled with professional isolation. A rural teacher described, "We don't have access to books about teaching methods or examples of good materials. Internet is slow here, so we cannot easily find resources online. We just use the same old textbook year after year." This resource scarcity prevented teachers from learning about and implementing innovative approaches that might better serve their students.

Infrastructure and learning resource challenges created material barriers to quality instruction. Limited availability of contextually appropriate textbooks and teaching materials suited to elementary students' developmental levels was evident across schools. The most commonly used textbooks were designed for older learners or were translations of Arab textbooks that included cultural references unfamiliar to Indonesian children. A teacher criticized available materials, stating, "The textbook we use has stories about desert life, camels, and Arab culture that means nothing to our students. They cannot connect this content to their lives. We need materials with Indonesian contexts." The absence of language laboratories or multimedia facilities for learning was universal among the schools studied. Even basic audio equipment for listening practice was unavailable in most schools. A principal explained the constraint, "We have limited budget. We must prioritize basic needs like desks and whiteboards. Audio equipment and computers for language learning are considered luxury we cannot afford."

Limited internet access and learning technology in rural schools created additional disparities. While urban schools had some access to technology, rural schools often lacked electricity consistency, let alone internet connectivity. This digital divide prevented rural students from accessing online learning resources increasingly available to their urban counterparts. Limited time allocation for Arabic instruction, averaging only two hours per week, severely constrained what could be accomplished. A teacher expressed frustration about time constraints, "Two hours per week is nothing for learning a foreign language. By the time students arrive, settle down, and we review previous material, there is barely time for new learning. Language learning needs much more exposure and practice time."

Student motivation and perception challenges added another layer of difficulty. Students generally perceived Arabic as a difficult and boring subject. In focus group discussions, students repeatedly described Arabic lessons as "hard," "confusing," and "not interesting." One student explained, "Arabic is the hardest subject. The letters are different, the words are hard to remember, and we don't understand why we need to learn it except for religion class." Lack of exposure to Arabic language use in authentic contexts meant students saw little practical value in learning Arabic beyond religious purposes. Students had minimal access to Arabic media, Arabic-speaking communities, or opportunities to use Arabic outside very limited classroom time. A student articulated this disconnect, "We only see Arabic writing in the Quran and in our Arabic textbook. We never hear people speaking Arabic. It feels like a dead language we are studying for no reason."

Learning motivation tended to be extrinsic, focused on test scores rather than intrinsic interest in communication or cultural understanding. Students studied to pass exams rather than to actually acquire language skills. One high-achieving student admitted, "I study Arabic to get good grades because my parents want me to do well. But honestly I don't enjoy it and I don't think I will ever use Arabic after I graduate." The unclear practical benefits of learning Arabic outside religious contexts contributed to this motivational deficit. Unlike English, which students perceived as important for future career opportunities, Arabic was seen as having limited utility. A teacher reflected on this challenge, "Students and parents ask why they need to study Arabic. They understand why English is important for jobs and technology. But they only see Arabic as useful for reading Quran, which they already do in religious studies class. We struggle to show them other values of learning Arabic."

## **2. Patterns Effective Arabic Language Learning Practices in Jordanian Elementary Schools**

The research in Jordan revealed several effective practices that contributed to more successful Arabic language outcomes, offering potential lessons for the Indonesian context while recognizing important contextual differences. Communicative and integrative approaches characterized Jordanian Arabic instruction, with systematic integration of all four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—from early grades. Observed lessons typically incorporated multiple skills within single sessions, with listening activities leading to speaking practice, then connected to reading texts, and finally to writing tasks. A Jordanian teacher explained the approach, "We teach language as a whole, not separate skills. Students listen to a short story, we discuss it together, they read the text, then write their own simple version. Everything is connected and meaningful." The use of communicative approaches emphasizing meaningful interaction in Arabic created classrooms where Arabic was the primary medium of communication. Teachers conducted entire lessons in Arabic, using visual aids, gestures, and simplified language to ensure comprehension while maximizing exposure to the target language. According to research, it is stated that learning Arabic using a communicative approach is more appropriate and in line with the objectives of Arabic language learning.

Integration of Arab culture into learning materials enhanced contextual understanding while maintaining student engagement. Materials included stories, songs, and activities reflecting Arab cultural contexts in age-appropriate ways. A Jordanian curriculum specialist explained, "We want students to learn not just the language but also understand Arab culture and values. This makes the language learning more meaningful and rich." The use of Total Physical Response and game-based learning for lower elementary grades made language learning physical and enjoyable. Observed first and second-grade lessons included songs with movements, games requiring physical responses to Arabic commands, and playful activities that associated language learning with positive emotions.

