

The Use of Songs and Movement in Teaching Arabic for Early Grade Learners at Islamic Elementary Schools: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Teaching Arabic to early grade students presents unique challenges, particularly in fostering motivation and building basic vocabulary. Learning media that combine elements of music and physical movement are considered promising in addressing these challenges, particularly in primary education, which emphasizes a multisensory approach. This study aims to systematically review the literature on the use of songs and movements as a medium for teaching Arabic in primary schools. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach was used, guided by the PRISMA protocol, with sources drawn from Sinta and Scopus indexed journals published between 2015 and 2025. This study systematically reviewed 35 empirical studies exploring the impact of songs and movements on teaching Arabic to early grade learners. Analysis of the 35 selected articles revealed that integrating songs and movements consistently increased student engagement, accelerated vocabulary acquisition, and strengthened memory retention through auditory and kinesthetic stimulation. The effectiveness of this approach was influenced by teacher involvement, availability of learning media, and alignment with student characteristics. Theoretically, this study strengthens the relevance of multisensory strategies in language teaching. Future research is recommended to test the effectiveness of this method through a more controlled experimental design.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Arabic holds a central position in Islamic education, functioning not only as a communication tool but also as a primary means for accessing the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical Islamic literature (Pera Aprizal, 2021). Mastery of Arabic is beneficial for a deeper understanding of Islamic teachings, a related

study highlighting the importance of mastering Arabic for non-Arab speakers in understanding the Al-Qur'an, the holy book which is the main basis for Islam. (Baharun et al., 2020) another study says that there are found differences of understanding towards Qur'an and hadith texts according to their Arabic language proficiency (Shah, 2016) which means mastery of Arabic are very important for learning Islamic studies.

In Indonesia, Arabic is introduced from the elementary level, particularly in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (Islamic primary schools), as part of efforts to nurture students' religious and linguistic competencies from an early age (Umri Siregar et al., 2024). Early introduction of Arabic for children is a strategic step aimed at fostering religious awareness and language skills in children from an early age. It is also practiced to optimize children's brain development through cognitive, social and emotional development. (Dalle et al., 2020) Learning Arabic from an early age helps Muslim children understand and recite the Quran, which is a fundamental aspect of their religious practices. (Hidayat et al., 2018)

However, the implementation of Arabic language education at the primary level especially for early grade students poses several challenges such as complex script, root word system, vowels, homographs, identifying gender and quantity, and also in cultural context (Daud et al., 2025). Furthermore, students often face limited vocabulary, low learning motivation, and varying levels of literacy preparedness (Faiz & Afrita, 2024). One of the primary hurdles is the limited vocabulary that young learners possess (Maskor et al., 2016) which restricts their ability to comprehend and use the language meaningfully. A study found that children with strong phonological awareness typically do not struggle significantly with recognizing letters, words, and sentences. Meanwhile, children who have challenges in representing and manipulating the sounds of spoken language are more prone to face obstacles in learning to read in Arabic. (Karroum et al., 2024) This suggests that the use of songs in Arabic language learning can be a solution to stimulate their ability to represent and manipulate spoken language sounds so that students can easily learn Arabic. In addition, students often show low levels of intrinsic motivation to learn Arabic, particularly when they perceive it as difficult or disconnected from their everyday experiences. Compounding these issues are the differing levels of literacy preparedness among students, which can be influenced by their prior exposure to reading and writing skills in both Arabic and their native language (Faiz & Afrita, 2024).

These challenges call for more innovative, age-appropriate, and engaging instructional approaches that are sensitive to the developmental stages of learners. Teachers must not only focus on language mechanics but also consider cultural and contextual factors that affect motivation and comprehension. With well designed pedagogy, learning Arabic in early grades can become both an enriching academic journey and a meaningful spiritual foundation.

Cognitive development theories shed light on language acquisition. According to Piaget's theory, language is a holistic aspect of cognitive development that evolves through internal processes aligned with biological growth and environmental exposure (Piaget, 1952). Meanwhile, Vygotsky emphasized the sociocultural environment, suggesting that interaction with adults, teachers, and peers plays a crucial role in language development (Vygotsky et al., 1978). These theories underline the importance of engaging, contextual, and sensory-rich learning experiences for young learners.

