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From Qur'anic Literacy to Arabic Language Learning: Reconstructing Students' Experiences in Islamic Education

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ABSTRACT
Qur'anic reading constitutes one of the earliest and most sustained forms of exposure to Arabic among Muslim learners in non-Arabic-speaking contexts. However, its contribution to formal Arabic language learning remains insufficiently understood, particularly regarding the processes through which Qur'anic literacy experiences are transformed into linguistic resources. This study aims to reconstruct the role of Qur'anic reading engagement in Arabic language learning among junior high school students. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with students and teachers, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis. The data were analyzed inductively through thematic analysis and triangulated across sources and techniques. The findings reveal that Qur'anic reading develops three forms of linguistic familiarity orthographic, phonological, and lexical which provide students with prior resources for learning Arabic. However, fluent recitation does not automatically lead to semantic, grammatical, or productive competence, revealing a recitation–comprehension gap. Based on these findings, the study proposes an Exposure, Mediation, Transfer (EMT) model, in which repeated Qur'anic exposure generates linguistic familiarity, instructional and semantic mediation connects familiar forms with meaning, and transfer occurs when these resources are activated in formal Arabic learning. The study conceptualizes Qur'anic reading experience as a source of latent linguistic resources rather than Arabic proficiency itself. These findings suggest that Arabic instruction in non-Arab Muslim contexts should explicitly connect learners' Qur'anic literacy experiences with vocabulary, morphology, grammar, meaning, and communicative use to facilitate broader linguistic transfer.
Keywords: Arabic language learning, Exposure–Mediation–Transfer (EMT), Qur'anic reading

ABSTRAK
Membaca Al-Qur'an merupakan salah satu bentuk paparan paling awal dan berkelanjutan terhadap bahasa Arab bagi pembelajar Muslim di lingkungan non Arab. Namun, kontribusinya terhadap pembelajaran bahasa Arab formal masih belum sepenuhnya dipahami, khususnya terkait proses bagaimana pengalaman literasi Al-Qur'an dapat bertransformasi menjadi sumber daya linguistik. Penelitian ini bertujuan merekonstruksi peran keterlibatan membaca Al-Qur'an dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab pada siswa sekolah menengah pertama. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan siswa dan guru, observasi nonpartisipan, serta analisis dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis secara induktif melalui analisis tematik dan triangulasi sumber serta teknik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa membaca Al-Qur'an membentuk tiga jenis familiaritas linguistik, yaitu ortografis, fonologis, dan leksikal, yang menjadi sumber awal dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab. Namun, kelancaran membaca Al-Qur'an tidak secara otomatis berkembang menjadi kompetensi semantik, gramatikal,

maupun produktif, sehingga ditemukan adanya kesenjangan antara kemampuan melafalkan dan memahami (recitation–comprehension gap). Berdasarkan temuan tersebut, penelitian ini menghasilkan rekonstruksi konseptual berupa model Exposure, Mediation, Transfer (EMT), yaitu paparan Al-Qur'an membentuk familiaritas linguistik, mediasi semantik dan pembelajaran menghubungkan bentuk bahasa yang telah familiar dengan makna, dan transfer terjadi ketika sumber daya tersebut diaktifkan dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab. Penelitian ini menempatkan pengalaman membaca Al-Qur'an sebagai potensi linguistik laten (latent linguistic resources), bukan sebagai kompetensi bahasa Arab itu sendiri. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya pembelajaran bahasa Arab yang secara eksplisit menghubungkan pengalaman literasi Al-Qur'an dengan kosakata, morfologi, tata bahasa, pemahaman makna, dan penggunaan bahasa secara komunikatif untuk memperkuat proses transfer linguistik.

Kata Kunci: *Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab, Exposure- Mediation-Transfer (EMT), Membaca Al-Qur'an*

INTRODUCTION

Qur'anic reading is not limited to formal religious instruction; in many Islamic educational settings, students engage with Qur'anic texts regularly through individual reading, recitation, memorization, and other structured religious activities. Such repeated interaction potentially provides learners with continuous exposure to Arabic orthography, phonological patterns, vocabulary, and textual structures (Rekan et al., 2025). Consequently, Qur'anic reading engagement may have implications that extend beyond religious literacy to the broader process of Arabic language learning (Rosowsky, 2023a) (Anwar, 2021).

