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## **The Role of Arabic Language in Early Childhood: A Phenomenological Study of Millennial Madurese Families in Kubu Raya**

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### **Abstract**

**Keywords:**

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language;  
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Millennial  
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This article aims to examine the role of Arabic in early childhood within the context of millennial Madurese families in Kubu Raya, West Kalimantan Province. This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method to gain an in-depth understanding of parents' experiences and practices in introducing and habituating the use of Arabic to early childhood. The primary data was obtained from five millennial Madurese parents who have early childhood in Kubu Raya Regency. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation techniques, supported by secondary data in the form of literature relevant to early childhood education, bilingualism, and Arabic language learning. The data collection process was carried out gradually and continuously throughout November 2025. Data analysis was conducted qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study show that millennial parents in Madura introduce Arabic to young children through various parenting strategies, such as integrating the language into daily activities, modelling behaviour, religious activities, and utilising digital media such as YouTube videos with parental guidance. Arabic is positioned not only as a tool for linguistic mastery but also as a medium for character formation and the internalisation of Islamic values. This study emphasises that the quality of interaction, consistency in parenting, and the family environment are key factors in the successful introduction of Arabic to early childhood.

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**Abstrak**

**Kata Kunci:** Anak usia dini; Bahasa Arab; Orang tua milenial.

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran bahasa Arab pada anak usia dini dalam konteks keluarga Madura milenial di Kubu Raya, Provinsi Kalimantan Barat. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologi untuk memahami secara mendalam pengalaman dan praktik orang tua dalam mengenalkan dan membiasakan penggunaan bahasa Arab kepada anak usia dini. Sumber data utama diperoleh dari lima orang tua milenial Madura yang memiliki anak usia dini di Kabupaten Kubu Raya. Data dikumpulkan melalui teknik wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi, serta didukung oleh data sekunder berupa literatur yang relevan dengan pendidikan anak usia dini, bilingualisme, dan pembelajaran bahasa Arab. Proses pengumpulan data dilakukan secara bertahap dan berkelanjutan selama bulan November 2025. Analisis data dilakukan secara kualitatif melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa orang tua milenial Madura mengenalkan bahasa Arab kepada anak usia dini melalui berbagai strategi parenting, seperti pembiasaan bahasa dalam aktivitas sehari-hari, keteladanan, kegiatan keagamaan, serta pemanfaatan media digital seperti video di Youtube dengan pendampingan orang tua. Bahasa Arab tidak hanya diposisikan sebagai sarana penguasaan linguistik, tetapi juga sebagai media pembentukan karakter dan internalisasi nilai-nilai Islam. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa kualitas interaksi, konsistensi pengasuhan, dan lingkungan keluarga menjadi faktor kunci dalam keberhasilan pengenalan bahasa Arab pada anak usia dini.

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## 1. Introduction

The family is the smallest social unit that indirectly plays an important role in influencing the growth and development of a child. Compared to the wider community environment, the family has a closer and stronger bond with the child. Through values, parenting patterns, and interactions among household members, the family shapes the child's character and personality. A family can be said to successfully support a child's growth and development if it is able to shape a personality that matches the child's development, allowing the child to express themselves, be creative, achieve, and actualise their potential in community life (Ulfa & Na'imah, 2020). The family environment serves as the primary foundation for the child development process. Families hold a very important position in supporting the growth and development of children. During early childhood, development occurs through interconnected stages, showing progress at each stage.

However, in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, many parents do not provide adequate attention to child development, meaning that the role of the family in supporting a child's overall growth has not been optimally realised. Contemporary phenomena indicate that some parents prioritise work, ultimately causing the child's developmental process not to proceed in accordance with developmental aspects (Hanifah & Farida, 2023).