Teacher quality and professional development in Jordan provided strong foundations for effective instruction. All Arabic language teachers possessed minimum bachelor's degrees in Arabic language education, ensuring baseline professional preparation. A Jordanian education official emphasized this standard, "We require specific qualifications for Arabic teachers because teaching language is specialized work. General teachers cannot do this effectively." Regular training programs each semester focused on methodological innovation, keeping teachers current with pedagogical developments. One Jordanian teacher described ongoing support, "Every semester we have training on new teaching techniques. We learn from experts and from each other. This helps us constantly improve our teaching."

Regular supervision and mentoring from Arabic language education supervisors provided ongoing support and accountability. Supervisors visited classrooms, observed instruction, and provided constructive feedback to help teachers refine their practice. A



supervisor described this role, "I visit each teacher at least twice per semester. I observe the lesson, note what works well and what could improve, then we discuss together how to enhance the teaching. This continuous support helps teachers grow professionally." Teacher learning communities for sharing best practices created collegial professional cultures. Teachers met regularly in school-based or district-based groups to share successful lessons, discuss challenges, and collaboratively solve problems. A Jordanian teacher valued this community, "Meeting with other Arabic teachers is so helpful. We share ideas and materials. When I have a problem with teaching something, I can ask colleagues who might have solved it. We learn from each other continuously."

Learning resources and technology in Jordan provided material support for quality instruction. Systematically designed textbooks progressively matched students' cognitive developmental levels, with carefully sequenced content building on prior learning. A Jordanian curriculum developer described the design process, "Our textbooks are developed by teams of language experts and child development specialists. We ensure the vocabulary, grammar, and cultural content are appropriate for each age level. Everything builds gradually so students don't feel overwhelmed." Use of interactive multimedia in instruction—including videos, audio materials, and learning applications—enriched learning experiences and catered to different learning styles. Observed lessons frequently incorporated short videos, audio recordings of native speakers, and interactive digital activities that engaged students and provided varied language input.

Classroom libraries with Arabic children's storybooks provided extensive reading opportunities. Each classroom visited had collections of age-appropriate Arabic storybooks that students could read independently or with teacher guidance during reading time. A teacher explained the value, "When students have access to interesting Arabic books at their level, they develop reading habits and learn to enjoy Arabic reading. This makes huge difference in their language development." Digital platforms for independent practice and online learning extended learning beyond classroom time. Students had access to supervised online resources where they could practice vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension at their own pace, receiving immediate feedback that supported self-directed learning.

Motivation and engagement strategies in Jordan created positive associations with Arabic learning and fostered student investment in language development. Use of songs, stories, and drama in instruction made learning enjoyable and memorable. Nearly every observed lesson included some element of song, storytelling, or dramatic performance that engaged students emotionally and cognitively. A student expressed enthusiasm, "Arabic class is fun. We sing songs, act out stories, and play games. I like coming to Arabic class." Competitions and Arabic language olympiads at school and national levels created positive incentives for achievement. Schools regularly organized internal competitions in recitation, storytelling, and language skills, with top performers advancing to regional and national levels. A teacher described the motivational impact, "Students work very hard to prepare for competitions. They want to represent their school and win recognition. This creates healthy competition and lots of practice."

Extracurricular Arabic language activities—including language clubs and storytelling sessions—provided additional engagement opportunities for interested students. These voluntary activities attracted students who enjoyed Arabic and wanted more exposure, creating communities of motivated learners who influenced broader school culture positively. Awards and certificates for Arabic language achievement provided recognition and reinforcement. Schools celebrated Arabic language success publicly, with certificate ceremonies and displays of student work that signaled the value placed on Arabic proficiency. A principal explained this culture-building, "When we celebrate Arabic achievement visibly, we send the message that Arabic proficiency matters and is valued. This creates positive culture around Arabic learning throughout the school."

### 3. Adaptation Strategies and Solutions for the Indonesian Context

Based on comparative analysis of challenges in Indonesia and effective practices in Jordan, the research identified adaptation strategies and solutions appropriate for the Indonesian context, organized by implementation timeframe. Short-term solutions for immediate implementation within one to two years focus on feasible interventions requiring limited resources but potentially significant impact. Teacher competency enhancement represents the highest priority short-term intervention. Intensive training programs on communicative Arabic language teaching methodologies could upgrade teacher skills relatively quickly. These programs should be practical and hands-on, modeling effective techniques that teachers can immediately implement. One Indonesian teacher who participated in a similar training reflected, "When I attended the three-day intensive workshop on communicative teaching, I learned so many techniques I could use immediately. Role-plays, information gap activities, simple games—I started using them the next week and students responded so positively."

