

Improving Foundational Language Skills of Standard Arabic in Early Childhood by Using Language Immersion-Based Learning Enhanced with Art Activities

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ABSTRACT

The fundamental language skills acquired during early childhood play a pivotal role in a child's developmental progress in kindergarten and the initial stages of primary education. This study aimed to improve the foundational language proficiency in Standard Arabic among early childhood children by implementing a language immersion-based learning approach enriched with art activities. The experimental approach was used through a quasi-experimental design based on one group, with pre- and post-measurements. The study sample consisted of 30 first-grade primary school children aged 6-7 years. The sample was selected by simple random method. A comprehensive list of foundational linguistic skills in Standard Arabic essential for the study sample was compiled, the list included the skills of: phonological awareness, listening, standard speaking skills, and linguistic vocabulary. Educational content for art activities, including puppet theatre, dough modeling, and flat expression drawing, was suggested across 15 sessions. An oral test was administered to assess the children's foundational language skills in Standard Arabic. The results demonstrated statistically significant effectiveness in utilizing language immersion-based learning enhanced by art activities, the differences between the average scores of the children in the study sample in the pre- and post-measurements on the oral test of foundational language skills were in favor of the post-measurement. Comprehensive findings showed that language immersion-based learning enhanced children's phonological awareness, listening, standard speaking abilities, and linguistic vocabulary. The study recommends integrating identified foundational language skills into early childhood art activities and underscores the importance of immersive learning in language skill instruction at this developmental stage.

Keywords: Foundational Language Skills, Oral Language, Art Activities, Linguistic Vocabulary, Early Childhood.

Introduction

Children acquire critical language and social communication skills in their early years. Language proficiency is specifically developed by activities that involve speaking, listening, reading, and writing in the early grades of kindergarten and primary school. During these crucial phases, kids absorb basic vocabulary, build simple phrases, and learn expressions that form the basis for the development of more complex language skills. Thus,

it is essential to improve the core language skills of children throughout these early stages. This emphasis is justified by the realization that their main means of learning, obtaining information, forming experiences, and promoting cognitive growth is accurate language competency based on accurate abilities. It is also noteworthy that early language proficiency is a strong indicator of future academic performance.

Foundational language skills in early childhood pertain to the competencies essential for a child's development during kindergarten and the initial grades of primary school. These abilities cover the child's ability to use language in expressive (speaking and writing) and receptive (hearing and reading) contexts for communicative tasks. This proficiency extends to reading and written comprehension, as well as the aptitude to convey meaning through the use of words and sentences (Adam, 2017). The acquisition of these foundational language skills bears significant implications for a child's holistic development, as evidenced by studies such as Laely et al. (2023), which highlight the association between foundational language skills and heightened cognitive abilities, enhanced social aptitude, and superior academic accomplishment.

In the early childhood stage, which is considered to be the most critical time for language acquisition, kids move from using informal and regional languages to formal language. Although encouraging this transition from informal languages to formal language is important, some research and writing in the field of teaching core language skills in early children, as exemplified by (Al-Yasjin, 2020; Al-Nashif, 2021; Hamida, 2022) highlight challenges associated with the Arabic language itself. Notably, these challenges encompass the existence of multiple language levels, such as colloquial dialects, standard Arabic. This difference in language levels poses potential confusion for children in early childhood, particularly those accustomed to the colloquial level during their preschool years. This predicament is compounded by the fact that colloquial dialects constitute the primary linguistic environment for children prior to their formal entry into the educational system.

In order to support children's development of expressive language skills, it is advised that language learning programs be customized to provide them with opportunity for real language exchanges, as opposed to slang. Language immersion is one type of immersive learning where kids are immersed in language-learning scenarios and are only allowed to use eloquent language during the entire learning process. This method entails completely excluding kids from informal speech while they are learning. The concept of language immersion in education originated from the bilingual curriculum implemented at St. Lambert School in Canada. In this setting, where the mother tongue was English, an immersive language learning approach was employed to teach French as the target language. This methodology garnered significant success in Canadian schools, owing to its unconventional nature, the dedication of educators, and their commitment to ensuring the success of this distinctive learning experience. Teachers actively facilitated extensive opportunities for language exposure, practice, skill acquisition, and cultural assimilation among students (Shabellat, 2018).

In the present study, immersive learning is construed as intentional educational methods wherein children are instructed in the foundational skills of Standard Arabic language. This involves immersing children in linguistic activities, emphasizing listening and speaking, while excluding local colloquial dialects during the learning process. The approach gradually imparts fluent skills over an adequate duration, with a prerequisite that language learning activities closely simulate real-life situations.

