Analysis of Early Childhood Arabic Language Acquisition of The *Komunitas Anak Shalih* Based on CEFR

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ABSTRACT

Early age is a golden opportunity for children; therefore, early age is called the golden age for children. At this age, the child has extraordinary abilities, so it is good to be developed optimally. It is the golden age for the child to learn and acquire the language without neglecting other aspects. This is done in *Komunitas Anak Shalih* Tanjung Morawa. While in the *Komunitas Anak Shalih*, early childhood children at the educational institution are familiarised with hearing the names of objects and conveying them using Arabic. But in the acquisition of Arabic, they do not have a framework standardisation as a reference. Let's call it one of the CEFR. This study will answer questions related to the process of acquiring Arabic for early childhood in the *Komunitas Anak Shalih* and their speaking skills according to CEFR levels. This study uses a qualitative naturalistic approach using an embedded case study design model or case study. Data collection techniques are observation, interviews, and documentation, with data analysis to reduce data, present data, draw conclusions, and verify. The results found that early childhood language acquisition in the *Komunitas Anak Shalih* used behaviourism theory, and their speaking skills were at the rudimentary A1 level (PreA1) based on the CEFR.

Keywords: Language Acquisition; CEFR; Early Childhood Language Acquisition.

INTRODUCTION

Early age is a golden opportunity for children; therefore, early age is called the *golden age* for children. The golden age is the time of Early Childhood to explore the things they want to do. The golden age is the most crucial time to shape children's character (Kertamuda, 2015). It is said to be *Golden Age* because, at this time, the brain's ability to absorb information is very high. Whatever information given will substantially impact children in later times. At this age, the child has extraordinary abilities, so it is good to be developed optimally.

This extraordinary ability of the child's brain is evident from Zimmer's research in Semiawan that children's brain cells have a range of between 100-200 billion brain cells (Semiawan, 2017). However, the results of other studies stated that only 5% of brain potential is used due to lack of stimulation that optimises brain function. Howard Gardner stated that children in the first five years are always marked by success in learning everything (Kertamuda, 2015). Thus, early age,

which is very important for children's continuous development, needs to stimulate the development of the child's intelligence.

This is the golden age for children to learn and acquire language without neglecting other important aspects of their lives. Aspects developed in early childhood education are aspects of behavioural development and habituation, including moral, religious values, and basic ability development, including physical, cognitive, language, and social-emotional development. Foreign Language Learning in early childhood is carried out as a language introduction (Mayang, 2012), and it can also be known as language acquisition.

Language acquisition is the process by which children acquire language. Language acquisition is divided into first-language acquisition and second-language acquisition. First language acquisition occurs if the child has never learned any language and then acquires a language. The language acquired can be a single language or monolingual FLA (*first language acquisition*), two languages simultaneously or sequentially (bilingual FLA), or more than two languages (multilingual FLA). Second language acquisition occurs if a person acquires a language after mastering a first language or is the process of a person developing skills using a second or foreign language.

According to Vygotsky, first language acquisition is obtained from children's interaction with their environment. Although children already have essential potential or language acquisition tools, Chomsky called language acquisition devices (LAD), that potential would develop optimally after receiving environmental stimulus. Otto in Salamah et al., revealed that language acquisition in preschool-age children is instilled in the environment where children interact, especially in the home, school, and playground environments. These three environments greatly influence children's language acquisition. It can be emphasised that language acquisition in children can occur due to factors such as the home environment, school environment, and playground environment. It can include second language acquisition and foreign discussions. Siti Salamah, Fathiyati Murtadho, and Yumna Rasyid, Sentence Acquisition In Early Childhood In Gender Perspective (Salamah et al., 2023).

At this golden age, one of the things that can be optimised is to introduce language to them as a period of growth and development of children's language, where in their environment they are accustomed and stimulated in addition to using their mother tongue also with a foreign language, namely Arabic. This is done in *Komunitas Anak Shalih Tanjung* Morawa. While in the *Komunitas*

Anak Shalih, early childhood children at the educational institution are familiarised with hearing the names of objects and conveying them using Arabic.

