



EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES ON LEARNING ARABIC FOR CHILDREN

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Abstract

Arabic learning can take place at various ages of either children, adolescents or adults. Learning Arabic is something needed for especially Muslim because it is important in Muslim life. This paper will explain about the Arabic learning strategy for children. This is important to discuss because children need special strategies in learning for their ages. In collecting information, the writer uses library research method, which is done by comparing several literary sources, especially those that are the main source of discussion to discuss about the existing problems. Then, as the result, language learning is a help to determine how, and how well, learners learn a foreign language. There are many variations on learning strategy. Arabic learning strategies for children include playing, singing, telling stories, projects, demonstration, and conversation. By using the suitable and fun strategy, children can develop their potential well and effectively. The selection of learning strategies depends on children's ages and characteristics.

Keywords: *Learning Strategy, Arabic, Children*

Abstrak

Pembelajaran bahasa Arab dapat terjadi di berbagai usia baik anak-anak, remaja dan orang dewasa. Pembelajaran bahasa Arab merupakan sesuatu hal yang diperlukan terutama bagi setiap muslim dan karena hal tersebut penting dalam kehidupan muslim. Artikel ini akan membahas tentang strategi pembelajaran bahasa Arab untuk anak-anak. Ini penting karena anak-anak memerlukan strategi khusus dalam belajar untuk usia mereka. Dalam mengumpulkan informasi, penulis menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan, yaitu dilakukan dengan membandingkan beberapa sumber sastra, terutama yang merupakan sumber utama diskusi untuk membahas tentang masalah yang ada. Kemudian, sebagai hasil, pembelajaran bahasa adalah bantuan untuk menentukan bagaimana, dan seberapa baik, peserta didik belajar bahasa asing, Strategi pembelajaran bahasa Arab untuk anak-anak termasuk bermain, bernyanyi, bercerita, proyek, demonstrasi, dan percakapan. Dengan menggunakan strategi yang tepat, anak-anak dapat mengembangkan potensi mereka dengan baik dan efektif. Selain itu, penentuan strategi belajar yang akan digunakan dalam belajar dipilih berdasarkan pertimbangan usia anak-anak serta berdasarkan karakteristik mereka.

Kata Kunci: *Strategi Belajar, Bahasa Arab, Anak-Anak*

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Introduction

Language has various definitions that depend on the kinds or regions where the language used. According to Nuha, the existence of language is a result of culture in an area. For example, the word "language" in Indonesian is equivalent to or equal to the word "*lughat*" in Arabic, "*language*" in English, "*langue*" in French, "*Taal*" in Dutch, "*sprache*" in German, "*Kokugo*" in Japanese, and "*bahasa*" in Sanskrit. As time has passed, it also still develops the essence of the language itself. The function of second language is the language used by people to state or express the feelings, emotions, hopes, desires, ideas, and thoughts of a person. On the other hand, language is also a tool for understanding and appreciating the feelings, hopes, desires, and thoughts of others. Then as the result, it is very true that someone uses language to create interaction with each other to understand one of the others.

Arabic has an important role in Islamic world. In Islam, it is the language of Quran, thus the need to learn and understand Arabic among Muslim is of paramount importance.¹ Holy book and most of the classical literature of this religion is written in Arabic. Then, it becomes a necessity for every Muslim to learn this language properly. Arabic study needs an appropriate strategy so that the goal that we want to achieve can be right on the target. For adults, learning Arabic can be done with a simple strategy. Yet it is different for the case of children since their physical condition is different than adults. With the same strategy, learning on adult will give different effect than learning that is done on the children. In addition, children also have some various abilities. A proper learning strategy will lead them to a faster mastery of Arabic. A teacher should have professional skill in teaching various levels of age. This ability is important to be mastered by every teacher who teaches both formal and non-formal institution. Thus, Arabic will be easily understood by the learners. As expected outcomes, with developing teaching strategies, so that their (teachers) students will be more active and engaged in the learning process; even they will learn the language better.²

The following paragraphs will discuss about the description of Arabic learning strategy for children which includes learning strategy and language learning in general, language development on the children, learning foreign language for children, the basic principles of choosing Arabic learning strategy for children, and Arabic learning strategy for children.