The practice of conducting all communication in Standard Arabic entirely for the duration of the learning period serves as evidence for linguistic immersion education. This immersive approach extends over a sufficient duration, covering a variety of linguistic contexts and situations within a continuous communicative and practical framework. This style of learning is grounded in a set of essential procedures, with primary emphasis placed on activities such as listening, speaking, and repetition solely conducted in the target language (eloquent language) (Manna, 2017).

Considering the aforementioned, the current study focuses on utilizing language immersion-based learning enhanced with art activities to improve the foundational language skills of standard Arabic in early childhood.

Literature review

Before beginning formal schooling, children in Arab countries usually come into contact with informal dialects in their immediate surroundings. Later, in the course of their official education, children become proficient in both Standard and expressive Arabic. Given the prevalent influence of colloquial dialects on children's language development during early childhood and its subsequent impact on their scholastic language proficiency, educational studies have concentrated on methodologies, mechanisms, and activities geared towards enhancing the foundational skills of Standard Arabic during this critical phase of a child's development. Al-Khatib (2008) explored the potential advantages of incorporating animation in the instruction of Standard Arabic skills to children at the initial stages of basic schooling. The study revealed that leveraging the expressive and eloquent language embedded in animation exerts a positive influence on a child's acquisition of language skills within a spontaneous context. This approach serves as an exemplar of employing language in a lifelike manner, devoid of any perceptible difficulty for the child. In a study of Girmen and Kaya (2019), the mirrored classroom model (FCM) was employed for the enhancement of fundamental language skills, accompanied by supplementary activities such as digital stories and games, targeting primary school children. The objective was to foster the development of essential language skills among learners through diverse activities. The study's

findings unveiled that the utilization of the mirrored classroom model (FCM), integrating digital story and game-based activities into the teaching and learning processes, significantly contributed to the advancement of learners' performance across various domains. Notably, improvements were observed in basic language skills, as well as cognitive and social aptitudes. Muhammad (2022) formulated a program centered on educational drama with the aim of cultivating Arabic speaking skills in primary school students. The program delineated speaking skills and language activities grounded in educational drama, aligning with the language learning objectives specified by the study. The study sought to evaluate the efficacy of the proposed program in enhancing speaking skills holistically, as well as in individual skill components, namely vocal intonation, expressive expression, fluency, linguistic accuracy, and the organization of ideas, along with persuasive capabilities. Laely et al. (2023) investigated the implementation of Outdoor Learning Activities (OLA) by teachers with the objective of enhancing basic language skills in early childhood. The findings revealed that while teachers did incorporate OLA into their practices, the optimization of children's language skills remained suboptimal. Language stimulation for children predominantly occurred within the confines of the classroom using conventional methods such as traditional conversations, storytelling, and question-and-answer sessions. These conventional approaches often lacked engaging learning activities. These outcomes underscore the imperative for Outdoor Learning Activity designs to harness the potential of the child's environment in order to address this limitation.

Although these studies based on multiple activities aimed at developing children's language skills, they did not address the development of classical language skills. It is clear from the objectives of these studies such as (Al-Khatib, 2008; Girmen and Kaya, 2019; Muhammad, 2022) that they address improving general language skills without focusing on speaking outside the local dialects in which the children live.

Afifi et al. (2018) affirm that artistic activities serve as valuable tools for children to express their thoughts and emotions, providing a means for more effective self-expression through their creative endeavors. These artistic activities encompass both plastic and linguistic expressions, offering children a space conducive to expression, whether free or guided, and whether undertaken individually or collaboratively. Abbas (2018) underscores that children's artistic creations draw inspiration from their immediate environment, societal influences, and prevailing customs and traditions. Modern educational philosophy places a distinct emphasis on nurturing the child's holistic development, including their physical, mental, psychological, and social attributes, with a focus on allowing children to experience their childhood while building a foundation for a peaceful and secure future. Art emerges as a paramount channel through which children articulate their feelings, perceptions, and imagination, facilitating the acquisition of diverse skills and experiences. The research conducted by Abu Fatima et al. (2021) substantiates and underscores the affirmative influence of artistic activities on children. The findings confirm that such activities play a pivotal role in bolstering children's self-confidence, facilitating language expression, encouraging social interaction, and enabling effective communication without apprehension or hesitation.