Language development can also be referred to as language *acquisition* in psycholinguistics. The acquisition of Indonesian language is interpreted when the child acquires a language that he first gets his first language (mother tongue). In conditions in Indonesia, the first language or mother tongue is the regional language where the child is born and develops. In contrast, Indonesian and foreign languages are second languages. Especially in early childhood at the Tanjung Morawa *Komunitas Anak Shalih* Education institution, all students are descendants of Batak and Malay tribes, which means their first languages are Batak and Malay. There are several differences between the first and second languages with regard to phonology, morphology, and syntax. It can make it difficult for community students to express words in Arabic, a foreign language.

Even so, language acquisition should have standards that become references. And this has not been seen in this educational institution of the Salih child community. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is a European framework that becomes a standard or general reference in language learning, especially foreign languages. This CEFR is a language benchmark standard accepted by the world as a benchmark for language skills this standard is not only used in the scope of education but even in government (Nurdianto, 2020). The CEFR is a set of guidelines for learning a foreign language that can be used in international languages other than English (Musthofa, 2022).

Early childhood Arabic acquisition studies have begun attracting language activists, including research by Lutfi Ulfah Faridah on Introduction to Arabic for Early Children. Her study found that it is crucial to introduce Arabic from an early age to children and provide benefits in terms of psychological and academic children, as well as from a social perspective. Introduction to Arabic in children from an early age has a good impact on children, including children with flexible intellectual advantages and academic, language, and social skills. In addition, children are ready to enter the context of association with various languages and cultures (Faridah, 2017). Furthermore, research conducted by (Adiluhung et al., 2022) found that the acquisition of Arabic phonology for children aged 4 to 8 years at *Pondok Arrisalah Slahung Ponorogo* was not wholly perfect. That's because there are still many incorrect acquisitions, such as the incorrect pronunciation of sounds, the addition of unnecessary sounds, and the pronunciation of long and short letters that are still wrong. In addition, (Darihastining et al., 2023) also describe and explain

the indicators of second language acquisition problems and show the contribution of language acquisition hypotheses to their use when interacting and dialoguing in obtaining language, namely English in early childhood, named Subject. The contributing hypotheses used are the input, mimicking, and total physical response hypotheses. Children as young as 5.5 years old can master linguistic outcomes in English acquisition, especially vocabulary in the form of nouns, adjectives, verbs, possessive pronouns, pronouns, and question words.

Likewise, in other research related to the acquisition and learning of Arabic with the CEFR framework, (Nurdianto & Ismail, 2020)) found that the presence of an Arabic curriculum is significant and needed in Indonesia, which the integrated and systematic CEFR covers in 6 levels, the lowest A1 and the highest C2 with the sequence A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2. The CEFR also prepares pre-A1 Arabic language learning. Learning each level is not based on age but on Arabic language skills. It could be that students in universities occupy the A1 level because the place of study does not have Arabic lessons. found that the presence of an Arabic curriculum is significant and needed in Indonesia, which the integrated and systematic CEFR covers in 6 levels, the lowest A1 and the highest C2 with the sequence A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2. The CEFR also prepares pre-A1 Arabic language learning. Learning each level is not based on age but on Arabic language skills. It could be that students in universities occupy the A1 level because the place of study does not have Arabic lessons. (Rohman & Rosyadi, 2021) also conducted a study on the development of CEFR-Based Arabic Teaching Materials to Improve Students' Arabic Language Skills. It was found that the use of Arabic teaching materials at *MI Darussolihin Yogyakarta* was not following the level of ability and needs of students, so the development of CEFR-based teaching materials to improve student's language skills, with the quality of CEFR-based Arabic textbooks included in the Good category and suitable for use as Arabic teaching materials and has a positive impact on improving students' Arabic skills. Rohman and Rosyadi also conducted a study on the development of CEFR-Based Arabic Teaching Materials to Improve Students' Arabic Language Skills. It was found that the use of Arabic teaching materials at *MI Darussolhin Yogyakarta* was not following the level of ability and needs of students, so the development of CEFR-based teaching materials to improve student's language skills, with the quality of CEFR-based Arabic textbooks included in the Good category and suitable for use as Arabic teaching materials and has a positive impact on improving students' Arabic skills. (Yasin & Tarauni, 2023)conducted a literature study on CEFR-Based Early Childhood Arabic Language Education; it was found that not all materials in CEFR can be taught in early childhood, and there need to be adjustments to

child development. CEFR also gives freedom for teachers to make their own methods if needed. So that these materials are objects that are close to children. Starting from the school, home, the things in it and also the people in it.