In response to such challenges, multisensory instructional strategies particularly those involving songs and physical movement have gained attention in early language education. Songs promote auditory repetition and rhythm that enhance memorization (Murphey, 1990). Children who learn through songs excel in memory, pronunciation, and translation. (Good et al., 2015). Meanwhile kinesthetic activities through movement foster active engagement and real-time language processing (Mosley et al., 2022). This multisensory approach has shown effectiveness in foreign language learning, especially in English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) contexts (Agaj Avdiu, 2021), but studies specific to Arabic language instruction remain limited and fragmented.

Arabic poses unique teaching challenges due to its root-based morphology, phonetic nuances, and diglossia. Effective instruction requires engaging, culturally relevant tools. However, most current media are generic and overlook Arabic's specific traits and the needs of Indonesian learners. A focused

literature review on using songs and movement in Arabic teaching is needed. This study applies a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach based on the PRISMA protocol (Mishra & Mishra, 2023) to synthesize and evaluate existing studies published between 2015 and 2025 to explore how songs and movement support Arabic learning outcomes for early grade learners, what instructional designs are most effective, and what implications they hold for curriculum development and future research in the field.

2. METHODS

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to evaluate, synthesize, and summarize empirical findings (Mantsiou et al., 2023) on the use of songs and movement in teaching Arabic to early grade learners. The SLR methodology follows the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines, which include four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion (Moher et al., 2009). The literature was identified using search tools such as Google Scholar and the Publish or Perish software, and was collected from reputable indexing databases, including Scopus, SINTA, Web of Science, DOAJ, and Garuda. The search included peer-reviewed articles published between 2015 and 2025 using keywords such as "Arabic language learning," "songs in Arabic teaching," "movement-based learning," and "primary education." Boolean operators (AND, OR) and truncation symbols were applied to refine search result. The sources of the articles used were obtained from national and international databases indexed by Sinta and Scopus with the following inclusion criteria:

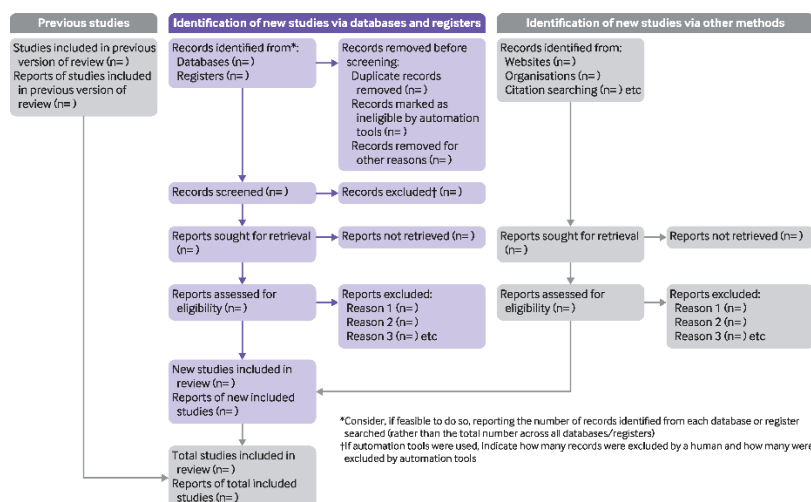
- a. Articles published between 2015 and 2025
- b. Empirical studies in Bahasa Indonesia or English
- c. Research focusing on the use of songs, movement, or both in Arabic language teaching
- d. Studies targeting primary school learners (early grade level)
- e. Articles from Sinta- or Scopus-indexed journals

The exclusion criteria that will be applied are as follows:

- a. Non-peer-reviewed articles or conference abstracts
- b. Studies not focused on Arabic language instruction
- c. Research beyond the elementary education context
- d. Theoretical papers without empirical data
- e. Articles lacking full-text access

