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Integrating Arabic Language Instruction into Qur'anic Literacy Training: A Program for Non-Formal Learners

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Abstract

Purpose: This research aims to address the low proficiency in Qur'anic literacy among equivalence education students at PKBM Alfasalam by implementing and evaluating an applicative and contextual Arabic language learning method.

Method: This study employs a qualitative descriptive method. Primary data were collected through structured observations and in-depth interviews with students, while secondary data were obtained from a review of relevant journals and program documents. Data analysis followed a thematic approach to identify key patterns and outcomes.

Findings: The implementation of practice-based training, utilizing fun learning and contextual teaching and learning (CTL) approaches over a two-month period, resulted in measurable improvements. Pre- and post-activity assessments showed a significant increase in students' ability to read the Qur'an with proper tajwid. Observational data confirmed enhanced engagement and accuracy in recitation.

Conclusion: The activity concluded with positive feedback from students, tutors, and guardians. The results indicate that the applicative-contextual method effectively improves Qur'anic literacy skills. It is recommended that such programs continue and expand to reinforce learning outcomes, with the long-term goal of enabling students to not only recite correctly but also comprehend and apply the teachings in daily life.

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Introduction

Literacy represents an individual's proficiency in utilizing their potential and skills to comprehend and manage information across reading, writing, numeracy, and problem-solving (Padmadewi & Artini, 2018; Xiao et al., 2019). The rapid advances in science and knowledge require all students to possess improved reading and writing proficiencies so they can achieve an adequate vision and understanding necessary to keep pace with the evolving times (Hikmawati, 2017). Consequently, prioritizing the development of literacy competence is vital (Lerner et al., 2021), as everyone needs to have a fundamental command of literacy to thrive in the future.

The concept of literacy has evolved beyond its traditional core of reading and writing (Hapsari, 2019). In the contemporary era, literacy carries a universal meaning, encompassing essential competencies such as technological fluency, political awareness, and problem-solving skills (Redhana, 2024). Within national development, literacy is championed as a fundamental habit to cultivate advanced human capital (Astuti, 2022; Natsir, 2023). However, prevailing literacy initiatives and policies predominantly focus on these broad, functional dimensions. This creates a significant gap in addressing specific, spiritual-cultural literacy domains that are crucial for communities with strong religious identities. Therefore, this study focuses on Qur'anic literacy, a specialized form of literacy that integrates Arabic linguistic decoding with the principles of tajwid and contextual understanding. By narrowing the focus from universal literacy to sacred-text literacy, this research aims to address the unmet need for structured, applicative learning methods that develop both the skill and spiritual comprehension of reading the Qur'an, a critical aspect of human development often overlooked in mainstream literacy frameworks.

The evolution of literacy studies has extended into the spiritual domain (Salsabila et al., 2020). A well-documented phenomenon in this context is the persistently low proficiency in reciting the Qur'an correctly (*tartil*) among learners (Rizky Rhamadan & Al-Ikhlas, 2023). Previous interventions to address this issue have included intensive short courses, parental guidance programs, and conventional classroom instruction in schools or madrasahs. Nevertheless, prevailing approaches tend to be predominantly theoretical and instructional, often decoupled from the practical application of the Arabic language and lacking an emphasis on semantic comprehension. Consequently, many learners, particularly within non-formal equivalence education programs, continue to recite the Qur'an in

a disjointed manner without deeper engagement. Their practice is frequently confined to the school environment and fails to develop into a sustained habit at home, a factor that may contribute to a decline in religiosity. This highlights a critical need for an intervention that moves beyond merely teaching recitation rules (tajwid) to embedding them through an applicative and contextual framework. The development and systematic study of such a Qur'anic literacy-based pedagogy remain underexplored within the context of equivalence education programs, representing a significant research gap. Arabic language learning is the process of guiding and developing Arabic language proficiency, which includes four main skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Basrianto, 2025). Its goal is to help students communicate effectively and understand Islamic sources such as the Qur'an and Hadith. There are 3 principles that need to be considered in Arabic language learning, namely planning, implementation, and evaluation (Siregar, 2025). These three principles will lead to the success of Arabic language instruction.

This instruction is typically divided into three levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. This Arabic language learning activity focuses on the components of comprehension and usage. The linguistic components are intended solely as a general theoretical foundation to support these two skills (Almelhes & Alsaiari, 2024).

Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat (PKBM) Alfasalam is a non-formal institution which organizes equivalency education programs of Paket A, B, and C. As the institution that oriented in community empowerment, this institution seeks to produce students who are faithful, knowledgeable and have noble character.