Workshops on developing simple and contextual learning media could empower teachers to create effective materials with limited resources. Teachers need guidance on making visual aids, flashcards, realia, and simple manipulatives that enhance comprehension and engagement without requiring expensive technology. Formation of Arabic language elementary teacher communities for peer learning and practice sharing could reduce professional isolation and create support networks. These communities could meet monthly to share successful lessons, discuss challenges, and collaboratively develop solutions. An Indonesian teacher who organized an informal teacher group shared, "Five of us Arabic teachers from nearby schools started meeting monthly to share ideas. This has been so valuable. We feel less alone and we learn so much from each other's experiences."

Provision of teacher guidebooks on communicative Arabic language instruction could serve as ongoing reference resources, supporting implementation of new approaches learned in training. These guidebooks should include lesson plan examples, activity ideas, troubleshooting guidance, and theoretical explanations accessible to practitioners. Material and method adaptation represents another crucial short-term strategy. Development of contextually relevant Indonesian teaching materials with familiar characters and situations could enhance student engagement significantly. Materials featuring Indonesian children, Indonesian settings, and situations relevant to Indonesian students' lives would help students connect Arabic learning to their own experiences. A curriculum developer proposed, "Imagine an Arabic textbook where the characters are Indonesian children named Ahmad and Fatimah living in Jakarta or a village in Java, dealing with situations our students know—going to school, helping family, playing with friends. Students would find this so much more relatable than textbooks about Arab children in Arab settings." Therefore, the provision of books plays an important role in supporting the learning and teaching process, while also implementing the values in a structured teaching program (Murshidah & Din, 2011).

Integration of games and Arabic songs appropriate to local culture could make learning enjoyable while respecting Indonesian cultural values. Songs with movements, language games, and playful activities adapted to Indonesian contexts could transform classroom atmospheres. Use of Indonesian folktales translated into simple Arabic could leverage students' existing cultural knowledge while developing Arabic proficiency. Students already familiar with stories like "Timun Mas" or "Malin Kundang" could access these in simplified Arabic, building comprehension through known content structures. Implementation of small-scale project-based learning such as creating posters or bilingual cards could give students purposeful language use. Projects requiring students to research, plan, and produce Arabic language products would develop multiple skills while creating authentic motivation for language use.

Simple technology utilization represents a feasible short-term strategy even in resource-constrained settings. Use of free Arabic learning applications for student independent practice could extend learning beyond limited classroom time. Many quality free applications exist for vocabulary building, pronunciation practice, and basic comprehension. Teachers need guidance on identifying appropriate applications and integrating them into curricula. Curated use of YouTube Arabic learning videos could provide varied native speaker models and engaging content. Teachers could preview and select high-quality videos appropriate for student levels, using them to supplement instruction. Creating WhatsApp groups for Arabic practice outside class could leverage the ubiquitous technology Indonesian students already use for social purposes. Teachers could post daily vocabulary, simple questions in Arabic, or encourage students to share photos with Arabic captions, creating informal language practice communities. Thus, the use of technology in Arabic language learning will be more interactive. What has been lacking so far is that with technology, teachers will have better skills or competencies in teaching Arabic, and technology can also be utilized to allocate time for Arabic language learning (Iswanto, 2017).

Simple digital storytelling using smartphones could empower students to create and share Arabic language content. Students could record simple Arabic stories, create photo stories with Arabic narration, or produce short videos using basic smartphone features, developing speaking skills while engaging with technology they find motivating. An innovative Indonesian teacher shared, "I had students work in groups to create thirty-second video stories in simple Arabic using their phones. They were so engaged and creative. They practiced their Arabic so much while making these videos, and they were proud to show their work to the class."

Medium-term solutions spanning three to five years require more substantial systemic changes but remain achievable with coordinated effort and moderate resource investment. Curriculum reform represents essential medium-term work. Revision of elementary Arabic curriculum employing communicative and spiral approaches would establish foundations for improved instruction. The spiral curriculum design would introduce concepts at basic levels and revisit them at progressively deeper levels as students develop, ensuring mastery through repeated meaningful encounters. Increasing instructional time allocation to minimum three to four hours weekly would provide necessary exposure and practice time for meaningful language development. While this requires schedule adjustments and possibly additional teaching personnel, it represents a fundamental requirement for effective foreign language instruction.