Articles were screened for relevance and quality through title and abstract review, followed by full-text analysis. Duplicate entries were removed. Quality was assessed based on methodological rigor, clarity of findings, and relevance to the research focus (Singh, 2017). A total of 35 studies met the criteria and were included in the final review. Key data points extracted included authors, year, location, method, type of instructional media (song/movement), target skills (vocabulary, speaking, listening), and major findings. A thematic coding approach was used to identify dominant categories (Muka et al., 2020) such as student engagement, vocabulary acquisition, motivation, and multisensory impact. To ensure reliability, the screening and coding processes were conducted independently by two reviewers and verified through inter-rater agreement. The PRISMA flowchart (Figure 1) illustrates the selection process:

Figure 1
PRISMA Flowchart



This methodology provides a comprehensive, transparent, and replicable synthesis of literature on Arabic language teaching strategies that integrate musical and physical elements.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There are 35 selected articles that have been reviewed based on reference sources, years, research methods, methods used to the findings. The review process aims to find and analyze the use of Songs and Movements in Arabic Language Learning for Early Elementary School Students.

Table 1
Article Review

No	Author(s)	Year	Method	Focus	Key Findings
1	Yulianti, Gamayanti	2021	Qualitative	Songs in Arabic learning	Improved vocabulary memorization
2	Wirda, Nasution	2023	Classroom Action Research	TPR approach	Enhanced oral comprehension
3	Moufarrej & Salameh	2019	Quantitative	Songs and retention	Songs increased vocabulary retention
4	Al-Khafaji & Al-Saedi	2025	Quantitative	Poetic songs and grammar	Better grammar achievement and concentration
5	Yusof et al.	2016	Quantitative	Singing method	Singing method that effective for learning Arabic, especially in mastering writing vocabulary, memorizing vocabulary.
6	Pane et al.	2024	Qualitative	Play and song-based Arabic	Increased pronunciation and motivation

No	Author(s)	Year	Method	Focus	Key Findings
7	Agaj & Avdiu	2021	Qualitative	Songs in EFL	Songs as enjoyable learning tools
8	Nurul Hikmah	2019	Qualitative	Songs for speaking skills	Helped overcome speaking difficulties
9	Aulia et al.	2023	Quantitative	TPR for vocabulary	Significantly improved vocabulary mastery
10	Suherman et al.	2023	Qualitative	Movement-based games	Improved vocabulary and engagement
11	Syaripah et al.	2024	Qualitative	Singing + flashcard	Enhanced vocabulary mastery among learners
12	Khotijah	2018	Qualitative	Arabic strategy design	Emphasized teacher role and student characteristics
13	Astutik & Aulina	2017	Qualitative	TPR in English	Promoted comprehension via daily physical activities
14	Irpan Pane et al.	2024	Qualitative	Play and song for Arabic	Boosted vocabulary, pronunciation, and listening
15	Syafryadin	2021	Qualitative	Immersive song/game-based EFL	Overcame learning barriers through culturally immersive tasks
16	Muntaner-Mas et al.	2024	Quantitative	The acute effects of physical activity on children's academic performance	Acute physical activity (single session) significantly improves children's academic outcomes, especially in Language.
17	Petrigna et Al	2022	Qualitative	Active learning's impact on motor skills, activity, and academics.	Learning with physical activity boosts motor skills, engagement, and achievement.
18	Mosley et al	2022	Qualitative	Kinesthetic Learning Strategy	Effective for foreign Language Acquisition
19	Delogu, Zheng	2020	Quasi Experiment	Musicality's Role in Productive Phonology in Second Language Learning	Musicality greatly enhances phonological skills in early L2 learning.
20	Almelhes, Sultan	2024	Quantitative	Challenges for learning Arabic	Emphasize feedback, adapted curriculum, technology use, cultural integration, and strategies like audio, student collaboration, and native speaker interaction.