Puppet theater stands out as an educational tool that significantly contributes to the multifaceted development of a child, encompassing mental, social, psychological, linguistic, and physical aspects. The primary objective is to present linguistic content and skills in an engaging format that simplifies comprehension for children. Particularly noteworthy is the auditory language offered by puppet theater, catering to children who may not yet be proficient readers, thereby piquing the child's curiosity for direct linguistic expression (Bakheet et al., 2022; Ahmed and Abu Adiba, 2022). The study conducted by Al-Berri and Saud (2016) advocates for the incorporation of puppet theater in Arabic language activities for primary grades. This recommendation is based on the observed enhancement of the child's central role in assuming different roles with enthusiasm, engaging in attentive listening, and exercising control over language use within theatrical activities. These dynamics contribute to positive communication, thereby supporting the enhancement of diverse language skills.

In flat expression drawing, children are afforded the opportunity to freely articulate their emotions, sentiments, motivations, and experiences related to specific situations, events, or personalities. This mode of expression involves using pens and colors on two-dimensional materials (Hassan and Farraj, 2015). The resultant drawings possess distinctive characteristics that render them significantly valuable for the advancement of language performance skills in children. These drawings emanate from the child's individual thoughts and experiences and can be effectively utilized to guide the child in interactive linguistic expression, encompassing speaking, describing, and listening (Samir and Ahmed, 2020). Moreover, drawing serves as a meaningful means of communication in a broader sense. Enhancing a child's visual language allows them to convey meanings or ideas through pictures and drawings. The child's learning experience is enriched when information and concepts are presented visually, promoting better comprehension (Alford, 2015).

The dough modeling also serves as a holistic outlet for children, activating their sensory, moral, and verbal faculties simultaneously. This multifaceted activity contributes to the development of social skills and facilitates the transition of children from individualistic tendencies toward collaborative teamwork. Linguistic communication becomes evident as children engage in conversations about their creations, stimulating active participation in discussions and expression of opinions. The linguistic outcomes are thereby augmented. Additionally, modeling with dough plays a pivotal role in the development of fine motor skills essential for grasping and controlling writing tools, thereby contributing to the preparation and enhancement of writing skills. Teachers can leverage the unique characteristics of dough, particularly its malleability, in designing artistic activities that effectively serve the development of language skills (Shahat and Rashwan, 2018).

Study Problem

The results of several studies, as exemplified by (Radwan and Ibrahim, 2017; Mohammad, 2022; Chadli and Ben Yamina, 2022; Ismail and Elmorsy, 2023; Shaaban et al., 2023), illuminate deficient foundational Standard Arabic proficiencies linked to the utilization of sophisticated language among young children in early childhood. According to these studies These inadequacies manifest across the domains of listening, speaking, and reading skills, underscoring the limited capacity of children to articulate coherent sentences on diverse subjects in eloquent language.

There is a notable deficiency in the emphasis on cultivating proficiency in standard Arabic skills within early childhood language instruction. This assertion finds support in the outcomes of an exploratory study conducted among nine first-grade female teachers at the Third Early Childhood School in Hofuf, Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia. Through interviews facilitated by the second researcher, it was revealed that a substantial majority, specifically eight female teachers (89%), conveyed that language instruction activities, encompassing both teaching and learning, predominantly rely on the use of the local dialect. Additionally, the findings underscored the limited and constrained intentional educational efforts directed towards fostering eloquent language, circumscribed within narrow parameters. Field observations conducted by researchers suggest that teachers in the early grades of primary school, while putting forth considerable effort in facilitating language activities, tend to employ dry and conventional approaches. These practices often revolve around traditional methods of teaching reading and writing, lacking the integration of more effective language learning models and strategies.

Field observations highlight a missed opportunity regarding the significant potential of artistic activities in Standard Arabic learning. Teachers often treat activities such as puppet theatre, dough modeling, and flat expression drawing in early childhood as mere artistic endeavors without recognizing their linguistic and social value. Consequently, these valuable activities are not effectively utilized to enhance language learning skills and promote proficient communication in listening and speaking. This observation aligns with findings from previous studies by Mazouz and Amrouni (2016), Afifi et al. (2018), and Ismail and Elmorsy (2023).

One reason why children do not use classical language as often as they should be because school environments tend to favor regional dialects. There is an evident gap exists in Arabic language studies when it comes to the application of immersive learning, especially in early childhood education. As far as the researchers are aware, few studies have been conducted in the area of teaching young children language skills that make use of linguistic immersion with the express goal of improving fundamental and expressive language skills. Immersion learning is still a little-studied topic in early childhood education, especially when it comes to learning Arabic. The core problem addressed in this study is the imperative to enhance the foundational skills of Standard Arabic among early childhood children. This necessitates the implementation of interactive teaching and learning models tailored to the cognitive and linguistic characteristics of children at this developmental stage.