Each of the studies above discusses the acquisition of Arabic for early childhood and also uses CEFR standards from various corners of the field and various approaches to research methods with different objectives. There is 1 study that specifically examines early childhood Arabic language education based on CEFR but with a qualitative approach to the literature review, not looking directly at the reality in the field. Therefore, based on the explanation above, this study emphasises the acquisition of Arabic in early childhood of the *Komunitas Anak Shalih* based on the CEFR by answering the question of how is the process of acquiring Arabic for early childhood in the Tanjung Morawa Komunitas Anak Shalih and how is their speaking ability according to the CEFR level?

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative naturalistic approach, where research is carried out naturally without manipulating existing variables and then described objectively. With this approach, the presence of researchers directly to obtain data from the source is necessary for the data to be valid (Arikunto, 2019). This approach describes the early childhood Arabic acquisition process at the *"Komunitas Anak Shalih"* Tanjung Morawa, North Sumatra. This research uses an embedded case study design model or case studies focusing on processes and outputs (Scholz & Tietje, 2002). The intended process focuses on how to implement early childhood Arabic acquisition at the Tanjung Morawa *Komunitas Anak Shalih*, and the external focus is the ability to speak early childhood at the Tanjung Morawa *Komunitas Anak Shalih*. The study subjects were students at the *"Komunitas Anak Shalih"* Tanjung Morawa Education institution, North Sumatra, at the Early Childhood level. Data collection techniques are observation, interviews, and documentation, with data analysis to reduce data, present data, draw conclusions, and verify.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

a. Language Acquisition

Language acquisition is the process by which humans acquire the capacity to understand language and produce and use words and sentences to communicate. Language acquisition involves structure, rules, and representation (Ismail, 2014). Three hypotheses are very effective,

especially in improving speaking skills for second language or foreign language learners in Indonesia: the input hypothesis, the acquisition and learning hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis. In another opinion, it is found that the form of language acquisition hypothesis consists of the Conscience hypothesis, the tabula rasa hypothesis, and the cognitive universe hypothesis (Solikhin, 2019). In addition, there are still many theories of second or foreign language acquisition, including Behaviorism, nativism, acculturation, and accommodation, and there are still many fragments and developments of these theories into specific.

b. Behaviorism

Some famous names such as John B. Watson, Skinner, and Thorndikae became originators of the theory of behaviourism. Watson argues that stimuli and responses around the child's environment are essential in language acquisition (Horowitz, 1992) (Dastpak et al., 2017). On the other hand, Skinner held that children are influenced by their behaviour as a result. Another case with Thorndike initiated the theory of trial error, where someone who continues to do something consistently will be able to master what he repeatedly does (Walker, 2017).

c. Nativism

Nativism also has famous figures, such as Chomsky, who believe humans are the only living things with language devices. Chomsky believes that every child born has a language acquisition device (LAD), which will then develop more complex as he grows (Lust, 2006) (Hussaini, 2021). Cognitivism

The theory of cognitivism has a striking difference from the previous two theories, which breaks the opinion that language acquisition is an innate ability. Still, language can be learned and developed according to the environment's cognitive level. The character is Jeane Piaget.

d. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

The CEFR was developed to facilitate critical reflection on the various components of language education – curriculum, syllabus, textbooks, and evaluation – and as a reference for shared understanding across European education systems (Jones et al., 2022). The CEFR is a European scale specifically designed to apply to any European language, so it can be used to describe English proficiency, German proficiency, or Estonian proficiency (if you have those skills). The CEFR establishes six levels of foreign language acquisition, A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2.
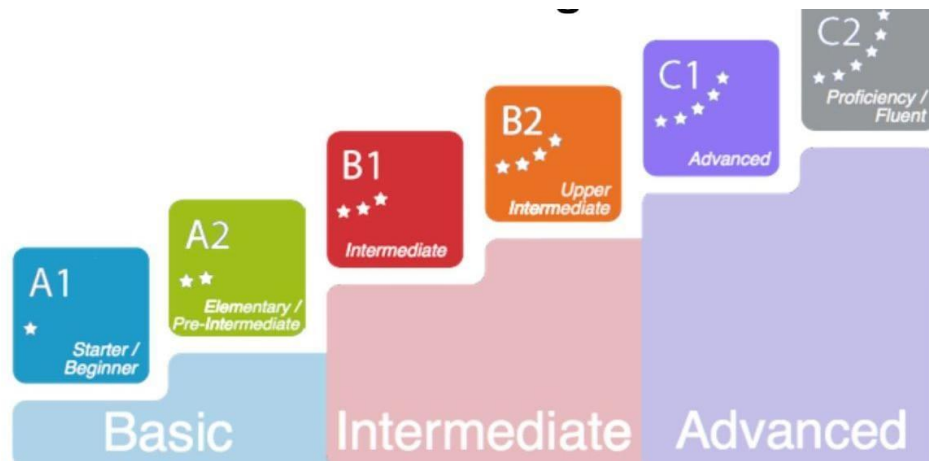
Diagram 1. CEFR Capability Level

General competencies in the CEFR are a combination of competencies in language learning that include many aspects. These competencies are then compiled into a single output of Arabic learning competencies, in particular. The scope of this general competence includes four competencies in Arabic language learning (*istima'*, *kalam, qira'ah,* and *kitabah*), plus knowledge competencies. The following is a compilation description of the CEFR competencies of each level from the lowest level A1 to the highest level C2.

Table 1. CEFR Competency at Each Level

Level	Description
A1	- Able to understand and use everyday expressions to express basic needs. Able to introduce oneself to others and answer simple questions about oneself, where he lives, known people and belongings owned. - Able to understand communication with others as long as the conversation is prolonged and the interlocutor is willing to help to understand it.
A2	- Understand frequently used sentences and expressions related to the most relevant fields immediately (e.g., basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, occupation). Able to communicate in simple and routine tasks that require

	the simple and direct exchange of information on prevalent and routine matters. - Able to describe in simple terms the aspects of his personality and the environment with which he directly interacts
B1	- Able to understand the main points of precise standard inputs about things routinely encountered at work, school, leisure, etc. - Able to handle most situations while traveling in an Arabic-speaking area. - Able to produce simple connected text on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. - Able to briefly describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes, and ideals by providing reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
B2	- Able to understand the main ideas of complex texts on concrete and abstract topics, including discussion of technical problems in their fields. - Being able to interact with a level of fluency and spontaneity makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without tension for either party. - Be able to produce clear and detailed texts on various subjects and explain points of view on topical issues that provide advantages and disadvantages of various options.
C1	- Understand the main ideas of complex texts on concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in their field of specialisation. - Being able to interact with a level of fluency and spontaneity makes regular interaction with native speakers possible without tension for either party. - Be able to produce clear and detailed texts on various subjects and explain points of view on topical issues that provide advantages and disadvantages of various options.

C2	- Able to understand easily almost everything heard or read. - Able to summarise information from various oral and written sources and reconstruct arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. - Able to express himself spontaneously, fluently, and precisely, distinguish more subtle nuances of meaning even in more complex situations.

There are four skill competencies in Arabic learning, with a description of each level. However, in this study, Arabic acquisition focuses on the ability to speak only. The competencies for speaking skills for each level are as follows.