No	Author(s)	Year	Method	Focus	Key Findings
21	Omari, Bataineh	2018	Qualitative	Problems of Learning Arabic	Songs, rhythmic poems, and balanced linguistic expressions have a strong impact on children's minds.
22	Podlipniak	2025	Qualitative	Musicality and Language: An Evolutionary Connection	Music and language co-evolved through shared brain systems, with Baldwinian mechanisms linking flexibility and stability to shape musical abilities.
23	Davis, Glenn	2017	Qualitative	The use of songs in language learning in children	Songs are effective in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and learning motivation in children's classrooms.
24	Sa'diyah, Suyuti	2025	Qualitative	Play, Story, and Song: Innovating Arabic Vocabulary Learning in Elementary Schools	Strategies encourage interactive, student-centered learning and accommodate diverse learning styles.
25	Zulfida et al	2024	Qualitative	Strategies and methods for teaching Arabic vocabulary to children	Multisensory methods and TPR significantly boost vocabulary retention and student participation.
26	Sokip	2018	Qualitative	Effective Strategies on Learning Arabic for Children	Song can train arabic learner ears in term of listening while they are having conversation or to create interaction.
27	Betty et al	2021	Classic Experimental Design	The effectiveness of using songs as a medium for learning Arabic for elementary school students	Songs help students grasp material better and make learning Arabic more engaging.
28	Pahri	2021	Qualitative	Implementation of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method to improve students'	The TPR method helps students get used to interacting and responding actively using Arabic, thereby improving their speaking skills.

No	Author(s)	Year	Method	Focus	Key Findings
				Arabic speaking skills	
29	Andini et al	2023	Experiment	The influence of singing methods on students' ability to memorize vocabulary and mahfudzat	The singing method significantly enhances memorization, making learning easier and more enjoyable.
30	Sholiha, Ismia	2023	Qualitative	The use of mnemonic methods and their application in learning Arabic	The mnemonic method is proven to help students improve their ability to remember new vocabulary, grammar, and Arabic language rules.
31	Qoim	2022	Qualitative	Implementation of the Totally Physical Response (TPR) method in Arabic language learning in Elementary Schools	Learning becomes enjoyable, stress-free, and meaningful through direct practice.
32	Nurul et al	2023	Qualitative	Improving speaking ability (mahārat al-kalām) in Arabic through the Total Physical Response method	Students' Arabic speaking skills (mahārat al-kalām) improved significantly after using the Total Physical Response method.
33	Samsul et al	2022	Qualitative	Application Of The Total Physical Response Method In Arabic Learning	The TPR method is simple, low-cost, stress-reducing, and enhances learning, communication, and children's expressiveness through movement games.
34	Nimas et al	2023	Qualitative	The Influence of Total Physical Response (TPR) Method in Mastering Arabic Vocabulary	TPR method is effective and appropriate for improving students' mastery of Arabic vocabulary
35	Rahmad, Anwar	2024	Qualitative	Implementation of singing method in learning Arabic vocabulary	The singing method effectively improves Arabic vocabulary mastery and provides a fun learning experience.

Based on the reviewed literature, a number of articles show that the application of Songs and Movements can help make Arabic language learning for early-level students in Elementary School more enjoyable and can improve their ability in learning Arabic. There are key findings related to the application of songs and movements in Arabic language learning at the early-level. These findings cover several important aspects as follows:

a. Increasing Student Engagement

Incorporating songs and physical activities has been shown to enhance student involvement in learning Arabic. Engaging activities that include movement, like number games or air writing, allow students to participate actively in their learning journey. This aligns with findings from research by Irpan (Irpan Pane et al., 2024) which indicated that games and songs boost student engagement in language learning.

b. Vocabulary Mastery

Salameh (Moufarrej & Salameh, 2019) demonstrates that songs are effective in aiding students' vocabulary retention. Similarly, the findings from Yusof (Mohd Yusof et al., 2016) study revealed that the singing approach had a significant impact on students' abilities to write and memorize Arabic vocabulary. Yulianti (Yulianti Witrin & Gamayanti, 2021) further elaborated that incorporating songs into Arabic language learning can boost vocabulary retention and make the memorization process more efficient.