There are other factors for children's weakness in using the classical language, such as the linguistic environment surrounding them, as children may be exposed to non-classical languages in their daily environment, which reduces their opportunities to interact in the classical language. In addition, there may be a lack of appropriate language training at home or at school, resulting in classical language not being sufficiently developed. Furthermore, poor motivation or self-confidence in the correct use of standard language can contribute to delays in the development of speaking skills in these children. Therefore, it is important to provide a supportive environment that encourages the use of classical language and provide the necessary language training to enhance the speaking skills. An immersive learning strategy enhanced by artistic activities may be considered an effective tool in treating weak classical language speaking skills among children. By integrating the arts into the educational process, children are motivated to interact in the classical language in an innovative and exciting way, which enhances their opportunities to acquire speaking skills naturally.

Study Questions:

- 1) What are the foundational skills of standard Arabic needed for children in early childhood?
- 2) What is the image of the educational content prepared in the light of learning based on linguistic immersion enhanced by artistic activities for children in early childhood?
- 3) What is the effectiveness of learning based on linguistic immersion enhanced by artistic activities in improving Foundational Language Skills of Standard Arabic for children in early childhood?

Study Objective:

The primary objective of the present study was to enhance the foundational skills of Standard Arabic among early childhood children by employing linguistic immersion-based learning complemented by artistic activities. Achieving this goal involved identifying the foundational skills of the Standard Arabic language pertinent to the children under consideration, constructing suitable educational content based on the study variables. In addition, verify the implementation of a language immersion-based learning approach enriched with art activities in Improving Foundational Language Skills of Standard Arabic

Study concepts

Language immersion-based learning: Refers to the methods used in education to teach kids the fundamentals of speaking Arabic. These teaching style center on hearing and speaking, isolating the regional vernaculars while learning, gradually imparting the necessary abilities, and immersing the kids in classical language and activities for the duration of the study period, use classical language; additionally, incorporate artistic activities to enhance immersion learning, such as puppet theater, dough shaping, and flat expression drawing.

Foundational language skills of standard Arabic: The phonological awareness, listening, standard speaking skills, and linguistic vocabulary of early childhood children, and they are assessed using a test of the fundamentals of classical Arabic that was created specifically for this study.

Art activities: These are artistic works performed by children in early childhood, which are enriched through learning on linguistic immersion, and are to include the following: puppet theatre, dough shaping, and flat expressive drawing.

Methodology

Study Approach: The experimental approach was used through a quasi-experimental design based on one group, with pre- and post-measurements.

Sampling: Utilizing the simple random method, the sample was drawn from first-grade students within the age range of 6-7 years, specifically from the Third School for Early Childhood in Hofuf, Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia, during the first semester of the academic year 2023-2024. There were 73 children in the first grade, including males and girls. Every child's name was inscribed on a card, which was then folded and hidden. Of the total number of children, 41% selected cards at random up to number 30. Throughout the course of the study, no child was left out of the sample. The selection of the first-grade level was deliberate, given its intermediary role in the early childhood stage, serving as a transitional phase between kindergarten and primary school. This phase is pivotal for children as they progress from pre-academic language skills to the acquisition of academic language skills, aligning with the foundational aspects of the Standard Arabic language a variable central to the present study. the study was applied to the research sample after obtaining the approval of the Scientific Research Ethics Committee, Deanship of Scientific Research - King Faisal University.

Study Tools

1) List of Foundational Language Skills of Standard Arabic (phonological awareness, listening, Standard speaking skills, and linguistic vocabulary)

The compilation of the list emanated from the objectives of early childhood language skills education and a comprehensive review of pertinent literature, including works by (Al-Khatib, 2008; Al-Yasjin, 2020; Ismail, 2021; Jakharab, 2022; Chadli and Ben Yamina, 2022; Mohammad, 2022; Ismail and Elmorsy, 2023; Al-Zubair and Bella, 2023). Initially, the list encompassed four primary dimensions: phonological awareness, listening, standard speaking skills, and linguistic vocabulary, comprising a total of 34 sub-skills in the initial iteration. This preliminary version was subjected to evaluation by nine experts specializing in kindergarten education, curriculum development, and Arabic language teaching methodologies. The experts were tasked with refining the list by enhancing the clarity of main domains and sub-indicators within scientific and linguistic frameworks. They were also instructed to assess the importance of each sub-skill using a scale of significance: very important skill, important skill, or somewhat important skill. Adjustments were made to certain sub-skills based on linguistic and stylistic considerations. No additional sub-skills were introduced, and any sub-skills lacking consensus agreement at an 80% threshold were removed.