The role of the family in supporting a child's growth and development cannot be separated from the role of language as the main means of communication and cognitive formation (Sapendi & Suratman, 2024; Zauche et al., 2016). Language becomes the first medium used by children to understand their environment, express feelings, and build social relationships. The family environment, particularly verbal interactions between parents and children, greatly determines the development of a child's language skills from an early age. Through daily conversations, stories, guidance, and parental responses, children receive linguistic stimulation that directly influences the development of thinking, imagination, and communication skills. The lack of parental involvement, as seen in the phenomenon occurring in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, has implications for the limited quality and quantity of language interaction within the family (Kurniawan et al., 2024; Nilapancuran et al., 2025; Yulianti, 2024). Children who interact more with gadgets than through direct communication are at risk of experiencing language development delays, limited abilities, and difficulties in expressing ideas and emotions verbally. In fact, well-developed language skills are an important foundation for a child's success in learning, socialising, and building self-confidence. Moreover, language within the family not only serves as a communication tool but also as a means of internalising values, norms, and socio-cultural identity (Fata et al., 2022; Hamzah et al., 2023).

Through language, parents instil moral values, attitudes, and ways for children to respect themselves and their surroundings. Families have the responsibility to create a rich, positive, and supportive language environment so that children can develop their language skills optimally while also forming a balanced personality. Therefore, strengthening the role of language in family interactions is an important aspect in supporting children's overall growth and development amid the challenges of the modern era. In addition, the role of family and language in the growth and development of children, children's interest in learning languages, and the availability of opportunities to practice actively are important factors in the successful development of bilingual abilities. Parents can support and encourage the use of two languages at home, as well as provide access to bilingual reading materials that can create a family environment supporting the use of two languages (bilingualism). Consistent and continuous interaction in both languages is also important to ensure that children can use the languages fluently and confidently (Novita & Nopriansyah, 2024; Puji Safitri et al., 2025; Wijaya et al., 2024).

In the context of research conducted by the research team, strengthening the role of family and language in the development of

bilingualism becomes increasingly relevant when linked to the Arabic language in early childhood. For millennial Madurese families in Kubu Raya, Arabic is positioned not only as a foreign language but also carries strong religious, cultural, and Islamic identity values. Exposure to Arabic from an early age, whether through simple communication at home, daily vocabulary routines, prayers, or reading the Qur'an, becomes a form of language practice integrated with daily family life (Mufidah, 2024). The role of parents in introducing Arabic from an early age is crucial through a responsive and consistent parenting style. Parents who consciously use Arabic in certain contexts, such as greetings, daily expressions, or religious activities, can create a meaningful linguistic environment for their child (Irman Sumantri, 2022). This practice not only supports the development of the child's bilingual abilities but also strengthens emotional bonds, spiritual values, and cultural understanding from an early age. Parent-child interaction in the use of Arabic, adjusted to the child's developmental stage, helps the child build confidence in using the language (Fatonah, 2022; Mursalina & Mawaddah, 2025; Suratman, 2021). When Arabic is introduced naturally through family activities, children not only learn the linguistic aspects but also understand the function and meaning of the language in social and religious life. Thus, Arabic serves as a means of shaping children's character, identity, and religiosity, while also enriching their bilingual experience.

The phenomenological study conducted by the researcher on millennial Madurese families in Kubu Raya is important for gaining an in-depth understanding of the practices, meanings, and experiences of parents in introducing Arabic to early childhood. This approach allows the researcher to explore the everyday realities of families in creating a language environment that supports the holistic development of children, encompassing language, cognitive, social, and spiritual aspects for early childhood.

## **2. Methods**

This article employs a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of Arabic in early childhood within the context of millennial Madurese families in Kubu Raya, West Kalimantan Province (Masmuri & Suratman, 2019; Miles et al., 2014; Sahri, 2024a; Suratman & Rahnang, 2021). This approach was chosen because the study focuses on the daily experiences of parents in introducing and familiarising young children with the use of Arabic. Through a qualitative approach, the researcher aims to capture the social reality and values that underpin parents in introducing Arabic within the family environment. The research data sources come from key informants, namely parents from millennial Madurese families who have early childhood. The number of informants is five millennial parents with young children in Kubu Raya District, West Kalimantan Province. The selection criteria for the informants were as follows: (1) parents belonging to the millennial generation; (2) families of Madurese ethnic background residing in Kubu Raya Regency, West Kalimantan; (3) parents who have children in the early childhood age

range (0–6 years); and (4) parents who actively introduce or expose their children to Arabic in daily family interactions, religious activities, or informal learning contexts. Based on these criteria, five millennial parents were selected as key informants because they were considered capable of providing rich and relevant information regarding the practice of introducing Arabic to early childhood within the family environment.