Arabic language education aims to develop both receptive and productive language abilities(Shahbari-Kassem et al., 2024). Receptive competence involves understanding spoken and written Arabic, whereas productive competence refers to the ability to use Arabic effectively in oral and written communication (Fauzi & Rahmawati, 2025). Developing these competencies requires sustained exposure to linguistic input, familiarity with vocabulary and grammatical patterns, and opportunities to process Arabic forms repeatedly. From this perspective, learners' engagement with Arabic texts outside formal language lessons may constitute an important component of their broader language-learning environment.

Qur'anic reading provides a distinctive form of such exposure. Regular engagement with Qur'anic texts familiarizes learners with Arabic script, word forms, pronunciation, and recurring lexical patterns (Basir et al., 2024). Repeated reading may also strengthen automaticity in recognizing Arabic letters and words and increase learners' familiarity with the phonological characteristics of the language. These processes potentially support aspects of Arabic learning, particularly reading fluency, vocabulary recognition, pronunciation, and general familiarity with Arabic linguistic forms. Thus, the frequency and consistency with which students engage in Qur'anic reading may be associated with differences in their achievement in Arabic language learning (Wan Hilmi Wan Abdullah et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, Qur'anic reading and Arabic language learning should not be regarded as identical linguistic activities (Rosowsky, 2023b). Qur'anic recitation can be performed accurately without complete comprehension of the lexical or grammatical meaning of the text. Students may also engage in Qur'anic reading primarily to fulfill religious, institutional, or memorization targets rather than to consciously process its linguistic features. Consequently, frequent Qur'anic reading does not necessarily result automatically in higher Arabic language proficiency. Its contribution to language learning may depend on the degree to which repeated exposure facilitates recognition, processing, and familiarity with Arabic linguistic forms (Gent & Muhammad, 2019). This distinction suggests that the contribution of Qur'anic reading to Arabic learning depends not only on the frequency of exposure but also on the processes through which learners recognize, interpret, and apply familiar linguistic forms. Linguistic noticing, meaning-making, teacher scaffolding, and contextualization may therefore play

important roles in facilitating or constraining the transfer of linguistic knowledge from Qur'anic reading to formal Arabic learning.

This distinction highlights an important gap in understanding how Qur'anic reading experiences contribute to Arabic language learning (Frieola et al., 2025). Although Qur'anic reading constitutes a routine activity for many Muslim students, particularly those studying in Islamic educational environments, previous discussions have not sufficiently explained the processes through which repeated exposure to Qur'anic Arabic develops into linguistic understanding and application. Research on Arabic education has more commonly examined instructional methods, learning strategies, motivation, vocabulary mastery, and other classroom-related variables (Anwar et al., 2025). However, less attention has been given to how learners recognize linguistic similarities between Qur'anic texts and classroom Arabic, how these similarities are interpreted through learning experiences, and why familiarity with Arabic forms does not always lead to meaningful comprehension. Thus, the central gap is not merely the limited empirical examination of Qur'anic reading engagement, but the insufficient explanation of the mechanisms and contextual conditions that facilitate or constrain the transfer of linguistic knowledge from Qur'anic reading to formal Arabic learning.

Examining these processes is particularly relevant among junior high school students, who are developing more advanced literacy and language learning abilities while simultaneously participating in structured religious learning. At this educational stage, students encounter Arabic through both Qur'anic reading activities and formal classroom instruction, potentially creating opportunities for connections between religious literacy and language learning(Nissa & Salim, 2026). However, these connections may differ according to students' reading experiences, linguistic awareness, understanding of textual meaning, and instructional support. Some students may recognize familiar Arabic words or pronunciation patterns from Qur'anic reading, while others may struggle to interpret or apply these forms in different learning contexts. Understanding such experiences requires a qualitative exploration of how students perceive, process, and transfer linguistic knowledge across Qur'anic reading and formal Arabic learning activities.

Against this background, the present study adopts a qualitative case study approach to explore how junior high school students experience the relationship between Qur'anic reading engagement and Arabic language learning. Rather than examining Qur'anic reading as a statistical predictor of academic achievement, the study focuses on understanding how repeated engagement with Qur'anic texts contributes to students' linguistic familiarity and how such familiarity is recognized, interpreted, and utilized in formal Arabic learning. Particular attention is given to the processes through which students connect their Qur'anic reading experiences with Arabic language learning, as well as the factors that facilitate or constrain these connections. By examining students' experiences and the educational contexts in which they occur, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying the relationship between Qur'anic reading and Arabic language learning and to offer a conceptual explanation of how religious literacy practices may support or limit broader linguistic development.