Learning strategy can be defined as a planning that contains a series of activities designed to achieve certain educational goals. There are two things that we need to understand from the

¹ Mohammed Salim Trigui and Sandra Ben Amar, "Arabic Language Learning (ALL) for Kids," *JAKU: Comp. IT*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2012): 137.

² Al-Fayyumi Khalil A. Rahman. M and Fayyumi Omar Khalil A. Rahman, "The effect of Teaching Strategies on Learning Arabic Language in Jordan," *Modern Research Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (2017): 485.

definition above. *First*, the learning strategy is an action plan (series of activities) including the use of methods and the utilization of various resources/the power of learning. It means the preparation of a new strategy until the process of preparing the work plan has not reached the action yet. *Second*, strategy is designed to achieve certain goals, and the direction of all decision-making strategy is the achievement of goals. Thus, the preparation of learning steps, the utilization of various facilities and learning resources are all directed toward achieving the objectives or goals. The importance to use strategy is to help learner improve language proficiency and by using more than one strategies can lead to better results of learning language.³ Moreover, by having higher language proficiency here can help learner to switch their L1 easily into L2. Wang states that an actual case of students with higher proficiency level switched to their L1 more frequent than students with lower proficiency level.⁴

Al Ghalayaini defines Arabic as sentences used by Arabs to express their goals (thoughts and feelings). Arabic has given many vocabs to other languages of the Islamic world, like Latin's role to most of European languages. During the Middle Ages, Arabic was also the main instrument of culture, especially in science, mathematics, and philosophy, which led many European languages that also borrow many vocabs from Arabic.⁵

According to Nuha, Arabic is the greatest language in terms of the number of speakers in the family of *semitic* languages. This language is closely related to Hebrew and Aramaic languages. Modern Arabic has been classified as a single macro-language with 27 subsections in ISO 639-3. These languages are spoken throughout the Arab world, while standard Arabic is known throughout the Islamic world. Modern Arabic comes from classical Arabic that has become the language of Islamic literature and Islamic religion since less of the sixth century. The Arabic alphabet is written from right to left.⁶

In relation to the teaching and learning process, the stages of development that are used should be elective. It means that it is not limited to the opinion but broad enough to gather from various opinions that have close relationship. Based on the establishment, the development of an individual since birth to maturity can be described through the following phases.

- a. Pre-school age : 0-6 years old.
- b. Primary school age : 6-12 years old.
- c. High school age : 12-18 years old.

³³ Salih Mahgoub El-Tingari, "Strategies for Learning Second Language Skills: Arabic Speaking Skills in the Malaysian Context," *International Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2016): 24.

⁴ Mohammad Azrien et al., "The Use of First Language in Arabic Language Classroom: A Teaching Buttress or a Learning Obstacle?," *Journal of Islamic Studies and Culture*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2014): 57.

⁵ Ulin Nuha, *Metodologi Super Efektif Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab* (Yogyakarta: Diva Press, 2012), 31-32.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

d. Student age : 18-25 years old

The age of primary school is often referred to the intellectual period or school compatibility period. Actually it is difficult to say what age precisely a mature child to enter into elementary school because the maturity is not determined by age solely. However, at the age of 6-7 years, usually the child has matured to enter the elementary school. According to Simona, children from age of eight or nine begin to develop a curiosity about the outside world.⁷

According to Syamsu (2006) in Nuha, developmental tasks during school era include learning to acquire physical skills for playing games, learning in form of healthy attitudes toward themselves as human beings, learning to get along with peers, studying roles according to gender, learning basic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic, learning to develop everyday concepts, developing conscience, learning to gain personal freedom, and need to developing positive attitudes toward social groups and institutions.⁸ Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find the effective learning strategies of Arabic toward the children. The problem occurs because many teachers or educators still neglect on teaching strategy toward children for especially.

Method

This study uses library research method, which is a method to get the data from related and relevant books based on the problem formulation. This type contains a topic that has several arguments and or information from literature as the source. To analyze the collected or gathered data, the writer uses qualitative analysis that is done by inductive and deductive analysis. Inductive analysis is the way of thinking in getting the conclusion that is started from statement or specific facts into general conclusion. Then, deductive analysis that defines as the way of thinking to get the conclusion which is started from general statement into specific questions by use logical reason.