Table (1): List of Foundational Language Skills of Standard Arabic

Domains	Subskills	How important the subskill is			Great value	Relative weight
		very important	important	somewhat important		
Phonological awareness	Distinguish the sounds of different letters in pronunciation.	8	1	0	26	%89.6
	Distinguish the sounds of letters that are similar in pronunciation.	9	0	0	27	%100
	Distinguish short movements.	9	0	0	27	%100
	Distinguish long movements .	9	0	0	27	%100
	Parsing words into phonemes.	8	1	1	27	%93.10

	Combine phonemes to form meaningful words.	9	0	0	27	%100
	Manipulating sounds (deleting, replacing, complementing, adding sounds to form new words)	7	1	1	24	%82.7
listening	Auditory word recognition.	8	1	0	26	%89.6
	Extracting the main idea from the audio.	8	1	1	27	%93.10
	Extracting sub-thoughts from audio.	8	1	0	26	%89.6
	Finding the meaning of new vocabulary through the context in the audio.	7	1	1	24	%82.7
	Follow directions and voice instructions.	8	1	0	26	%89.6
	Understanding the sequence of thoughts in audio.	7	1	1	24	%82.7
	Rearranging events in audio.	8	1	0	26	%89.6
	Distinguish details in audio.	8	1	1	27	%93.10
Standard speaking skills	Describing things/events with eloquent words and structures.	8	1	0	26	%89.6
	Expressing ideas in eloquent words and sentences, far from colloquialism.	9	0	0	27	%100
	Conveying a verbal message to the listener in clearly formulated language.	8	1	1	27	%93.10
	Tell stories using eloquent expressions.	8	1	0	26	%89.6
	Expressing personal experience in clear, non-colloquial language.	8	1	0	26	%89.6
	Arranging ideas and communicating them in conversation.	8	1	1	27	%93.10
	Expressive performance accompanied by insinuating expressions (using appropriate body language).	9	0	0	27	%100
	Pay attention to the speed and accuracy of speech.	8	1	0	26	%89.6
linguistic vocabulary	Using more than one synonym for the word.	7	1	1	24	%82.7
	Diversify the vocabulary used in oral expression.	8	1	1	27	%93.10
	Express things using various sentences.	8	1	0	26	%89.6
	Describe events using a variety of vocabulary and structures.	9	0	0	27	%100

2) The proposed content based on learning by linguistic immersion enhanced by artistic activities:

Suggested content setting background: The instructional content was developed with the explicit aim of enhancing Foundational Language Skills of Standard Arabic (phonological awareness, listening, Standard speaking skills, and linguistic vocabulary). To achieve this objective, reference was made to a curated compilation of foundational skills specific to Standard Arabic, prepared for the purposes of this study. In addition, the educational content was enriched through the infusion of artistic activities, including puppet theatre, dough modeling, and flat expression drawing. Moreover, the construction of the content was informed by the objectives articulated in language learning literature, particularly those aligned with artistic activities. This approach was substantiated by insights from prior scholarly works, such as: (Al-Thaqafi and Wadi, 2014; Mazouz and Amrouni, 2016; Barakat, 2017; Shahat and Rashwan, 2018; Al-Yasjin, 2020; Ismail, 2021; Jakharab, 2022; Chadli and Ben Yamina, 2022; Muhammad, 2022; Ismail and Elmorsy, 2023 ; AL-Zubair and Bella, 2023).

General objective of the content: improving the foundational skills of the Standard Arabic language among the children of the study sample based on learning based on linguistic immersion enhanced by artistic activities.

Detailed Goal Setting: A set of detailed content objectives was defined that were presented at the beginning of each content session.

Determine the content of the sessions this included:

- a) A theoretical introduction that explains to early childhood female teachers the general and detailed content objectives, the definition of key terms, and the schedule of distribution of sessions.
- b) Teaching and learning methods in the light of learning based on linguistic immersion enhanced by artistic activities.
- c) The nature, domains and sub-indicators of the language skills targeted.
- d) Guidelines for providing and implementing content for children in the light of learning based on linguistic immersion enhanced by artistic activities (puppet theatre, dough modeling, and flat expression drawing).
- e) Proposals for artistic means and activities during the provision of educational content for children.
- d) Define the proposed roles of the parameters during the implementation of the sessions.
- d) Determine the proposed evaluation methods during the implementation of the sessions.
- e) The detailed content of the sessions, which included (15) educational sessions, and it was taken into account that each session within the content includes the following main elements:
 - Session topic.
 - Execution time.
 - Detailed session objectives.
 - Techniques and methods of teaching and learning.
 - Propose appropriate artistic activities.
 - Means of teaching and learning.
 - Calendar methods.