METHODS

Type and Design

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design (Robert K.Yin, 2015) to explore and reconstruct the role of Qur'anic reading engagement in students' Arabic language learning. The qualitative approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2023) was selected because

the study sought to understand students' experiences, perceptions, and learning processes rather than statistically examine the relationship between Qur'anic reading and Arabic language achievement. A case study design enabled an in-depth investigation of Qur'anic reading and Arabic language learning as interconnected educational practices within their natural setting.

The notion of reconstruction in this study refers to the analytical process of identifying, connecting, and interpreting patterns emerging from participants' experiences in order to develop a conceptual understanding of how Qur'anic reading engagement may contribute to Arabic language learning. Therefore, the study did not begin with an assumption that Qur'anic reading necessarily improves Arabic competence. Instead, possible connections between the two practices were constructed inductively from empirical evidence obtained from students, teachers, and learning activities.

Data and Data Sources

The primary data consisted of participants' experiences, perceptions, behaviors, and explanations concerning their engagement with Qur'anic reading and Arabic language learning. Particular attention was given to students' experiences related to Arabic-script recognition, pronunciation, vocabulary recognition, reading fluency, comprehension, confidence, and their perceived difficulties in learning Arabic. The study involved 12 participants, comprising 10 junior high school students as the primary participants, one Arabic language teacher, and one Qur'anic reading teacher as supporting informants. Students were selected through purposive sampling based on their participation in regular Qur'anic reading activities, enrollment in formal Arabic language instruction, and willingness to share their learning experiences. The selection also considered variations in Qur'anic reading engagement and Arabic learning experiences to capture diverse perspectives. The two teachers were included based on their direct involvement in students' learning activities and their ability to provide complementary information regarding students' linguistic development.

Secondary data included relevant educational documents, such as Arabic learning materials, Qur'anic reading activity records, students' learning assignments, and other documents relevant to understanding the learning context. These multiple data sources were used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and to support data triangulation.

The adequacy of the qualitative data was evaluated in relation to the depth, relevance, and diversity of information obtained from the participants. Particular attention was given to identifying recurring patterns and variations in students' experiences, while information from the two teachers and relevant educational documents was used to corroborate and contextualize the emerging findings. Data sufficiency was assessed based on whether the collected information provided adequate explanatory depth to address the research questions and support a coherent interpretation of the relationship between Qur'anic reading experiences and Arabic language learning.

Data Collection Technique

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews constituted the primary data collection technique.

Student interviews explored their Qur'anic reading habits and experiences, perceptions of Arabic texts, familiarity with Arabic vocabulary and pronunciation, experiences in recognizing Arabic words and structures, and their perceptions of whether and how Qur'anic reading influenced their Arabic learning. Interviews with Arabic and Qur'anic learning teachers focused on observable patterns in students' reading abilities, pronunciation, vocabulary recognition, participation, and learning difficulties. Non-participant observations were conducted during selected Qur'anic reading and Arabic language learning activities. The observations focused on how students interacted with Arabic texts, pronounced Arabic words, recognized vocabulary, responded to unfamiliar linguistic forms, and participated in learning activities. Field notes were systematically recorded to capture relevant behaviors and contextual information. Documentation was used to complement interview and observational data. Relevant documents were examined to identify evidence related to students' Qur'anic reading activities and Arabic language learning. Data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation were subsequently compared through source and technique triangulation to strengthen the credibility of the findings.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis through an inductive and iterative process. Analysis began with familiarization with the data through repeated reading of interview transcripts, observation notes, and relevant documents. Initial codes were then assigned to meaningful segments of data related to students' Qur'anic reading experiences and Arabic language learning. The codes were subsequently compared, grouped, and organized into potential themes. Particular attention was given to recurring patterns explaining possible connections between Qur'anic reading engagement and students' Arabic learning experiences. Themes were continuously reviewed against the original data to ensure that they adequately represented participants' experiences rather than predetermined assumptions.