c. Listening and Speaking Skills

Music and physical activities also enhance students' abilities in listening and speaking Arabic. A study conducted by Saedi et al (Al-Khafaji & Al-Saedi, 2025) indicates that incorporating songs into Arabic grammar instruction not only aids in mastering vocabulary but also enhances pronunciation and listening understanding.

d. Total Physical Response (TPR) Method's Effectivity

The Total Physical Response (TPR) approach, which integrates physical activities with the teaching of Arabic vocabulary, demonstrates a notable improvement in vocabulary acquisition, as indicated by research conducted by Aulia (Aulia et al., 2023). The TPR technique, which employs bodily movements to enhance word comprehension, is particularly beneficial in Arabic language learning that emphasizes both physical action and memorization.

e. Multimodal Strategy

Several studies highlight the benefit of integrating songs with visual and kinesthetic tools. Combined singing with flashcards to enhance vocabulary retention, (Syaripah et al., n.d.) while Zulfida (Sri Zulfida et al., 2024) applied multisensory and TPR strategies to address varied student needs. These approaches reflect a growing emphasis on multimodal learning to support student engagement and comprehension.

Overall, the study's findings show that students gain a great deal from the use of music and movement into Arabic language instruction. Students can study in an engaging and entertaining environment when songs are used as a teaching tool, which boosts their drive to learn. This result is in line with earlier research that shown that music can help students memorize information and enhance their memory (Mohd Yusof et al., 2016; Moufarrej & Salameh, 2019).

Furthermore, it has been shown that using the TPR method which emphasizes body language to introduce vocabulary and sentence structures is highly successful in enhancing students' comprehension (Nasution & Suti'ah, 2023). For young children who require a more engaging and enjoyable learning environment, this approach is quite beneficial. To put it another way, the TPR

approach can help students overcome the challenges they have when learning Arabic, particularly those that have to do with low motivation and language recall.

While many studies show this approach's effectiveness, teachers and students face challenges like time constraints and limited resources. Educators must consider each student's needs and the local context. Using songs and movements in Arabic learning greatly boosts students' language skills, making classes more dynamic and enjoyable and improving Arabic education quality in elementary schools.

Combining songs, movements, and methods like Total Physical Response in Arabic learning is highly recommended to match student needs and class conditions. This mix boosts students' enthusiasm, as elementary learners enjoy light, fun activities. Movement-based games like cricket, number games, air writing, and counting engage students in playful instruction-following, which improves language comprehension and learning motivation.

To better understand the distribution of methodologies, focus areas, and media in the reviewed studies, a frequency-based meta-narrative analysis was conducted before the thematic analysis. This approach offers a descriptive summary and reveals key patterns in the use of music and movement in early childhood Arabic instruction. The categorical frequencies are summarized in the table below:

Table 2
Categorical Frequencies

No	Analytical Category	Subcategory / Description	Frequency
1	Research Method		
	Qualitative	Case studies, descriptive, narrative methods	26
	Quantitative	Surveys, statistical experiments	7
	Experimental Design	Classic experimental design (controlled group)	1
	Quasi-Experiment	Partial control of variables	1
	Classroom Action Research	Iterative cycles of teaching intervention	1
2	Focus of Findings		
	Vocabulary		
	Grammar & Phonology	Grammar and phonological skills improvement	4
	Motivation & Engagement	Increased motivation, classroom involvement	8
	Academic Motor Skills	Influence of physical activity on academic performance	2
	Strategy Design & Diagnosis	Teacher's role, student characteristics, multisensory strategies	5
3	Integration of Approaches		
	Songs	Used as the main or supporting learning tool	21
	TPR (Total Physical Response)	Emphasizing physical responses and active participation	12
	Songs + TPR/Multisensory	Integration of movement, singing, and visual aids	7
	Play-Based Activities	Elements of play that support emotional and kinesthetic engagement	6

These findings align with broader literature in EFL/ESL education, while emphasizing Arabic's unique features such as root-based morphology, which may require adapted song structures and gestures. Despite promising results, studies also acknowledge limitations such as lack of ready-to-use Arabic song resources and the need for teacher training.