The data sources for this study are also supported by secondary data in the form of documents and literature relevant to early childhood education, bilingualism, and Arabic language learning. Data collection techniques were carried out through interviews, observations, and documentation. The data collection process was conducted gradually and continuously while considering the credibility of the informants and the consistency of the data with the research focus during November 2025. Data analysis in this study was conducted using a qualitative approach that combines general qualitative analysis procedures with phenomenological interpretation. Initially, the data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation were organized and reduced to identify relevant information related to the research focus (Khalil et al., 2025; Sahri, 2024b; Sahri & Widiatmaka, 2025). Meanwhile, the phenomenological approach also involved several stages. First, the researcher conducted open coding to identify key statements from informants regarding their experiences in introducing Arabic to their children. Second, these statements were grouped into thematic categories representing recurring patterns of parenting practices, language familiarization, and religious-cultural values. Third, the researcher interpreted the meaning of these themes to understand the essence of parents lived experiences in creating a language environment that supports early childhood development. Finally, the researcher synthesized these findings to construct a comprehensive description of how Arabic language practices are integrated into family life among Madurese millennial families in Kubu Raya.

### **3. Result and Discussion**

#### **Millennial Parents' Strategies in Teaching Arabic in Early Childhood**

The findings of this study indicate that millennial Madurese parents in Kubu Raya employ several strategies in introducing Arabic to early childhood within the family environment. Based on interviews and observations conducted with five millennial parents, the introduction of Arabic is generally carried out through daily family interactions, religious activities, and the use of digital media. These practices are integrated into everyday routines, allowing children to encounter Arabic in natural and meaningful contexts.

One of the dominant strategies identified in this study is the habituation of Arabic through daily social activities. Parents introduce Arabic in simple and contextual forms, such as greetings, expressions used before and after activities, and basic vocabulary related to family routines. For instance, children are accustomed to hearing and using phrases such as greetings, short prayers, and simple commands during daily interactions. This practice gradually familiarises children with

Arabic sounds and vocabulary, enabling them to perceive the language as a natural part of their family communication rather than as a difficult foreign language.




Millennial parents are the generation born between 1980 and 2000. The millennial generation is also referred to as Generation Y. This term began to be recognised and used in the editorials of major US newspapers in August 1993. Millennials have unique characteristics based on their region and socio-economic conditions. One of the main traits of millennials is marked by increased use of communication, media, and digital technology. Because they were raised with technological advancements, millennials are characterised by creativity, being well-informed, having passion, and being productive. Compared to previous generations, millennials adapt more easily to technology (Rahmawati, 2022).

In relation to the context of the study conducted by the researcher, parents' strategies in introducing Arabic cannot be separated from the parenting practices carried out in daily life. Parents act as the primary agents of language socialisation, especially during early childhood, which is a sensitive period for language development. At this stage, children more easily absorb sounds, vocabulary, and language structures through natural and repeated interactions in the family environment. One of the dominant strategies used by parents is familiarising children with Arabic through social activities. Arabic is introduced in a simple and contextual manner, such as the use of greetings, expressions of prayers before and after activities, and basic vocabulary related to family activities. This strategy makes Arabic a part of the family routine, so children do not see it as a foreign or difficult language, but as a language with communicative and religious functions in social life. In addition, millennial Madurese parents in Kubu Raya also introduce Arabic through recitation and the use of specific vocabulary to their children. *"Usually I teach my child simple Arabic words during daily activities, for example when greeting family members or before starting an activity"* (Based on the results of interviews with Madurese millennial parents in Kubu Raya).