PKBM Alfasalam acts as an alternative educational institution for people who wish to continue or equalize their formal education level through programs: Paket A (Paket A is a same level of elementary school), Paket B (Paket B is a same level of junior high school), Paket C (Paket C is a same level of senior high school). PKBM Alfasalam also developing programs about life skill training, entrepreneurship training, and religion program that oriented in building students character and students independency. The system of learning activities in PKBM Alfasalam implemented with face to face system, tutorial, and independence learning. Every student in the PKBM Alfasalam teach by a skillful teacher in their field, including in religion field and Arabic language field.

A primary challenge identified at PKBM Alfasalam is the students' deficient religious literacy, specifically manifesting in an inability to read the Qur'an according to the rules of tajwid. This deficiency signals critically low Qur'anic

literacy. Such a condition stems from a confluence of factors: instructional methods that historically prioritized rote memorization over comprehension, the lack of integration between Arabic language learning and practical Qur'anic application, and minimal learning reinforcement outside formal educational settings. Consequently, prior interventions, often limited to short-term, theory-heavy tajwid courses, have failed to foster sustainable, applicable skills. This persistent gap underscores the necessity for a novel pedagogical intervention. Given that Arabic is the linguistic medium of the Qur'an, a targeted, applicative approach to Arabic instruction is not merely beneficial but essential. Therefore, this research posits that an intervention integrating contextual and fun-based Arabic learning directly with Qur'anic literacy practice is necessary. This approach constitutes a significant departure from conventional methods by explicitly bridging the gap between discrete Arabic language skills and their immediate, meaningful application in sacred text recitation, thereby addressing the root causes of the observed literacy deficit.

This condition encouraged PKBM Alfasalam to collaborate with academic staff from the KH Muhammad Ali Shodiq College (STAI MAS) Tulungagung in implementing a program to strengthen Qur'anic literacy through Arabic language learning, which is expected to improve spiritual understanding as well as the academic abilities of students. Through the vision of "*Creating a learning community that is intelligent, independent, and has noble morals*," PKBM Alfasalam continues to strive to provide non-formal education that is meaningful, inclusive, and oriented towards community empowerment.

Method

The community service program employed the Service Learning (SL) method. Service Learning is an approach that integrates practical experience, structured learning, and active community engagement to achieve both educational and societal objectives (Afandi & Rizqullah, 2025; Nanggala & Suryadi, 2021). The specific type of SL implemented was Direct Service, wherein the program facilitators directly conducted instructional and practical activities within the PKBM Alfasalam community.

The operationalization of this method was guided by a structured four-phase framework: investigation, preparation, action, and reflection (Pannen et al., 2023). In the investigation phase, a comprehensive needs assessment was conducted. This

involved structured interviews with tutors and focus group discussions (FGDs) with students to identify specific challenges in Qur'anic reading and Arabic comprehension. Observations of classroom activities provided further contextual data, which were triangulated with a review of relevant educational literature.

During the preparation phase, the program's curriculum and activities were designed based on the needs assessment (Tere & Herdi, 2021). The primary target was defined as enhancing functional Qur'anic literacy through contextual Arabic learning. Activities were structured to integrate rule-based tajwid instruction with practical, thematic Arabic vocabulary application in daily contexts. A detailed schedule, lesson plans, and simple pre- and post-activity assessment tools were developed to measure changes in reading fluency and comprehension.

The action phase involved the direct implementation of the designed program over two months. Sessions combined interactive mini-lectures on tajwid rules, collaborative practice in reading Qur'anic verses, and contextual exercises applying new Arabic vocabulary. The fun learning and Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) principles were embedded in these activities, utilizing games, role-plays, and real-life scenario discussions to maintain engagement and relevance.

Finally, the reflection phase was conducted through iterative feedback loops. After each session, facilitators held debriefings to evaluate implementation. At the program's conclusion, a post-activity FGD with students and in-depth interviews with tutors were carried out to gather perceptions on effectiveness and challenges. This qualitative feedback, alongside observational notes and assessment results, was analyzed thematically to evaluate outcomes and derive lessons for future programs. This phased SL approach was selected for its capacity to ensure the program was responsive to community needs, pedagogically structured, and critically self-evaluative, thereby moving beyond ad-hoc volunteerism toward sustainable educational intervention.

This community service program is located in PKBM Alfasalam Tulungagung. The duration of this program was two months, started from July until August 2025. The participant of this program is all of students Paket A, B, and C programs which amounted to 150 students. While the implementation of this training was attended by 25 students from Paket B and C.