Developing clear and measurable competency standards for each grade level would provide teachers with explicit targets and create accountability for outcomes. Currently vague objectives would be replaced with specific descriptors of what students should know and be able to do at each level, aligned with international language proficiency frameworks adapted to the Indonesian context. Developing comprehensive assessment systems beyond traditional paper-and-pencil tests would ensure assessment of actual communicative competence. Speaking and listening assessments, performance tasks, and portfolio assessments would complement written tests, providing fuller pictures of student proficiency and creating accountability for developing all language skills.

Teacher development system construction represents another crucial medium-term priority. Arabic language elementary teacher certification programs with specific competency standards would professionalize the teaching force and ensure baseline qualifications. These programs could offer pathways for current teachers lacking proper credentials to achieve certification while establishing clear standards for new teachers entering the field. Scholarships for Arabic teacher advanced education would develop a cadre of highly qualified teachers who could eventually serve as trainers and mentors for

their peers. Investment in deepening the expertise of promising teachers would create multiplier effects as these individuals share knowledge throughout the system.

Structured supervision and mentoring systems by experienced supervisors would provide ongoing support for teacher development, similar to the Jordanian model. This would require training supervisors in effective observation and feedback techniques and allocating time for regular classroom visits and follow-up conversations. Incentives for teachers excelling in instructional innovation would recognize and reward effective practice while motivating broader improvement. These incentives might include financial bonuses, recognition awards, opportunities for advanced training, or leadership roles in professional development activities.

Infrastructure provision would address material constraints limiting instructional quality. Procurement of basic language laboratories in schools would provide spaces equipped for listening and speaking practice, with audio equipment and appropriate acoustics. While full multimedia laboratories might be beyond immediate reach for all schools, basic facilities with audio playback capability would significantly enhance instruction. Provision of mini Arabic libraries in every school with age-appropriate Arabic reading materials would support extensive reading and independent learning. Even small collections of high-quality Arabic children's books would provide students with access to engaging Arabic texts beyond textbooks.

Development of digital learning resource portals for elementary Arabic would centralize high-quality materials accessible to teachers and students nationwide. This portal could include lesson plans, activities, videos, interactive exercises, and assessment tools that teachers could freely access and adapt. Grants for schools developing excellent Arabic programs would incentivize innovation and create model programs that could be studied and replicated. Schools receiving grants might experiment with extended instructional time, innovative methodologies, or intensive teacher development, with their experiences documented and shared broadly.

Long-term solutions spanning five to ten years envision systemic transformation requiring sustained commitment and significant investment but promising fundamental improvement in Arabic language education. Institutional collaboration represents a strategic long-term approach. Indonesia-Jordan cooperation in teacher and expertise exchange would facilitate direct learning from Jordanian experience while building bilateral educational ties. Exchange programs could send Indonesian teachers to Jordan for extended observation and practice teaching in Jordanian schools, while Jordanian educators could contribute to Indonesian professional development programs.

Indonesian teacher internship programs in Jordanian schools would provide immersive professional learning experiences. Selected Indonesian teachers could spend several months observing and co-teaching in Jordanian classrooms, learning effective practices through direct experience. These teachers would return as local experts who could train their colleagues based on firsthand understanding. Collaborative curriculum and contextually appropriate material development would leverage Jordanian expertise in Arabic language education while ensuring materials suit Indonesian contexts. Joint teams of Indonesian and Jordanian educators could design curricula and materials that apply sound pedagogical principles to Indonesian students' needs and circumstances.

Sustained collaborative research on Arabic language learning would build evidence bases for effective practices in both countries and advance understanding of language education broadly. Ongoing research partnerships could examine implementation and impact of various approaches, generating knowledge to guide continuous improvement. Creating an Arabic language learning ecosystem would establish conditions for Arabic acquisition beyond formal instruction. Development of community-level Arabic immersion programs could create contexts for language use outside schools. Community centers,

mosques, or after-school programs might offer Arabic language activities that provide additional exposure and practice opportunities in supportive environments.