Proposed sessions:

1. The city of visual imagination
2. The secret of magic colors
3. Linguistic dough: Building letters and words with dough
4. Theater world
5. Nature sounds
6. Magic garden
7. Drawing dreams
8. Heroes talk
9. I have a personal dictionary
10. A journey of creativity with the story
11. Animal dialogue
12. The journey of the magic pen
13. A dialogue with bridal dough
14. The charming painting
15. Forming events with dough

The preliminary version of the educational content underwent evaluation by a panel comprising nine experts specializing in kindergarten education, possessing expertise in curricula and Arabic language teaching methodologies. The primary aim of this evaluation was to enhance the content to align with both the overarching and specific objectives of each instructional session. The evaluation process aimed to determine the consistency of proposed technical activities with the content and the inherent characteristics of eloquent

language skills. Furthermore, the evaluators provided insights regarding potential deletions or additions. To facilitate the evaluation, a rating card was developed, enabling evaluators to systematically express their opinions. This card facilitated structured feedback on the content, with provisions for unstructured comments to capture nuanced perspectives on the session content. Consensus was achieved among the panelists regarding the number and thematic focus of the sessions within the general objective framework. Consequently, adjustments were made to refine the content, including modifications to session objectives and the employed teaching and learning methodologies. The collective input from the evaluators played a pivotal role in shaping the final version of the instructional sessions, with their perspectives duly considered through consultative deliberations.

3) Oral test of Foundational Language Skills of Standard Arabic

The test was formulated with the objective of assessing the fundamental skills of Standard Arabic language outlined in the present study. These skills were categorized into primary components: phonological awareness, listening, Standard speaking skills, and linguistic vocabulary. The questions designed for this test are intended for individual oral administration to each participant in the study. The test included the following sections:

a) Phonemic Awareness Axis: It included (7) oral questions (from the multiple choice pattern) that measure the sub-skills of this axis.

b) Listening: It included listening to only one text (story) and included under the text (8) questions (multiple choice mode) measuring the sub-listening skills identified in the current study.

c) Standard speaking skills: included (3) brief topics covering the targeted skills in this axis, and the total questions that are asked on the three topics is (7) questions (from the pattern of direct free expression), provided that the method of measuring this axis is through a gradient registration card to three levels.

d) linguistic vocabulary: It included (4) questions (from a multiple choice pattern) covering the sub-skills of the axis.

The application instructions for the teacher were placed on the first page of the test, and a part was allocated at the beginning of the test to include the basic data of each child participating in the application by the teacher. Table 2 shows the test description in the initial image:

Table (2): Description of the test in the initial image

the field	questions	Total questions	percentage
Phonological awareness	7 : 1	7	%27
listening	15 : 8	8	%30.7
Standard speaking skills	22 - 16	7	%27
linguistic vocabulary	26 - 23	4	%15.3
Total	26	26	%100

Test Validity:

The test underwent an initial assessment by a panel of (9) expert arbitrators specializing in kindergarten education, as well as curricula development and methodologies for teaching Arabic. This evaluation aimed to validate the appropriateness of the test's vocabulary in measuring the foundational skills outlined in the current study, specifically focusing on the standard Arabic language. Concurrently, the comprehensive list of skills articulated in the study was provided to the arbitrators alongside the test for reference and contextual understanding. During this evaluative phase, certain arbitrators introduced minor modifications to the phrasing of specific questions, while refraining from altering the inherent vocabulary of the test. Additionally, some arbitrators underscored the necessity of implementing a graded scoring mechanism categorized as advanced, intermediate, and novice to assess the vocabulary within the Standard Speaking axis (the third axis of the test). The feedback from the arbitrators played a pivotal role in shaping this dimension, leading to the development of a graduated evaluation card tailored for measuring the vocabulary within this axis during the final implementation of the test. This meticulous process reflects a commitment to refining and optimizing the test content to ensure its validity and effectiveness.

Test Stability:

The reliability of the oral test of foundational language skills of standard Arabic was calculated after the exploratory application to a sample of seven children not included in the basic sample. Reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The value of the test reliability coefficient was (0.81), which is a high reliability value, while the values of the reliability coefficients of the sub-axes of the scale were as follows: Phonological awareness axis: (0.82), Listening (0.79), Standard speaking skills (0.81), and the linguistic vocabulary (0.78), all of which have statistically significant reliability values.

Test correction method:

1. Phonological awareness axis: one score is allocated for each correct answer, and zero for the wrong answer (overall score 7).
2. Listening axis: One score is assigned for each correct answer, and zero for the wrong answer (overall score 8).