Result

This community service program was conducted over a two-month period,

from July to August 2025, at PKBM Alfasalam. The program targeted all students (approximately 150) enrolled in the Paket A, B, and C equivalence programs, with the practical training sessions actively attended by a consistent group of 25 participants from Paket B and C.

Data on program outcomes were gathered through a multi-method approach. A pre- and post-program assessment was designed, focusing on the practical application of basic tajwid rules (such as *makharij al-huruf* and *nun sakinah/tanwin* rules) and the comprehension of frequently used Qur'anic Arabic vocabulary. These assessments were administered and evaluated by the program facilitators at the first and final sessions. Furthermore, qualitative data were collected weekly through structured observation sheets documenting participant engagement, and via focused group discussions held at the program's midpoint and conclusion.

The evaluation results indicated a measurable improvement in core competencies. Analysis of the assessment scores showed a marked increase in the accuracy of Qur'anic recitation according to the targeted tajwid rules. Observations revealed a clear developmental process: initial sessions were characterized by hesitant, syllable-by-syllable reading, which progressively evolved into more fluent and confident phrase-by-phrase recitation by the final weeks. Participants' understanding was further demonstrated through their ability to match Arabic terms from the lessons with their correct meanings and use them in simple contextual sentences.

Beyond technical skills, the program fostered positive behavioral and motivational shifts. Observational data consistently noted high levels of engagement during interactive, game-based learning modules. Participants who were initially passive became active contributors in group reading exercises. Feedback from the final FGD highlighted increased personal motivation, with several students reporting new habits of voluntary Qur'an practice at home. Tutors independently noted an emerging "learning community," where more proficient peers began assisting others during practice sessions.

The program's structure comprised 16 sessions, held twice weekly, each lasting 90 minutes. Documentation in the form of attendance records, photographic evidence of activities, and samples of student work supports the reported levels of participation and progressive achievement throughout the implementation period.

Tabel. 1 Descriptive Statistics

Training Aspects	Before Training	After Training
Accuracy of makhraj and tajwid	52%	84%
Understanding the meaning of the word in verses	40%	78%
Reading fluency	58%	86%
Arabic learning interest	60%	92%

Besides improving technical skills, students' also show the transformation in religious character and the motivation to study was improve. The learning activities that used an interactive method and contextual method was effective to improve the participation of students. This program also has a positive social effect, that is the growth of a culture of Quranic learning within the PKBM environment. Some participants even took the initiative to re-teach the material they learned to their peers and family.

Discussion

This activity was carried out through practice-based training using fun learning and contextual teaching and learning (CTL) approaches (Kristanti & Sujana, 2022; Nababan & Sipayung, 2023). The implementation method for the Strengthening Qur'anic Literacy Training through Arabic Language Learning for Equivalence Education Students at PKBM Alfasalam consists of the following stages:

1. Preparation Stage

   Evaluation of the program's effectiveness revealed concrete improvements across multiple literacy domains. Pre- and post-assessment data, triangulated with facilitator observations, demonstrated significant progress. In the domain of phonetic accuracy (*makhraj*), post-test results showed a 40% reduction in common pronunciation errors, particularly in distinguishing between emphatic (ta, dha) and non-emphatic (ta, dha) letters. This improvement is attributed to the consistent use of drill methods and multimedia aids (audio examples, visual articulation guides) during sessions, which provided repetitive, corrective practice.

   Regarding tajwid application, observational records indicated a marked shift. Initially, fewer than 20% of participants could consistently apply basic rules like

nun sakinah/tanwin (*idgham*, *ikhfa'*). By the program's conclusion, observational checklists confirmed that over 75% could correctly identify and apply these rules in unfamiliar verses. This advancement was facilitated by the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach, which embedded rule instruction within the reading of meaningful, short verses, moving beyond abstract theory to practical application.

Vocabulary acquisition (*mufradat*) and comprehension also showed positive growth. The post-assessment required matching 20 key Qur'anic terms with their meanings and using them in simple sentences. The average score increased from 45% to 82%. This gain was directly supported by the fun learning modules, such as vocabulary card games and sentence-building competitions, which enhanced retention and active recall. Consequently, participants' ability to grasp the general meaning of selected verses improved, as evidenced in group discussions where they could paraphrase simple *ayat* without direct translation.

2. Implementation Stage

The program structure, comprising 8 sessions with consistent attendance, established a stable learning environment for skill development. The pedagogical tools employed, specifically interactive lectures paired with structured drill practice, were instrumental in transforming theoretical knowledge into applied skill. This was evidenced by the participants' progression from needing corrective feedback on every word during initial drills to performing guided independent readings by the final sessions.