Organizing national Arabic language festivals and olympiads would celebrate achievement, provide goals for student effort, and raise the profile of Arabic language education. These events could include competitions in various language skills, cultural performances, and exhibitions of student work, creating national enthusiasm for Arabic learning. Partnerships with Arab country embassies for cultural programs could bring native speakers into contact with Indonesian students and provide authentic cultural experiences. Embassy-sponsored events, visiting speakers, pen pal programs, or cultural exchanges would enrich students' understanding of Arabic language and Arab cultures while providing motivation for learning.

Development of Arabic language media including television programs, radio broadcasts, and applications for children would create accessible exposure to Arabic outside formal instruction. Indonesian-produced Arabic language content designed for child learners could make Arabic feel more present and relevant in students' lives. A media specialist proposed, "Imagine a popular children's television program that teaches Arabic through entertaining stories and characters children love. This could reach millions of students and create positive associations with Arabic learning." Media is not only tools and materials used for information and communication, such as television, mobile phones, and radio, but also things that can help convey and receive messages from others, including learning resources or activities such as discussions and seminars (Waskito, 2020).

Systemic policy development would establish supportive conditions for all other improvements. Formulation of comprehensive national policy on Arabic language learning with clear standards for each educational level would provide vision and direction for Arabic education nationwide. This policy would articulate the purposes of Arabic learning in Indonesia, set ambitious but achievable goals, and specify strategies for accomplishment. Standardization of Arabic teacher qualifications and competencies would ensure teaching quality by establishing clear requirements for who may teach Arabic and what knowledge and skills they must possess. These standards would inform teacher education programs and certification processes.

Allocation of dedicated budgets for Arabic language learning development including materials, technology, and infrastructure would signal governmental commitment and provide necessary resources for improvement. Arabic language education would have protected funding rather than competing with other priorities in general education budgets. Development of regular monitoring and evaluation systems for instructional quality would create accountability and provide data for continuous improvement. Regular assessments of student outcomes, classroom observations, and program evaluations would identify what works, what doesn't, and where additional support is needed, enabling evidence-based refinement of policies and practices.

## **D. DISCUSSION**

This research reveals a significant pedagogical gap between Arabic language learning practices in Indonesia and Jordan. In Indonesia, learning is still dominated by traditional grammar-translation approaches oriented toward knowledge about language rather than the ability to use language, while Jordan has implemented a more holistic communicative approach. This gap indicates the need for a paradigm transformation in Arabic language learning in Indonesia, where the view of Arabic as merely a classical and religious text language needs to be expanded to recognize it as a dynamic modern communication tool. However, it is crucial to note that adopting the Jordanian approach cannot be done wholesale, as Indonesia's different sociolinguistic context—where Arabic is not a daily language of instruction and exposure is very limited—requires creative adaptation. Research findings show that combining



communicative learning principles with local contextualization yields more optimal results (Alkhawaldeh, 2017).

The striking difference in Arabic teacher competence between Indonesia and Jordan emerges as one of the main determinants of learning quality. In Jordan, the recruitment, education, and professional development system for teachers is managed systematically and continuously, while in Indonesia, many Arabic teachers at the elementary level lack adequate educational backgrounds and have minimal access to professional development. These findings confirm teacher quality theory, which states that teachers are the most influential factor in student learning outcomes. Teachers with strong Arabic language competence, adequate methodological understanding, and robust pedagogical abilities can create effective learning environments despite infrastructure limitations. This interpretation underscores the urgency of investing in teacher capacity development through comprehensive and continuous training programs, not merely one-shot training sessions. The teacher learning community model that has succeeded in Jordan can be adapted in Indonesia, where teachers form communities of practice for mutual learning and support, with digital platforms facilitating virtual communities when geographical distance poses challenges. Thus, an educator teaching Arabic in madrasah ibtidaiyah must have classroom management skills, including a series of actions taken by a teacher to create and maintain a conducive classroom environment and implement a communicative approach (Raehang et al., 2025).

One important lesson from this comparative study is that the effectiveness of foreign language learning is highly determined by the level of contextualization and cultural relevance. Students in Jordan have higher exposure to Arabic in daily life, while Indonesian students require extra efforts to create meaningful learning contexts. Findings show that when Arabic learning materials in Indonesia are integrated with local contexts—using Indonesian figures' names, familiar story settings, and communicative situations relevant to students' lives—motivation and engagement increase significantly. This aligns with meaningful learning theory and the principle of authenticity in language teaching. Contextualization does not mean reducing understanding of Arab culture but rather bridging students' culture with the target culture. An intercultural communication approach in Arabic learning can help students appreciate cultural diversity while maintaining their own cultural identity, making Arabic learning about mastering not only linguistic competence but also intercultural competence.