Discussion

Learning Strategy and Language Learning

Basically, learning strategy is the step that is taken by the students to get understanding so that can increase their engagement and good involvement in language classroom. Teachers and educators should create teaching strategies to teach language in the classroom to increase students' engagement and involvement in the classroom that lead to a good learning.⁹

⁷ Simona Laurian-Fitzgerald, *The Effects of Using Games for English as a Second Language Primary School Learners* (Butani Secondary School: Arhipelag XXI Press, 2015), 774.

⁸ Ulin Nuha, *Metodologi Super Efektif*, 71.

⁹ Al-Fayyoumi Khalil dan A. Rahman, *The effect of Teaching*, 485-486.

Since the amount of information that must be processed by language learners is high in language classroom, learners use different language learning strategies in performing the task and processing the input. Language learning strategies are good indicators of how learners approach task or problems encountered during the process of language learning. The use of learning language strategies here is to create active activities to achieve the learning goal. When learning is active, students do most of the work, they use their brains, study ideas, solve problems, and apply what they learn.¹⁰ So, learning can be said as the way that teacher applies in class to the students so that the students can get easier understanding about the material taught and to activate students enthusiasm to learn something, in this case is second language.

Language Development Of Children

Language is a means of communication with others. In this sense, it includes all ways of communication, where thoughts and feelings are expressed in writing form, oral, gestures, or motion using words, sound sentences, symbols, drawings or paintings. By language, all human beings can recognize themselves, their fellow human beings, the natural world, knowledge, and moral or religious values.

New born baby until the age of one year is commonly referred as an *infant* or not able to speak. This term is appropriate when associated with the ability to speak. However, it is inappropriate to be associated with the ability to communicate, because even without the language baby has been communicated with the person who take him care, for example by crying, smiling, or gestures. Therefore, the developmental stage of baby language (children) can be divided into two, namely, the stage of development of articulation and the development stage of words and sentences.¹¹ Children and adolescents have different way in learning language. Children respond to the meaning even if they do not understand words, learning from everything that surrounds them. Moreover, intonation, gesture, facial expression, and actions help to convey to children what the unknown words and phrases mean. By understanding the message, they understand the language.¹²

As the children get older, when a child is educated in elementary school, this is a period of rapid development of the ability to recognize and master the vocabulary. At the beginning of this period, child has mastered about 2500 words and in the final period has been able to master about 50,000 words. With the mastery of reading and communicating with other people, children have always liked to read or listen to critical stories. At this time the child's thinking level is more

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 486.

¹¹ Abdul Chaer, *Psikolinguistik: Kajian Teoritik* (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2009), 230.

¹² Simona Laurian-Fitzgerald, *The Effects of Using*, 773-774.

advanced, they ask a lot about the time and causal cases. Therefore, the word “Question” which he used was originally just what, then it has been followed by the “other question words: where, from where, to where, why, and how.”

The development of language as mentioned above is preceded by the ability to produce sound. It means a child who has a speech organ deficiency will not have a comprehensible language since his speech organs are still not complete then naturally begin to produce simple sounds, consonant vocals and unfulfilled combinations because there is no differential function of the sound device. The form of speech is like a children while they are crying to ask something.

Learning Second Language for Children

Foreign language learning refers to the process of acquiring a second language after the children get their first language. There are experts who call the term language learning and there are others who also called language acquisition. The term language learning is believed that a second language can be mastered only by the learning process, by way of intentionally and consciously. This occurs through acquisition of the first language or mother language obtained naturally, unconsciously in the family environment of the caretakers of children. While experts who use the term language acquisition assume that the second language is also something that can be obtained, both formally in formal and informal education within the living environment. In a bilingual and even multilingual society the second language acquisition is informally can be occurred.¹³

The second language learning is the process of understanding one or more language after the preceding language is controlled to certain limitation. Thus, learning a second language means learning to master a second language to them. Generally, the second language learning outcome is not as good as the first language learning outcome. However, in children, the learning process is occurred very quickly and smoothly, especially because their brains are still very sensitive to receive language stimulant.