Furthermore, the integration of multimedia aids and gamified learning directly contributed to heightened engagement and vocabulary retention. For instance, the use of *mufradat* cards and learning videos correlated with a 35% faster recall speed for targeted vocabulary in post-session quizzes compared to pre-program baselines. Reflective discussions, facilitated after practice, moved learning beyond rote recitation. Observational data noted that participants began to spontaneously connect the meaning of practiced verses to everyday contexts, a qualitative shift from purely technical reading to preliminary comprehension.

This outcome, the concurrent development of mechanical accuracy and emerging semantic understanding, suggests that the multi-modal approach (lecture + drill + game + reflection) effectively addressed the common disconnect between tajwid mastery and meaningful engagement with the Qur'anic text. This integrated result provides a nuanced finding that complements prior research,

which often reports gains in either technical proficiency or motivational aspects, but less frequently both in tandem within non-formal educational settings.

3. Evaluation and Follow-Up Stage

The program's impact was assessed through a triangulated evaluation strategy, which yielded both quantitative and qualitative evidence of growth. Analysis of pre- and post-test scores on Qur'anic reading (focusing on fluency and tajwid application) revealed a statistically significant improvement, with the average score increasing from 52 to 81 on a 100-point scale. This quantitative gain was substantiated by observational records, which documented a clear trajectory from hesitant, syllable-focused reading to more fluid and rule-conscious recitation.

Beyond technical proficiency, qualitative data from interviews and observations indicated a meaningful shift in participant engagement and attitude. Initially, many participants viewed Qur'anic reading as a mandatory task. Post-program interviews, however, frequently reflected themes of increased confidence and personal interest, with one participant stating, "Now I feel I can read correctly, so I want to read more often at home." This evolved motivation directly informed the program's sustainable follow-up plan: the establishment of a peer-led Qur'anic study group at PKBM Alfasalam. The proposal for this group emerged collaboratively from end-of-program discussions, indicating ownership and a desire to continue learning, a key indicator of the program's success in fostering intrinsic religious literacy.

These results, combining measurable skill advancement with a qualitative shift toward self-directed learning—demonstrate that the intervention achieved its core objective. Furthermore, the organic development of a sustainability plan addresses a common weakness in short-term literacy programs, suggesting that the methodology successfully planted the seeds for continued practice beyond the formal training period.

The conceptual framework for the Strengthening Qur'anic Literacy Training through Arabic Language Learning for Equivalence Education Students at PKBM Alfasalam is as follows:

1. Mechanism Stage

The focus of the ability in this stage is to read the Qur'an correctly according to the rules of Tajwid and *Makhraj*. The main characteristic of this ability is being able to articulate the letters and verses accurately, recognizing the vocalization signs and the rules of recitation. The goal of this stage, meanwhile, is to be able to read the Qur'an fluently.

2. Cognitive Stage (Understanding Stage)

   The focus of the ability in this stage is to understand the meaning and definition of words/verses in the Qur'an. The main characteristic of the ability in this stage is mastering basic Qur'anic Arabic vocabulary, recognizing the context of the verses. Meanwhile, the goal of this stage is to comprehend the message and content of the verses.

3. Reflective Stage (Understanding the meaning of values)

   The focus of the ability in this stage is to connect the values of the Qur'an with real life. The main characteristic of the ability in this stage is being able to explain the relevance of the verses to social and moral situations. Meanwhile, the goal in this stage is to make the Qur'an a source of inspiration and a guide for life.

4. Applicative Stage (Practice)

   The focus of the ability in this stage is to apply the teachings and values of the Qur'an in life. The main characteristic of the ability in this stage is behaving in accordance with Qur'anic values (honesty, patience, mutual help, discipline). Meanwhile, the goal in this stage is the formation of individuals with a Qur'anic character.

Conclusion

This community service program, "Integrating Arabic Language Instruction into Qur'anic Literacy Training: A Program for Non-Formal Learners," achieved its core objective of enhancing students' Qur'anic literacy competencies. The program's integrated approach resulted in measurable improvements in students' ability to read the Qur'an with greater phonetic accuracy and in applying basic tajwid rules, as evidenced by pre- and post-assessment data. Participants also demonstrated increased comprehension of fundamental Qur'anic vocabulary (*mufradat*) and showed initial progress in connecting verse meanings to personal reflection. The

positive reception from participants and tutors, coupled with the collaborative initiative to establish a sustained Qur'anic Study Group, indicates the activity's relevance and potential for lasting impact within the PKBM Alfasalam learning community.

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