In the final analytical stage, relationships among the identified themes were interpreted and reconstructed into a conceptual explanation of the role of Qur'anic reading engagement in Arabic language learning. This reconstruction sought to explain not only whether students perceived a relationship between Qur'anic reading and Arabic learning, but also how and through what learning processes such a relationship emerged. Negative cases and contrasting experiences were also examined to avoid assuming a uniformly positive relationship between Qur'anic reading engagement and Arabic language learning. The credibility of the analysis was strengthened through triangulation across participants, data collection techniques, and relevant documents. Interpretations were continuously compared with the empirical data, allowing the final conceptual reconstruction to remain grounded in participants' actual learning experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The integration of interview, observation, and documentation data revealed that Qur'anic reading engagement was connected with students' Arabic language learning through a gradual rather than direct process. Repeated interaction with Qur'anic texts primarily developed familiarity with Arabic linguistic forms, while the transformation of such familiarity into broader language competence required semantic and instructional mediation. Based on the thematic analysis, the findings and discussion are organized into three interconnected themes: (1) Qur'anic reading and the development of linguistic familiarity, (2) negotiating the gap between recitation and comprehension, and (3) reconstructing the relationship through exposure, mediation, and transfer.

Qur'anic Reading and the Development of Linguistic Familiarity

The most prominent pattern across the data was that regular Qur'anic reading provided students with substantial prior exposure to Arabic script, sounds, and lexical forms. Most participants did not perceive Arabic orthography as an entirely new writing system when encountering it in formal Arabic lessons. Their previous experiences with Qur'anic reading enabled them to recognize Arabic letters, connected forms, vowel marks, and basic sound patterns relatively quickly.

AR described this familiarity:

"*When I see Arabic writing, I am not really afraid of reading it because I am used to reading the Qur'an. Even if I do not know what the word means, I can usually read it.*" (AR, student interview)

NF reported a similar experience:

"*Sometimes I don't know the meaning, but I know how to read the word. I usually try to read it first, and then the teacher explains what it means.*" (NF, student interview)

Classroom observations supported these accounts. Students demonstrated relatively little hesitation when reading fully vocalized Arabic texts. Difficulties became more visible when vowel marks were reduced or students were required to determine grammatical endings independently. The Arabic teacher similarly observed that most students did not begin Arabic reading "from zero" because they had already developed familiarity with Arabic letters through Qur'anic reading.

This finding indicates that Qur'anic reading provides students with orthographic familiarity that can function as an initial resource in formal Arabic learning. This interpretation is consistent with research emphasizing the distinctive characteristics of Arabic orthography and the importance of decoding and orthographic processing in Arabic reading development. Saiegh-Haddad and Schiff (Saiegh-Haddad & Schiff, 2025), for example, demonstrated that decoding accuracy and fluency contribute to Arabic reading comprehension alongside vocabulary and morphological awareness. A broader review of Arabic literacy research similarly indicates that orthographic knowledge interacts with phonological and morphological awareness in supporting Arabic reading development. These studies were conducted predominantly among native Arabic speakers and therefore cannot be directly generalized to Indonesian learners; nevertheless, they provide a psycholinguistic basis for

understanding why repeated interaction with Arabic script may reduce the initial decoding burden faced by learners of Arabic as a foreign language.

Phonological familiarity constituted another important dimension of this prior experience. MR explicitly associated his ability to pronounce Arabic sounds with Qur'anic and tajwid learning:

"*For letters like 'ain, kha, or dha, we have already learned how to pronounce them when studying the Qur'an. So when those letters appear in Arabic lessons, we already know the sound.*" (MR, student interview).

Observation during Arabic oral-reading activities supported this account. Students generally demonstrated greater confidence in producing Arabic phonemes than in explaining the meanings of the words being pronounced. This suggests that Qur'anic recitation provides repeated articulatory practice that can subsequently be mobilized during Arabic lessons. The finding corresponds with Arabic literacy research emphasizing that phonological knowledge constitutes an important component of the processing of written Arabic, although its contribution interacts with morphological, orthographic, and lexical knowledge rather than functioning independently.