Basic Principles in Determining Learning Strategy on Arabic Toward The Children

Learning Arabic basically is not difficult to comprehend or learn if there is a willingness to learn, study, and perfect it.¹⁴ What is meant by perfect here, is how a teacher can face characteristic of students and what suitable learning strategy to be determined. To choose and determine the learning strategy of *Arabiyah Lil Athfal*, first teacher should understand well the principles of

¹³Abdul Chaer, *Psikolinguistik: Kajian*, 242.

¹⁴Abdul Aziz Othman Altwaijri, *Teaching The Arabic Language: Challenges and Remedial Approaches* (ISESCO, 2017), 13.

learning *Arabiyah Lil Athfal* and the characteristics of students who will be taught. Characteristics of the students include: Students are still learning and happy to talk about their environment, happy to play, pleased to practice something newly known / learned, tend to be happy to ask, tend to be happy in getting appreciation, and tend to do the things because of encouragement from outside.

Based on some of these characteristics, teacher can choose appropriate learning strategies of *Arabiyah Lil Athfal*. One of the characteristics of students is that their knowledge is still limited to their daily environment. Based on the statement above, the subject matter should be chosen for matters that are related to their environment. For example, about themselves, parents (father/mother), siblings, home and inside of home, pets, toys, school environment, and playmates.

The statement above has been mentioned that one of the characteristics of young students is that they happy to ask. This should be taken into teachers' consideration to choose learning strategy. In starting learning activities for example, teacher can stimulate students' curiosity. Thus, there will be questions or comments from students that lead to the substance of the material. With the questions from students, it is possible that the interaction and multi-direction communication happened. To motivate students so that they can follow the learning process well, teacher can do variations. This variation can be done in terms of materials, methods/techniques, media, and place.

Learning Strategy of Arabic for Children

In learning activities, teachers are demanded to implement teaching and learning activities well. Each teacher must have a strategy in teaching, so that each learner is able to understand especially the material presented by the teacher. In addition, strategies must be attractive and suit the characteristics of learners. The right strategy will lead learners to be great learners. Some Arabic learning strategies for children, among others are explained below:

1. Playing

According to educators and psychologists, playing is a child work and a child's growth mirror. Playing is an activity that gives satisfaction to own self through which the child obtains the limitation and understands a life. Children start playing as early as infancy but as they grow up and mature the nature of their playing type changes.¹⁵

According to Jean Jacques Rousseau, playing is the nature of the child and they can choose what they want to learn. The child plays something because he wants a freedom.¹⁶ Playing is a child's need. Play is an activity that integrates with the world of children, in which

¹⁵ Sigridur Dogg Sigurdardottir, *The Use of Games in the Language Classroom* (Sigillum University Islandiae, 2010), 6.

¹⁶ Mukhtar Latif et.al., *Orientasi Baru Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Teori dan Aplikasi* (Jakarta: Kencana Prenada Media Group, 2013), 100.

contained various functions such as the development of physical ability in term, of motor, cognitive, affective, social. By playing children will experience a process that leads to the developmen of human capabilities. We can insert bit by bit Arabic learning material, and the children will li sten to various sounds and say syllable or even vocabulary.¹⁷

Before starting the game in the classroom, teacher needs to pay attention to the following:

- a. Give information to the students that they will play a game in the class. This is necessary so that they are physically and mentally ready to play
- b. Make some groups of student based on the game needs
- c. Explain the rules of the game as clearly as possible, and be confident that every student has already understood the rules
- d. Train the students about the linguistic aspects that will be presented in the game.
- e. Give an example of a game so that students know well how the game should be done.

2. Singing

In this learning strategy, teacher approach the students by using songs. It is because children of all ages are basically happy to listen, sing, and learn. The result research of Mellasari found that the use of song lyrics as an effective technique for teaching listening. Students give positive and enthusiast respond to the lesson, also engaged easily in the whole learning process.¹⁸ Therefore, music in general is an important part of the teaching and learning process for the students as a child. Almost all forms of songs, either regional songs or other pop songs can be utilized by teachers in learning. The thing that must be paid attention is that teacher should be able to choose or make their own songs that can be used, either to sing together or to sing while doing activities.