Discussion

The results found in this study are in line with the previously set objectives, namely to examine the effectiveness of using songs and movements in learning Arabic for elementary students. These findings provide evidence that this method not only helps increase student engagement in learning, but also plays a role in accelerating vocabulary mastery and improving listening and speaking skills.

a. Relevance to Previous Research

The results of this study are consistent with previous findings, which shows that the use of songs in language learning can improve vocabulary retention and strengthen speaking skills (Moufarrej & Salameh, 2019). The incorporation of physical movement in Arabic language learning can help accelerate vocabulary mastery.

b. Differences in Findings

There are differences in the effectiveness of using this method depending on the characteristics of the students. Some studies show that the use of songs is more effective in increasing learning motivation, while TPR focuses more on kinesthetic learning that is oriented towards students who are more physically active. Therefore, it is important to adjust the method to the needs and preferences of students.

c. The Role of Teachers in the Success of the Method

This finding highlights the importance of the teacher's role in implementing this method. Teachers who can intelligently adapt the use of songs and movements in learning will greatly influence the success of the learning process. Teaching involving teachers with diverse backgrounds and interactive methods, such as those carried out in the International Work Camp, is very effective in improving language learning. (Agaj Avdiu, 2021; Syafryadin & Boulahnane, 2021)

d. Implications for Practice

This review supports the integration of songs and movement in early Arabic language instruction. Teachers are encouraged to use rhythmic and kinesthetic tools that align with students' developmental stages. For example, in class, teachers can use popular songs that students know to teach new vocabulary, followed by appropriate body movements to increase engagement. Schools and curriculum developers should consider incorporating song-based modules and training sessions on multisensory pedagogy, particularly in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah or similar primary institutions. Contextually relevant Arabic songs and TPR-based activities can foster more dynamic and effective learning environments. The curriculum can include traditional songs from local cultures that are relevant to Islamic educational values.

e. Research's Limitations

While this study provides comprehensive insights, it is limited by the scope of included databases and the predominance of qualitative studies. The lack of large-scale experimental or longitudinal research restricts the generalizability of findings. Cultural variations in Arabic dialects were also not addressed in detail. There is potential for selection bias or lack of quantitative studies in this study.

f. Future Research

While this study supports that songs and movements enhance Arabic learning, further research is needed. Experimental studies can better confirm the effectiveness of this method combination.

Exploring digital technology that integrates songs and movements offers a promising direction. Future research should focus on developing validated Arabic song modules for early learners and conduct controlled experiments comparing songs to other teaching media in varied settings. Furthermore, studying digital tools like augmented reality and gamified apps combined with multisensory learning could further enrich Arabic education. Further research should consider comparing the use of songs with other teaching methods to determine the most effective approach.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of using songs and physical movement in Arabic language instruction for early grade learners. The literature review reveals that integrating music and movement particularly through Total Physical Response (TPR) methods can significantly improve vocabulary acquisition, as well as listening and speaking skills. Furthermore, these methods have been shown to enhance student engagement and motivation in the learning process.

Beyond reinforcing existing pedagogical strategies, this review underscores a pedagogical shift: the growing need to adopt kinesthetic and auditory stimuli to address the cognitive and affective needs of young language learners. These findings suggest that joyful and interactive methods such as songs and movement are not merely complementary, but essential elements of effective Arabic language instruction in primary schools.

This systematic review confirms that songs and movement-based strategies improve retention, support linguistic development, and foster enthusiasm among learners. It also affirms the theoretical relevance of multisensory and learner-centered approaches. Moving forward, educators and researchers should develop contextual, scalable, and evidence-based resources potentially involving interactive applications and augmented reality platforms to optimize Arabic language learning experiences.

Future research is recommended to conduct experimental studies with control groups to more precisely measure the impact of song and movement integration on specific Arabic language skills. Digital innovation combining music and movement presents a promising frontier for further investigation.

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