Vocabulary recognition provided a third form of familiarity. ZA explained:

"*Sometimes the teacher gives vocabulary and I feel that I have seen the word before in the Qur'an. After the teacher tells us the meaning, I remember, 'Oh, that is the word I often read.' It becomes easier to remember.*" (ZA, student interview)

However, FA provided an important qualification:

"*I often recognize the word, but I don't necessarily know the translation. I just know that I have read it before.*" (FA, student interview)

The contrast between ZA and FA indicates that repeated Qur'anic exposure initially generates lexical familiarity rather than complete lexical knowledge. Recognizing a word as familiar is not equivalent to understanding its semantic meaning or being able to use it productively. This interpretation is particularly relevant because vocabulary has been identified as an important component of Arabic reading comprehension. Saiegh-Haddad and Schiff found that receptive vocabulary, together with morphological awareness and decoding skills, contributed to differences in reading comprehension. (Baharun et al., 2020), while formal instruction is required to connect those forms systematically with meaning and use.

Document analysis reinforced this distinction. Students appeared relatively comfortable with activities involving reading, copying, and recognizing Arabic vocabulary, whereas more substantial difficulties emerged when they were required to construct sentences or select vocabulary independently. Thus, Qur'anic reading appears to generate three interconnected forms of prior linguistic experience: orthographic familiarity, phonological familiarity, and lexical familiarity (Tumanggor & Wiza, 2026). These forms constitute useful linguistic resources, but they should not be equated with complete Arabic proficiency.

Negotiating the Gap between Recitation and Comprehension

Although students possessed substantial familiarity with Arabic forms, the data consistently revealed a distinction between their ability to recite Arabic texts and their ability

to understand or independently produce Arabic. This recitation–comprehension gap emerged across interviews, observations, and documentary evidence.

DA described the distinction clearly:

"Reading is easier than translating. If the teacher asks me to read, I can do it. But if I am asked directly what it means, sometimes I don't know." (DA, student interview)

NA similarly differentiated reading from productive language use:

"I am more confident if the task is reading. Speaking Arabic is more difficult because I have to think about the words myself. When reading, the words are already there." (NA, student interview)

Classroom observations demonstrated the same tendency. Students generally participated readily when asked to read Arabic passages aloud, whereas participation declined when tasks required them to explain meanings, analyze grammatical structures, or construct original sentences. This pattern corresponds with the distinction between decoding and comprehension emphasized in Arabic literacy research. Reading comprehension requires more than successful word decoding; lexical knowledge, morphological awareness, oral-language comprehension, and other metalinguistic resources also contribute to the construction of meaning (Gottardo et al., 2018). Recent empirical evidence from Arabic speaking children similarly demonstrates that decoding accuracy and fluency alone do not account for reading comprehension, with vocabulary and particularly morphological awareness making important contributions (Suja et al., 2025).

The case of RH further demonstrates the limitations of direct transfer: *"I read the Qur'an every day, but Arabic lessons are still difficult for me, especially grammar. Reading the Qur'an and understanding Arabic feel different."* (RH, student interview)

RH represents an important negative case. His experience challenges the assumption that high Qur'anic reading frequency automatically results in broader Arabic competence. Rather, the linguistic effects of Qur'anic reading appear strongest in areas directly practiced during recitation, particularly decoding and pronunciation. The explanation for this gap became clearer when students described how they normally approached Qur'anic reading.

RS stated: *"Usually, when reading the Qur'an, I focus on finishing the target and reading correctly. I do not always look at the translation."* (RS, student interview)

AM similarly explained: *"If I read half a juz, I mostly just read it. If there is a word I know from Arabic lessons, sometimes I notice it, but I don't deliberately look for vocabulary."* (AM, student interview)

Observation of Qur'anic reading activities corroborated these accounts. Students generally maintained continuous recitation and concentrated primarily on accuracy, fluency, and completion. They rarely stopped to examine lexical meanings or grammatical structures unless specifically instructed to do so. These findings reveal a distinction between recitation-oriented engagement and language oriented engagement. Recitation-oriented engagement emphasizes accurate pronunciation, fluency, and completion, whereas language oriented engagement involves conscious attention to vocabulary, morphology, grammatical relationships, and meaning (Kim, 2026). This distinction is theoretically important because research on Arabic reading consistently demonstrates that successful comprehension depends on multiple linguistic and metalinguistic resources. A scoping review of Arabic reading

research, for instance, concludes that phonological awareness, morphological awareness, and orthographic knowledge jointly contribute to reading development and that explicit metalinguistic knowledge is particularly relevant to comprehension (Bin Sawad et al., 2022).