The reason why using song, in this case explain that because song can train learner ears in term of listening while they are having conversation or to create interaction, so that no misunderstanding. Hsu et.al. mention that listening is an important capability of social interactions, and it has been found that people receive new messages more efficiently via listening than reading.¹⁹

Things that must be considered in choosing songs of learning Arabic for children include:

¹⁷ Fathul Mujib dan Nailur Rahmawati, *Metode Permainan-Permainan Edukatif dalam Belajar Bahasa Arab* (Jogjakarta: Diva Press, 2013), 26-27.

¹⁸ Mellasari Hadian, "The Use of Song Lyrics in Teaching Listening," *Journal of English and Education*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2015): 96.

¹⁹ C. Hsu et al., *Effects of Video caption modes on English listening comprehension and vocabulary acquisition using handheld devices* (Educational Technology & Society, 2013): 403-414.

- a. Poetry or words inside of song should be clear
- b. The language used in the song is not too difficult
- c. Selected theme songs should be appropriate to the child's world
- d. The duration of song is not too long
- e. The song is strived to have relevance to the material being taught.²⁰

3. Story telling

This strategy is one of learning experiences for children by bringing the story orally. Through the story then it is inserted the names of the characters in Arabic, for example the word "secretary" called "*katib*", the director called "*mudir*", and so on. Stories can allow the child's learning process to be amusing, entertaining and fulfilling at the same time.²¹ Moreover, telling story can give learner chance to speak up. Telling stories provides the opportunities for students to speak the foreign language creatively, integrate information and knowledge they learn from other sources, and become more confident in the ability to express themselves spontaneously.²²

However, the story should be attractive and can get the attention of the child, and not be separated from the purpose of education for children. There are several kinds of storytelling techniques, as follows:

- a. Read directly from the story book. The technique of telling story by reading directly from the storybook is great if the teacher adds the appropriate poem/prose to be read to the child.
- b. Storytelling by using a picture illustration of book. If the story delivered to the child is too long and detailed, then the addition of image illustrations from books must attract to the children's attention, as the result it can make this story-telling technique work well. Listening to stories without image illustrations demands a greater focus than when a child is listening to a picture book story. The use of pictures in the story is intended to clarify the messages spoken, also to remind the child's attention to the plot of the story.
- c. Telling the story of fairy tales is the most ancient art form. Storytelling is a way of continuing on cultural heritage from one generation to the next. Tales can be used to convey messages of virtue to the child. Through this fairy tale can also be inserted some Arabic vocabulary.
- d. Storytelling by using puppet media.
- e. Storytelling by using or playing the fingers of the hand.

²⁰ Muhsin Riyadi, *Strategi Mengajar Bahasa*, 127-128.

²¹ Jake Dennis Wood, *Using Stories to help children learn a foreign language* (Universidad de Granada, 2016),

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²² Gonzalez, *Teaching English through stories: A meaningful and fun way for children to learn the language* (Colombia: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2009), 98.

As the case of songs, stories are also important in Arabic learning. Listening to a story that is read or told by the teacher is an activity that is liked by the young students. However, more capable students may be required to do something while listening to a story, for example drawing something in a story, or being asked to create a story from a series of pictures or cartoons.

There are two activities that the teacher can do with the story, that is telling a story and reading a story. In telling the story, the teacher does not carry the book and is not too tended on the story to be told. The teacher can appreciate the story that he is telling by slightly changing or adjusting his language to the level of the children. In reading the story, the teacher reads the story from the book with a loud voice. For this necessary the teacher should use a ledger that can be seen clearly by all students. The activities in this story class may vary according to the age of the students. Smaller students level may be asked to "listen and do" (*al-istima 'wal' amal*), "listen and imitate" (*al-istima 'wattardid*), or "pantomime" (*at-taqlid / at-tahrij*). On the other hand, students with bigger level may be asked to perform more complex activities such as "listening and describing the route" (*al-istima 'wa rasmuththariq*), "seeing and telling stories" (*al-musyadah wal hikayah*), or "dramatizing the story" (*At-tamtsil*).