This is relevant to religious and cultural practices within Madurese families, where Quranic study activities become one of the main means of introducing the Arabic language from an early age. Through these study activities, children are introduced to the *hijaiyah* letters, basic phrases, and the pronunciation of simple words and sentences in Arabic. This process not only serves as a language learning tool, but also as a means of instilling religious values and fostering spiritual habits in children's home life. In addition to recitation activities, millennial parents in Madura, Kubu Raya also encourage the use of certain Arabic vocabulary in daily interactions, such as greetings, simple commands, and terms related to worship activities. The use of this vocabulary is repeated and contextual, allowing children to understand the meaning of Arabic in social life activities. This approach shows that Arabic is not taught formally, but rather introduced naturally through parenting practices that adapt to the child's development (Ahmadil et al., 2025; Mahmudah, 2025).

Through a combination of language habituation, role modelling, religious activities, and the use of digital media, Millennial Madurese parents in Kubu Raya create a language environment that is relevant to the Arabic language development of early childhood. This strategy demonstrates parents' efforts to adapt parenting practices to early childhood development while maintaining religious and local cultural values within Madurese families in Kubu Raya. With this strategy, Arabic not only serves as a means of communication but also as a medium for shaping children's identity and character from an early age. In addition to habituation, parents also apply a role modelling strategy in language practice. Early childhood tends to imitate the language used by parents and family members at home. When parents consistently use Arabic in simple communication at home, the child is encouraged to mimic and use it spontaneously. This role modelling strengthens the language acquisition process while also building an emotional bond between parent and child during the language learning process. Based on interviews with millennial Madurese parents in Kubu Raya, at least several themes are introduced by parents to children through YouTube content, as follows:

**Table 1. Arabic Language Themes in Introducing Arabic to Early Childhood**

No	Arabic Language Theme	Examples of YouTube Channels that teach Arabic
1.	Counting and Introducing the <i>Hijaiyah</i> Letters	 <p>Source: Channel Youtube Ayo Kita Berdoa</p>
2.	Guessing Animal Names in Arabic	 <p>Source: Channel Youtube Sarah Playschool</p>
3.	Introducing Body Parts in Arabic	 <p>Source: Channel Youtube Annawawi TV</p>

#### 4. Islamic Children's Song



Source: Channel Youtube Hore Kids

The findings show that millennial Madurese parents also utilise digital media, particularly YouTube, to support the introduction of Arabic to their children. The content accessed by parents generally focuses on basic vocabulary, hijaiyah letters, and Islamic children's songs that are considered attractive and easy for children to follow. As shown in Table 1, several YouTube channels frequently used by parents provide educational content that combines language learning with visual and audio stimulation suitable for early childhood.

Based on interviews with the informants, parents intentionally select YouTube content that introduces simple Arabic vocabulary and Islamic educational songs. One parent explained: *"My child likes watching Arabic songs on YouTube, especially the ones that teach hijaiyah letters. Usually, we watch together and I repeat the words so my child can follow them."* (Based on the results of interviews with Madurese millennial parents in Kubu Raya). Another parent also stated that digital media helps children remember Arabic vocabulary more easily because of the visual and musical elements, *"When my child watches videos about animal names in Arabic, he often repeats the words after the video. Sometimes he remembers the words while playing at home"* (Based on the results of interviews with Madurese millennial parents in Kubu Raya).