The findings therefore suggest that repeated Qur'anic exposure may strengthen particular components of Arabic processing without automatically activating the semantic and metalinguistic processes required for comprehension. Frequency of exposure alone is consequently insufficient to explain differences in Arabic learning.

However, the boundary between recitation and comprehension was not absolute. During one observed vocabulary lesson, the Arabic teacher introduced a word and asked whether students had previously encountered it in the Qur'an. Several students immediately recognized the form and attempted to recall related Qur'anic expressions

The teacher explained: "*When I say, 'You have actually read this word in the Qur'an,' they usually become interested. They realize that the word is not completely new. Then I explain its meaning and how it can be used in another context.*" (Arabic teacher interview)

This episode demonstrates that prior Qur'anic familiarity can become linguistically productive when it is accompanied by instructional mediation. Students already possessed familiarity with the form the teacher provided the semantic and contextual bridge required to transform recognition into explicit linguistic knowledge. Consequently, the crucial issue is not merely the frequency with which students encounter Arabic through Qur'anic reading, but whether that familiarity is subsequently noticed, interpreted, and connected with meaning.

Reconstructing the Relationship: Exposure, Mediation, and Transfer

The integration of the three empirical themes provides the basis for reconstructing the relationship between Qur'anic reading engagement and Arabic language learning. Rather than emerging as a predetermined theoretical framework, the Exposure–Mediation–Transfer (EMT) model was developed through an interpretative synthesis of participants' accounts, observed learning patterns, and the contrasting experiences identified in the negative cases. The first component, exposure, was derived from accounts describing repeated encounters with Arabic letters, sounds, and lexical forms during Qur'anic reading activities. The experiences of AR, MR, and ZA illustrated how sustained engagement with Qur'anic texts was associated with familiarity with Arabic orthography, pronunciation, and previously encountered linguistic forms. These recurring experiences were interpreted as representing linguistic exposure, which constitutes the first component of the reconstructed model. Importantly, this component refers to students' reported and observed familiarity with Arabic forms rather than evidence of independently measured language acquisition.

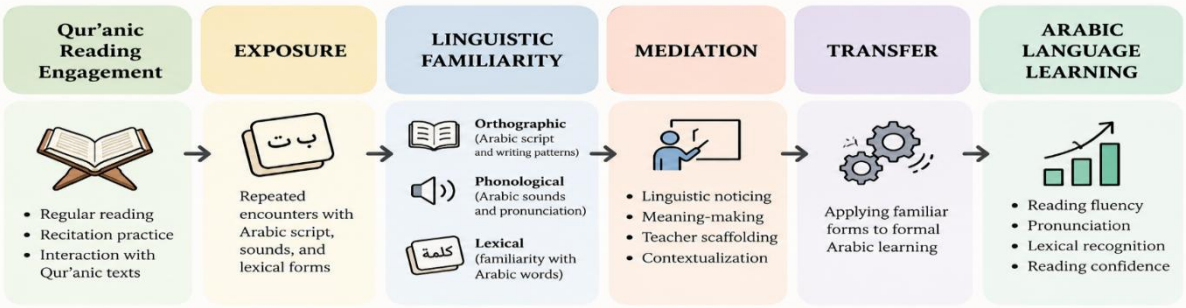
This interpretation is consistent with existing Arabic literacy research emphasizing the interaction of decoding, lexical, phonological, morphological, and orthographic processes in reading development. Saiegh-Haddad and Schiff (Saiegh-Haddad & Schiff, 2025), for instance, demonstrated the contributions of vocabulary, morphological awareness, decoding accuracy, and reading fluency to Standard Arabic reading comprehension. However, the present findings do not establish that Qur'anic reading independently develops these competencies. Instead, they suggest that repeated Qur'anic reading may provide a context in which learners

develop familiarity with selected linguistic forms that could become relevant to subsequent Arabic instruction. The exposure component therefore captures a recurring experiential pattern identified in the qualitative data, while its potential contribution to language development remains dependent on subsequent learning processes.