4. Project

Project strategy is one way of providing learning experiences by confronting children on daily issues that need to be solved in groups, such as mentioning any kinds of work in Arabic, then discussed together with the help of a guide in the group of children. This method is derived from John Dewey's idea about the concept of "learning by doing", which is the acquisition of learning outcomes by doing the actions in accordance with the objectives, especially the process of controlling the child about how to do a job consisting of a series of behaviors to achieve the goal.

According to the research result, there is a close relationship between the process of gaining true experience with education. Therefore, education for children must be integrated with the living environment that can spur children to get direct experience in learning Arabic, for example the experience of adding vocabulary obtained when playing and learning with his mother. The living environment as a personal and especially the child's life environment in the group, giving much experience on how to practice speaking Arabic together with his friends. The benefits of this strategy for children who are in development lies in its strength in motivating children to learn Arabic.

This strategy is very important in building a healthy child's personality so that they can easily receive Arabic lessons. A healthy child's personal is that he who has characteristics such

as an independent attitude, self-confidence, adaptability, and self-development. With this method is expected that children can learn Arabic optimally.²³

5. Demonstration

Demonstration means showing, working, and explaining. Explaining something verbally is not enough, moreover in teaching Arabic, as it is certainly easier to imitate what the teacher said after the object was shown to be memorized. In this strategy the teacher shows, performs, and explains the name of the object or occupation shown. With demonstration activities, teacher can improve students' understanding through visual and hearing. The child is asked to pay attention and listen carefully to all the teacher's information so that he is more understanding about how to do something. Thus the next child can imitate how to do it as exemplified by the teacher.

6. Conversation

Conversation means communicating the thoughts and feelings verbally or realizing receptive language skills and expressive language. Conversation can also be interpreted as dialogue or as the embodiment or shape of receptive and expressive language in a situation. With this strategy, children are invited to ask and answer about the objects around them by using Arabic, after the teacher tells some Arabic vocabularies.

According to Halliday in Moeslichatoen (2004),²⁴ in general the advantages of conversation for children are:

- a. Functions as a tool that can satisfy the needs of the child to express his desires.
- b. Function to set, that is to control the behavior of others.
- c. Functions as interpersonal relations, ie language can be used as a means of communication in the social environment, including in the world of children.
- d. Works for own self, that is children can express their views, feelings and attitudes.
- e. Function as heuristic, which serves to ask something like, "tell me why so".
- f. Imaginative function, that is with the children's language can avoid themselves from reality or in other words it can function *fuitis*.
- g. Informative function, that is, children can inform new information to others through language, such as the sentence "I have something to tell".

Meanwhile, Mukhtar Latif et. al. suggested some real benefits of conversation, that are increasing children's courage to speak, training children's ability to listen to the conversation and capturing messages from others, building positive self-concepts, broadening knowledge and

²³ Sumiarni, *Strategi Pembelajaran*, 108-109.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

increasing vocabulary number owned by children, increasing the courage of children to establish relationships with others such as teachers and peers.²⁵

Conclusion

First, Language is a means of communication with others. Language development is preceded by the ability to produce the sound. Second language learning refers to the process of acquiring a second language after the child obtains his first language. Second language learning for children needs to be designed in such a way that it resembles natural acquisition conditions. Meanwhile, learning strategy is the way that teacher apply in class to the students so that the students can get easier understanding about the material taught. *Second*, to choose and determine Arabic learning strategies for children, teachers should first understand well about the principles of learning and the characteristics of learners to be taught. Children need specific strategies in learning for their age. *Third*, Arabic learning strategies for children include playing, singing, telling stories, projects, demonstrations, and conversations. Playing is the nature of children and they have the ability to choose what they want to learn, children do playing for wanting a joy in any ages. Basically children also like listening, singing and learning. Listen to stories that read or told by the teacher is a fun activity by children. Project strategy is one way of providing learning experiences by confronting children to everyday problems that must be solved in groups. Then the demonstration strategy, that is the teacher shows, works out, and explains the name of the object or work that is shown. Finally, the conversation with each other to communicate thoughts and feelings verbally or realize the ability of receptive language and expressive language.

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²⁵ Mukhtar Latif et.al., *Orientasi Baru Pendidikan*, 115.

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