In this process the child imitates the language used by their parents, which is relevant to the theory that early childhood is characterised by the imitation mechanism, an important process in learning, where children replicate the behaviour, activities, and language use of people in their social environment. Through this imitation process, children not only observe but also reproduce the actions they have imitated in the form of behaviour. Early childhood is a developmental stage marked by high curiosity and a strong tendency to learn through observation and imitation of their surroundings (Ayuni & Watini, 2022). The next strategy employed by millennial Madurese parents is the use of media and learning resources appropriate for the child's age. Parents provide picture storybooks, children's songs, educational videos, and simple games in Arabic (Hamzah & Suratman, 2023). These media serve as engaging and enjoyable linguistic stimuli, thus increasing children's interest in interacting with the Arabic language. In the context of millennial Madurese families, the use of digital media also becomes an alternative with parental guidance to ensure its use as an educational medium (Hasanah, 2023; Rizqina et al., 2024; Sabrina et al., 2025).

Positive communicative interactions conducted by parents become an important strategy in parenting practice. Parents provide

space for children to try using Arabic without undue pressure or demands. This approach helps children build confidence and courage in using the language, which is a crucial foundation for early childhood bilingual development. The introduction of Arabic in millennial Madurese families is also combined with the instillation of religious and cultural values. Arabic is introduced as the language of worship and the source of Islamic teachings, making language introduction part of instilling Islamic values. The integration of language, religious values, and culture makes the process of learning Arabic relevant to the developmental context of early childhood (Ulfa, 2023).

Parents' strategies in introducing Arabic in parenting practices are not only oriented towards linguistic mastery, but also towards character formation, religious identity, and emotional closeness within the family. These findings emphasise that the success of introducing Arabic to young children is largely determined by consistency, role modelling, and the quality of language interactions established by parents within the family environment. This is relevant to the view that places the family environment as the primary source for children in the language acquisition process. Parenting strategies that emphasise consistency, role modelling, and the quality of language interaction align with the view that the quality and intensity of a child's exposure to a second language through daily interaction greatly influence the speed and effectiveness of language competence development. When parents consciously introduce Arabic into family routines, the child receives linguistic input that facilitates vocabulary comprehension, broadens understanding, and enables mastery of language usage patterns in context. In this context, the home environment serves as the most fundamental setting for the child to learn communication. The home becomes the context of the most intensive language use because interactions between parents and children occur continuously within it (Fani & Setyawati, 2025).

### **Arabic Language Learning in Millennial Madurese Families from a Developmental Theory Perspective**

The introduction of the Arabic language to early childhood in millennial Madurese families in Kubu Raya can be comprehensively understood through the perspective of child development theory. Early Childhood are at a developmental stage where they receive language stimulation from their environment, including from parents. Thus, the language experiences obtained from parents have a long-term impact on the linguistic, cognitive, and social abilities of early childhood (Suratman & Rahnang, 2021). In this context, the family acts as the primary and first developmental environment, providing Arabic language stimulation through daily interactions at home. According to Piaget's cognitive development theory, early childhood are in the pre-operational stage, where the learning process occurs through symbols, imitation, and concrete experiences (Pakpahan & Saragih, 2022). The introduction of Arabic in millennial Madurese families is conducted through simple symbols, such as prayer phrases, worship vocabulary, and greetings, which are easily understood and remembered by children. This activity allows children to associate Arabic with contextual experiences in their

lives, so that the language acquisition process occurs gradually and in accordance with the child's cognitive development stage. The use of this strategy is relevant to Durtam's (2022) study, which states that early childhood Arabic language learning models to improve children's vocabulary mastery require effective learning media. Arabic learning media that can be used include picture media, body parts, cards, books, puzzles, and others.

From the perspective of Vygotsky's theory, a child's language development is greatly influenced by social interaction with the environment (Rahman, 2024). Millennial Madurese parents in Kubu Raya play a role in providing scaffolding through guidance, repetition, and examples of using Arabic in specific contexts. Through repeated and supportive interaction, children are given the opportunity to develop their Arabic language skills within their zone of proximal development. This practice confirms that Arabic is not acquired passively, but rather through a social process involving dialogue and parental support. Scaffolding plays a very important role within the framework of the Zone of Proximal Development, which is the condition when a child is able to reach a higher level of skill through assistance and guidance. In this process, the presence of parents is crucial to provide direction, examples, and support gradually according to the child's abilities. The dominant factor influencing a child's language development is family parenting style, with a consistent approach to stimulation for optimal results (Insani, 2024).