3. The axis of speaking Standard language: Three degrees have been allocated for the advanced level, two degrees for the intermediate level, and one degree for the developing level, and there is no zero degree at this level, because children's responses in the level of speaking Standard have been restricted to three levels: (advanced - intermediate - developing), and therefore the total degree of this axis is (21) degrees.
4. The axis of linguistic vocabulary: one score was allocated for each correct answer, and zero for the wrong answer (total score 4).

Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis program SPSS was utilized to demonstrate the variations in the average scores of the research sample children on the foundational skills test for classical Arabic through the use of a t-test for paired samples. There was usage of the mean and standard deviation. Blake's modified gain ratio was employed to confirm the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

Results and discussion

To answer the question: "What is the effectiveness of learning based on linguistic immersion enhanced by artistic activities in improving Foundational Language Skills of Standard Arabic for children in early childhood? A paired samples t-test was employed to demonstrate the significance of differences between the pre- and post-measurement averages in the oral test of foundational language skills of standard Arabic.

Table (3): The variances in the mean scores among the children within the study sample on the oral test of foundational language skills of standard Arabic

Domains	Measurement	mean	standard deviation	N	df	(T)	significance	Differences in favor
Phonemic awareness skills	Pretest	3.10	0.84	30	29	13.34	0.05	Posttest
	Posttest	6.13	0.86					
Listening skills	Pretest	3.67	0.88					
	Posttest	6.97	0.76					
Standard speaking skills	Pretest	10.60	1.61					
	Posttest	19.02	3.38					
linguistic vocabulary	Pretest	1.40	0.56					
	Posttest	3.60	0.56					
Total score for the test	Pretest	18.77	2.48					
	Posttest	35.72	3.17					

Table (3) demonstrates statistically significant distinctions at the 0.05 significance level in the scores of the children within the study sample across both the sub-axes and the cumulative score of the foundational skills test for Standard Arabic. These disparities favored the post-measurement phase, evident in the (T) values of (13.34, 14.96, 12.49, 10.39) for the individual test axes and (12.93) for the overall test score. The difference between the total mean of the post-test and the total mean of the pre-test amounted to (16.95) degrees, indicative of an enhancement in the proficiency level of the children within the study sample in the specified skills subsequent to the implementation of the proposed educational content.

In addition, Blake's (1966) modified gain ratio was used to provide more information about effectiveness of learning based on linguistic immersion enhanced by artistic activities in improving Foundational Language Skills of Standard Arabic. This is a statistical formula used to measure the effectiveness of a program or educational course by comparing the differences between pre-tests and post-tests. The result of Blake's modified gain ratio needs to be greater than 1.2 to be considered effective regarding impact. The modified gain ratio reached (1.221). This indicates the effectiveness of the independent variable of the current study, "Using Language Immersion-Based Learning Enhanced with Art Activities" in improving foundational language skills of standard Arabic.

The preceding findings are consistent with studies in this domain, such as Manna (2017), underscored the pivotal role of linguistic immersion activities in attaining linguistic proficiency. Similarly, Jakhar's study (2022) validated the effectiveness of linguistic immersion in imparting skills related to the Standard Arabic language, while Al-Meligy's study (2023) elucidated the effectiveness of employing linguistic immersion for the development of speaking and writing abilities. The present outcomes cohere with research that attests to the impact of specific artistic activities on augmenting children's language skills. Al-Khatib's study (2008), for instance, highlighted the significance of utilizing animation for teaching Standard Arabic skills to children. Furthermore, Al-Berri and Saud's research (2016) affirmed the positive influence of employing puppet theater in enhancing listening skills among first-grade children. Similarly, Samir and Ahmed's study (2020) demonstrated the effectiveness of utilizing children's drawings to develop language performance skills in kindergarten children. Additionally, Muhammad's study (2022) disclosed the effectiveness of a proposed program grounded in educational drama for cultivating Arabic speaking skills in the primary stage.

The effectiveness of using language immersion-based learning enhanced with art activities in improving foundational language skills of standard Arabic among the study sample's children can be attributed to the following factors:

Continuous Linguistic Interaction: Learning based on linguistic immersion facilitated an interactive and ongoing environment in clear Standard Arabic. This exposure allowed children to consistently encounter eloquent and accessible language across various contexts through interactive artistic activities such as puppet theater, dough modeling, and flat expression drawing.

Confidence Enhancement: Language immersion activities played a crucial role in bolstering children's confidence in using Standard Arabic. The live language interactions provided them with a platform to express themselves without shame or hesitation. This, in turn, strengthened their willingness to actively engage in language activities and articulate themselves appropriately during the content sessions.