The second component, mediation, was reconstructed from participants' accounts describing the distinction between recognizing Arabic forms and understanding their linguistic meanings. The experiences of FA, DA, and RH illustrated situations in which familiarity with Qur'anic pronunciation or written forms did not necessarily correspond to vocabulary comprehension or grammatical understanding. These contrasting experiences provided an empirical basis for identifying a gap between linguistic familiarity and meaningful language processing. Within the participants' learning experiences, teacher explanation, vocabulary instruction, translation, contextualization, and opportunities for linguistic noticing emerged as potential ways of connecting familiar forms with explicit linguistic knowledge. This interpretation is consistent with research emphasizing the contribution of lexical and metalinguistic knowledge to Arabic reading comprehension beyond decoding accuracy(Orosoo et al., 2025). Accordingly, mediation was conceptualized as an interpretative component that helps explain why repeated exposure may be associated with different learning experiences. The findings suggest the relevance of mediation but do not establish the independent causal effects of particular instructional practices.

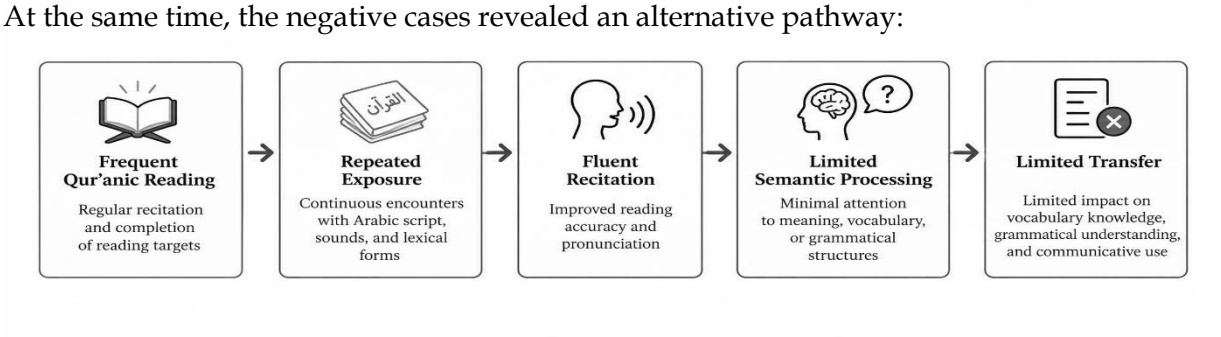
The third component, transfer, was interpreted from students' descriptions and observed instances of connecting linguistic forms encountered during Qur'anic reading with activities in formal Arabic lessons. In this study, transfer refers to perceived or contextually observed application of prior linguistic familiarity rather than independently verified improvement in Arabic language competence. Participants' accounts suggested that connections were more readily recognized in script identification, pronunciation, reading fluency, and familiar lexical forms, whereas semantic comprehension, grammatical interpretation, spontaneous speaking, and independent sentence construction were described as more challenging. These patterns indicate possible differences in how prior linguistic familiarity is utilized across learning activities, but they should not be interpreted as evidence of a measured hierarchy of linguistic transfer. The transfer component was therefore reconstructed as a potential process through which previously encountered Arabic forms may become useful in formal learning, particularly when supported by meaningful linguistic processing and instructional mediation.

The reconstructed relationship can therefore be represented as:



Picture 1: **Reconstructing the Relationship: Exposure, Mediation, and Transfer**

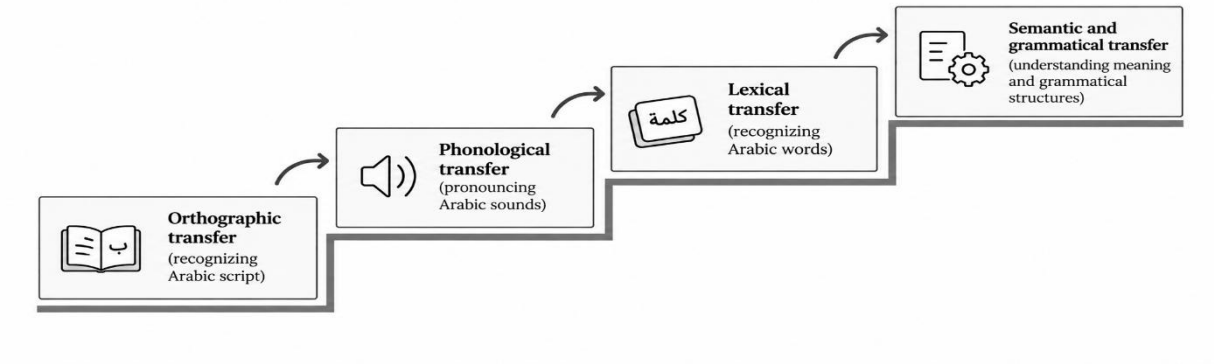
At the same time, the negative cases revealed an alternative pathway:



Picture 2: **The Negative Cases Revealed an Alternative Pathway**

The coexistence of these pathways explains why students with similar levels of Qur'anic reading frequency may demonstrate substantially different Arabic learning experiences. The crucial distinction lies not solely in how much exposure occurs, but in how that exposure is cognitively and pedagogically processed. On this basis, Qur'anic reading can be conceptualized as generating latent linguistic resources (Basir et al., 2024). These resources consist of accumulated familiarity with Arabic orthographic, phonological, and lexical forms that may support subsequent Arabic learning but do not automatically constitute functional language competence. Their educational value emerges when they are activated through linguistic noticing, semantic processing, and instructional mediation.

The findings further suggest a continuum in the degree of transfer:



Picture 3: **a Continuum in the Degree of Transfer**

This continuum is compatible with existing evidence demonstrating that Arabic reading involves progressively complex interactions among decoding, vocabulary, morphological awareness, and comprehension processes (Jailani et al., 2025). However, the present study extends this literature by locating those processes within the distinctive experience of non-Arab Muslim learners whose first sustained encounter with Arabic may occur through Qur'anic literacy rather than formal foreign-language instruction (Arifah et al., 2024).

The Exposure, Mediation, Transfer (EMT) reconstruction therefore constitutes the principal conceptual contribution of this study. Rather than positioning Qur'anic reading and Arabic language learning as either equivalent or completely separate practices, the model conceptualizes them as distinct but intersecting literacy practices. Qur'anic reading provides sustained exposure and develops familiarity with selected Arabic linguistic forms, while

formal Arabic instruction can mediate and activate those forms as resources for broader language development (Almelhes, 2024).

Accordingly, the relevant question is not simply whether Qur'anic reading improves Arabic language learning, but under what conditions linguistic familiarity accumulated through Qur'anic reading becomes transferable to Arabic language knowledge (Sari & Moore, 2024). The findings indicate that the transition depends on the interaction of exposure, linguistic noticing, semantic mediation, and transfer. Qur'anic reading provides exposure; repeated exposure generates familiarity; mediation connects familiar forms with linguistic meanings; and transfer enables students to mobilize those resources in Arabic learning. The EMT model therefore explains both the potential contribution of Qur'anic reading and the limitations observed among students who demonstrate fluent recitation without corresponding levels of Arabic comprehension.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the relationship between Qur'anic reading engagement and Arabic language learning among junior high school students is neither direct nor automatic. Regular Qur'anic reading provides sustained exposure to Arabic script, sounds, and lexical forms, generating orthographic, phonological, and lexical familiarity that can support formal Arabic learning. However, such familiarity does not automatically develop into semantic, grammatical, or productive competence. Based on these findings, the study reconstructs this relationship through the Exposure, Mediation, Transfer (EMT) model, in which Qur'anic reading provides linguistic exposure, mediation connects familiar forms with meaning through linguistic noticing, contextualization, and teacher scaffolding, and transfer occurs when these resources are activated in Arabic learning. The findings further indicate a gradual continuum from orthographic and phonological transfer to lexical, semantic, and grammatical transfer, with the latter requiring greater instructional mediation. Thus, Qur'anic reading can be conceptualized as a source of latent linguistic resources rather than as equivalent to Arabic language proficiency.

This study is limited by its qualitative and context-specific design, which restricts the generalizability of the findings across different learner populations, educational levels, and institutional settings. It also focuses primarily on students' learning experiences and observable transfer processes without quantitatively measuring the relative contribution of Qur'anic reading engagement to specific Arabic language skills. These limitations leave an important research gap concerning how strongly each stage of the EMT model contributes to Arabic proficiency, which forms of Qur'anic engagement generate the greatest transfer, and how instructional mediation influences this process. Future research should therefore test the EMT model quantitatively with larger and more diverse samples, compare learners with different levels and patterns of Qur'anic engagement, and examine its applicability across educational contexts. Experimental or longitudinal studies are particularly needed to investigate whether instructional designs that deliberately connect Qur'anic reading with vocabulary, morphology, grammar, and communicative activities can transform latent linguistic resources into stronger semantic, grammatical, and productive Arabic competence.

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