Furthermore, language acquisition theory emphasises the importance of high-quality and continuous linguistic input (Jasmine et al., 2025). In millennial Madurese families, Arabic is introduced through consistent strategies in the home environment, whether through communication, Quranic study activities, or the use of age-appropriate learning media. This strategy provides linguistic input that strengthens children's language experiences and supports the gradual development of bilingual competence (Hia et al., 2025). In addition to cognitive and linguistic aspects, the introduction of Arabic is also related to the moral and religious development of children. Arabic is positioned as the language of worship and a source of Islamic teachings, so its use within the family is not only aimed at language mastery, but also at the internalisation of religious values and the formation of the child's Islamic identity. From the perspective of moral development theory, this experience helps children understand the religious values inherent in the Arabic language through daily practices exemplified by their parents.

This is relevant to the view of Rizky Auliani et al (2025), who revealed that Arabic not only functions as a means of communication but also holds a fundamental position in understanding Islamic teachings. Mastery of Arabic enables children to understand the meaning of prayers, Qur'anic verses, and various religious terms embedded in the daily practices of a Muslim. Introducing Arabic at an early age not only provides linguistic advantages but also contributes to strengthening religious understanding and fostering a child's closeness to religious values from the early stages of development.

Furthermore, the introduction of Arabic to children from an early age by millennial Madurese parents is supported by the view that early childhood is the most optimal period for providing stimulation in a language other than the first or native language. According to brain mechanism theory, early childhood is a developmental stage when a child's brain is most receptive to various language stimulations. At this stage, the child's ability to absorb and process language is at the right level in the development process (Munawwarah & Hibana, 2022). Introducing Arabic from an early age not only contributes to a child's understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage and Islamic values but also equips the child with the ability to communicate in a language with global usage. Arabic, as one of the international languages, provides opportunities for the child to interact in broader contexts in the future. Furthermore, learning Arabic at an early age has a positive impact on the child's development, particularly in cognitive aspects. The process of learning a new language stimulates the child's brain to form new neural connections, thereby enhancing critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills (Qodir & Hasan, 2024).

Thus, the introduction of the Arabic language within Madurese millennial families can be understood as a holistic developmental process, encompassing cognitive, social, linguistic, and religious aspects. From a developmental theory perspective, the success of introducing Arabic to young children is greatly influenced by the suitability of parenting strategies with the child's developmental stages, the quality of parent-child interactions, and the consistency of the family environment in providing language experiences for early childhood.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that the introduction of Arabic to early childhood in millennial Madurese families in Kubu Raya is primarily carried out through family-based language practices integrated into daily life. Millennial parents introduce Arabic through several key strategies, including language habituation in everyday interactions, parental role modelling, religious activities such as Qur'anic recitation, and the use of digital media such as educational YouTube content. These strategies allow children to encounter Arabic naturally within meaningful family contexts, enabling the language to function not only as a learning subject but also as a medium for communication and the internalisation of Islamic values.

This research contributes to the understanding of early childhood language socialisation by highlighting the role of family interaction in introducing Arabic within informal learning environments. The findings show that the success of early Arabic exposure is strongly influenced by consistent parent-child interaction, the integration of language with religious practices, and the adaptive use of digital media by millennial parents. These findings suggest that parents should introduce Arabic through simple daily interactions, religious routines, and targeted use of digital media to support early childhood language development. For teachers and early childhood education institutions, collaboration with families is crucial to creating consistent language exposure between home and school. Although this study focused on Madurese millennial families in Kubu Raya, these findings may also be relevant to other

Madurese communities or Muslim families in various regions where Arabic plays a significant role in religious and cultural life. However, further research involving more participants and diverse sociocultural settings is needed to examine how similar parenting strategies operate in other communities and to explore additional factors that influence early Arabic exposure within the family context.

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