This research holds several important significances. Theoretically, it enriches the literature on Arabic as a foreign language learning, particularly at the elementary level where studies remain limited, provides a framework for understanding factors influencing Arabic learning success in non-native speaker contexts, and develops an Arabic learning model that integrates communicative approaches with local contextualization. Practically, it provides a blueprint of concrete strategies and solutions for improving Arabic learning quality in Indonesian elementary schools that can be directly implemented by education practitioners, offers policy recommendations for the government in designing national Arabic learning development programs, and presents an international collaboration model in language education development that can be replicated for other foreign languages. Socially, it contributes to efforts to improve education quality in Indonesia, particularly in language learning contexts, strengthens Indonesia-Jordan bilateral relations through academic and educational collaboration, and facilitates intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding between the Arab world and Indonesia (Waskito, 2020).

Despite being conducted systematically, this research acknowledges several limitations. Geographically, it only involved samples from East Java (Indonesia) and Amman-Irbid (Jordan), so generalizing findings to all regions of Indonesia and Jordan should be done cautiously, as learning conditions in other regions may differ, especially in areas with different geographical and socioeconomic characteristics. Temporally, this cross-sectional research captures a snapshot of learning conditions in one specific period, while longitudinal studies

would provide more comprehensive understanding of the development and effectiveness of learning strategies in the long term. Methodologically, although data triangulation was conducted, qualitative research has limitations in sample size and statistical generalization, and follow-up research with mixed-methods involving quantitative data would strengthen the validity of findings. The complexity of variables influencing language learning—including individual differences, social context, policies, and others—means this research cannot experimentally isolate the influence of each factor, requiring caution in interpreting causal relationships. Finally, as researchers from Indonesia and Jordan, there is potential for bias in data interpretation despite reflexivity efforts, and involving a third researcher from a neutral country could add objectivity to comparative studies. (Hamid et al., 2020)

## E. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the established research objectives, this study yields several main conclusions. Regarding the challenges of Arabic learning in Indonesian elementary schools, the research finds that Arabic language learning faces multidimensional challenges encompassing pedagogical aspects, teacher competence, infrastructure, and student motivation. Major challenges include the dominance of traditional methods that inadequately develop communicative abilities, low linguistic and methodological competence among teachers, limited learning resources and technology, and low intrinsic student motivation due to insufficient relevance of learning to real life. These challenges are interconnected and form a system that hinders optimal achievement of students' Arabic language competence.

Concerning effective practices in Jordan that can be adapted, the Arabic language learning system in Jordanian elementary schools demonstrates several effective practices with potential for adaptation in the Indonesian context, including a communicative-integrative approach emphasizing language use in meaningful contexts, a structured and continuous teacher development system, optimal use of technology and multimedia, and varied and engaging motivational strategies. However, adapting these practices must consider differences in sociolinguistic contexts, where Indonesian students have far more limited exposure to Arabic compared to Jordanian students.

Regarding practical strategies and solutions, this research formulates comprehensive strategies and solutions grouped into short-term, medium-term, and long-term categories. Short-term solutions focus on improving teacher competence through intensive training, adapting contextual learning materials, and utilizing simple technology. Medium-term solutions include curriculum reform, developing teacher coaching systems, and providing adequate infrastructure. Long-term solutions emphasize the importance of Indonesia-Jordan institutional collaboration, building a holistic Arabic learning ecosystem, and formulating systemic policies. The key to successful implementation of these strategies lies in appropriate contextualization, sustained commitment from all stakeholders, and strong policy support.

In general conclusion, improving the quality of Arabic learning in Indonesian elementary schools requires a paradigm transformation from traditional approaches to communicative-contextual approaches. Lessons from the Jordanian education system provide valuable insights but must be creatively adapted considering Indonesia's local context. Investment in teacher capacity development emerges as the top priority, followed by providing quality and relevant learning resources. International collaboration and systemic policy support will accelerate the achievement of effective and meaningful Arabic learning objectives for Indonesian students. The success of Arabic language education ultimately depends on recognizing that language learning transcends mere grammatical knowledge, encompassing the ability to communicate meaningfully across cultures while maintaining one's own cultural identity. This transformation requires not only changes in teaching methods and materials but also a fundamental shift in how all stakeholders—teachers, policymakers, institutions, and society at large—perceive and value Arabic language education in the Indonesian context.

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## G. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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