Table 2. Speaking Skills Competency at Each Level Based on CEFR

Level	Description
A1	- I can use simple phrases (idhofah) and sentences to describe where I live and the people I know.
A2	- I can use phrases and sentences to describe simply the conditions of my family and others, my living conditions, my educational background, and my current or most recent work.
B1	- I can relate phrases in simple ways to describe experiences, events, ideals, hopes, and ambitions. - I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can tell a story or tell the plot of a book or movie and describe my reaction.
B2	- I can present clear and detailed descriptions of various subjects related to my interest. - I can explain the point of view on topical issues that provide the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
C1	- I can present a clear and detailed description of a complex subject that integrates subthemes, develops specific points and complements with appropriate conclusions.
C2	- I can present a clear description or argument that flows

	smoothly in style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure that helps the receiver to pay attention and remember key points.

e.   Early Childhood Language Acquisition in the *Komunitas Anak Salih*

Komunitas Anak Shalih consists of 2 levels, namely for early childhood ages 4 to 6 years (equivalent to Early Childhood Education and *Raudhatul Athfal*) and for children ages 7 to 10 years (equivalent to elementary school). This study focused on early childhood. *Komunitas Anak Shalih* activities include introducing Arabic vocabulary, simple phrases, reading *iqro'* and *al-Quran,* and the sciences of Religious Education. The activity starts at 4 o'clock, with a duration of approximately 2 hours, and is guided by 2 teachers.

Early childhood is introduced to Arabic while playing and learning to read *iqra'/al-Qur'an* and the Islamic religious science. During their time in the *Komunitas Anak Shalih*, these young children are accustomed to using Arabic vocabulary they find to speak. They were introduced to the Arabic terms around them. And every word they hear is used while in the community of the submissive. They do not speak perfect sentences in Arabic but only use words they have already found. As He said, *saya pinjam bukumu* (I borrow your book), because it is recognised from the beginning of the book is *a kitaab*, so they express it with the sentence, *"ana pinjam kitab anti"*, *saya ambil pena* (I take a pen). They express with the sentence, "*ana* take *(ambil) qolam*". Although the language's pronunciation is still not fluent and not accurate, the speech can still be understood. Like the word "it's *cabburah*" (it's *sabbuurah*).

The Arabic language they found in the Anak Salih Community is related to those around them, such as the introduction of Arabic either vocabulary or simple expressions about self-knowledge, stationery, in class, family, limbs and colors. The introduction of Arabic is done by direct method, and also audio lingual.

Based on the process of acquiring early childhood Arabic in *Komunitas Anak Shalih*, at least based on the three grand theories previously described above, many language education institutions use the framework to obtain good language mastery, especially second or foreign languages. In the educational institution *"Komunitas Anak Shalih",* the author identifies several similar patterns that lead to one of the three above theories, behaviourism. As well as activities carried out repeatedly to stimulate children's language skills in a second or foreign language, such as repeated words so that students become attached to their memories and easy to use. Various words are embedded and accustomed to communication between teachers and children so that

with this repetitive process, they are accustomed to even being able to reproduce them through simple oral speech or react with sentences they often hear, such as ما اسمك, without thinking they can immediately answer names.

The application of behaviourism is also evident in the learning process in the classroom where the teacher uses the *sam'iyah syafahiyah* method or audio-lingual method. Also, in the direct method, a word is heard and repeated simultaneously by the teacher and students together respond.

Suppose you look at the standardisation of the CEFR framework. In that case, the mastery of early childhood Arabic in the *Komunitas Anak Shalih*, especially for their proficiency in speaking, is at the level of A1. It is not perfect and can be tied to pre-A1 because early childhood can already answer questions if asked about names. Still, they cannot use phrases or sentences that are perfect. They used the Arabic vocabulary they had obtained. Although not entirely in one sentence, it is in Arabic. Because, indeed, they have not been recognised by verbs. Only a single vocabulary is recognised, and simple phrases, for example *ana meminjam qolam* (*Ana* borrow *qolam*). At level A1 could use simple phrases *(idhofah)* and sentences to describe "where I lived and the people I knew".

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the explanation above, early language acquisition in the *Komunitas Anak Shalih* uses the theory of behaviourism, where the process of language acquisition by stimulating students so that there is a response from them for mastery of Arabic in their speaking skills based on CEFR is still at the rudimentary level of A1 or can be called Pre-A1. Early childhood can already answer questions with very simple answers.

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