Vital Contexts for Learning: The incorporation of artistic activities, such as puppet theater, dough modeling, and flat expression drawing, into the educational content presented children with essential and realistic contexts for language learning. By participating in these artistic activities, children immersed themselves in life scenarios similar to those encountered in their daily lives. This experiential learning approach deepened their understanding of eloquent language usage during the content sessions in the current study.

In addition, the preceding research outcomes can be ascribed to the appropriateness of linguistic immersion and artistic activities within the educational curriculum for the developmental needs of children in the initial grades of primary school. The significance of adopting a pedagogical approach based on linguistic immersion, complemented by artistic endeavors, lies in its utilization of learning activities rooted in engagement and the child's active involvement in authentic language practices. The incorporation of artistic activities in the educational content has resulted in the creation of a learning environment that fosters proficient phonological awareness and reinforces sustained learning. This is evidenced through children's participation in puppet theater, dough modeling, and flat expression drawing. Through these activities, children have had the opportunity to immerse themselves in diverse linguistic experiences, thereby contributing to the enhancement of their speaking skills, linguistic vocabulary, and phonological awareness. Importantly, this approach has motivated them to develop their language proficiency more effectively, departing from conventional methods of language instruction.

In the development of educational sessions based on linguistic immersion, careful consideration was given to avoiding an in-depth exploration of the levels of the Standard language. Instead, the focus was solely on utilizing eloquent language, with the specified proficiency level in this study aimed at avoiding both unfamiliar and sophisticated expressions on one hand, and coarse and colloquial language on the other. This meticulous approach was incorporated into the educational activities included in the curriculum provided to the study's participants. The intention was to prevent alienating children from the learning process due to language complexity exceeding their cognitive and age-appropriate levels.

The utilization of artistic expression activities also contributed to achieving the research findings. Puppet theater played a significant role in improving speaking and expression skills in classical Arabic, as children participated in different roles and learned to use eloquent expressions naturally. Additionally, dough modeling contributed to expanding children's vocabulary and linguistic expressions, while flat expression drawing enhanced their expression and language accuracy skills, positively impacting the formation and enrichment of their linguistic skills.

The findings align with the research objectives, which aimed to enhance foundational skills in classical Arabic during early childhood through linguistic immersion learning supplemented by artistic activities. The results indicated that the sub-objectives of the study were covered by improvement the skills of phonological awareness, listening, standard speaking abilities, and linguistic vocabulary in children.

Study limitations:

The results of the current study are limited to the sample that was worked with only. It is difficult to generalize the results of the current study in light of the small sample that was dealt with. More specifically, the limitations of the study are as follows:

- Learning based on linguistic immersion enhanced by the following artistic activities: phonological awareness, listening, Standard speaking skills, and linguistic vocabulary.
- The foundational skills of the following Standard Arabic: phonological awareness, listening, Standard speaking skills, and linguistic vocabulary.
- Children of the first grade of primary school (6-7) years, at the Third Early Childhood School in Hofuf, Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia.

Recommendations:

a) It is recommended that educators and educational program planners for kindergartens and early primary school grades prioritize the inclusion of language immersion learning activities for children in this age group. This inclusion aims to enhance oral language skills across multiple proficiency levels.

- b) Incorporate the foundational language skills identified in this study into early childhood artistic activities and adhere to the principles of immersive learning when teaching language skills during this developmental stage.
- c) Enhance interaction periods with children in early childhood by employing the Standard Arabic language within authentic contexts. This can be achieved through the integration of linguistic and artistic activities into the curricula of kindergarten and early primary school grades.
- d) Advise early childhood educators to utilize educational activities that deliberately minimize exposure to local and colloquial dialects during puppet theater sessions. Additionally, instruct them to guide children in describing their artistic creations through flat expression drawing and dough modeling.
- e) Implement the educational content from this study for training children in the foundational eloquent skills of the Arabic language within the first grades of primary school.
- f) Provide comprehensive training to supervisors and teachers, focusing on effective implementation of a language immersion learning program and incorporating artistic activities in early childhood classrooms.
- g) In light of the results of the current study, specific times can be allocated from the daily schedule for children to immerse themselves in conversation in classical Arabic.
- h) Successful teaching strategies can be employed alongside language immersion such as situational learning and role-based learning. Training teachers in these methods may improve their professional skills in employing immersive learning with children.

Further Studies

- a) Conducting experimental studies in early childhood to develop fluent Arabic language skills using other learning methods other than immersive learning.
- b) Conducting studies to verify the effectiveness of the use of language immersion learning in early childhood to develop social interaction skills and achieve communication competence in children.
- c) Expand current study in the future to include larger and diverse samples of early childhood children in different environments and cultures.

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