

REVITALIZING LOCAL WISDOM THROUGH A WAYANG GOLEK BASED ARABIC LANGUAGE LEARNING MODEL TO ENHANCE MADRASAH STUDENTS' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

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Abstract

This study aims to develop and examine a Wayang Golek-based Arabic language learning model that revitalizes local wisdom while enhancing the communicative competence of Madrasah students. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research explores the integration of traditional Wayang Golek performances into Arabic language instruction through classroom observations, interviews with teachers and students, and document analysis. The findings reveal that incorporating Wayang Golek into Arabic learning creates a contextual and culturally responsive learning environment that increases students' motivation, classroom participation, and confidence in using Arabic for communication. Storytelling, dialogue, and role-playing activities embedded in the performances effectively improve speaking, listening, vocabulary acquisition, and intercultural understanding while simultaneously fostering character values and appreciation of local cultural heritage. Based on these findings, the study proposes a Wayang Golek-based Arabic language learning model integrating cultural orientation, interactive storytelling, communicative language practice, collaborative reflection, and authentic assessment. The model offers an innovative pedagogical framework for strengthening communicative competence while preserving local wisdom in contemporary Arabic language education.

INTRODUCTION

Arabic language learning plays a strategic role in Islamic education because it enables students to access the primary sources of Islam while developing communication skills that are increasingly important in a globalized world. Contemporary Arabic language instruction is expected to move beyond grammar-oriented approaches toward communicative learning that actively engages students in listening, speaking, reading, and writing within meaningful contexts. However, in many madrasahs, Arabic instruction continues to emphasize memorization of vocabulary and grammatical rules, resulting in limited opportunities for students to develop communicative competence and use the language confidently in authentic situations (Sukandarman & Sofa, 2024).

Current developments in language education emphasize the importance of contextual, learner-centered, and culturally responsive learning. One promising strategy is the integration of local wisdom into classroom instruction. Local cultural resources provide authentic learning experiences that are familiar to students, making language learning more meaningful and motivating. Among Indonesia's rich cultural heritage, Wayang Golek represents a traditional performing art that conveys moral values, storytelling, dialogue, and social interaction. These characteristics make it highly compatible with communicative language teaching, as students can practice Arabic through role-playing, storytelling, questioning, and interactive conversations inspired by Wayang Golek performances (Sofa, 2026).

The use of Wayang Golek in Arabic language learning also supports the preservation of cultural heritage while strengthening students' linguistic and character development. By integrating traditional stories into Arabic learning activities, teachers can encourage students to expand their vocabulary, improve pronunciation, develop speaking fluency, and understand language within meaningful cultural contexts. Moreover, the moral values embedded in Wayang Golek stories promote honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and respect, demonstrating that language education can simultaneously foster communicative competence and character education through culturally responsive pedagogy (Putri & Sofa, 2026).

Despite the growing interest in integrating local wisdom into education, research examining Wayang Golek as a pedagogical model for Arabic language learning remains limited. Existing studies have predominantly focused on local culture as a learning medium or on communicative approaches in Arabic instruction separately, with little attention to combining both perspectives into an integrated instructional model. Therefore, this study aims to develop and examine a Wayang Golek-based Arabic language learning model that revitalizes local wisdom while enhancing Madrasah students' communicative competence. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of innovative Arabic language pedagogy by offering a culturally grounded instructional framework that integrates local wisdom, communicative language teaching, and character education in Madrasah learning contexts (Parawansah & Sofa, 2024).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Arabic language learning has shifted from a grammar-oriented paradigm toward a communicative approach that emphasizes students' ability to use the language effectively in authentic situations. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) views language as a tool for interaction rather than merely a system of grammatical rules. In this approach, students are encouraged to develop the four language skills listening (*mahārah al-istimā'*), speaking (*mahārah al-kalām*), reading (*mahārah al-qirā'ah*), and writing (*mahārah al-kitābah*) through meaningful communication. For Madrasah students, communicative competence encompasses not only linguistic accuracy but also the ability to express ideas appropriately within cultural and social contexts (Sudaryanto & Sofa, 2025).

The integration of local wisdom into language education has gained increasing attention as an approach to contextualizing learning and strengthening students' cultural identity. Local wisdom refers to the values, traditions, and cultural practices that shape community life and serve as valuable educational resources. In Indonesia, traditional performing arts such as Wayang Golek embody moral teachings, social interaction, and

storytelling traditions that can be transformed into authentic learning materials. The use of culturally relevant instructional resources enhances students' motivation, facilitates comprehension, and promotes meaningful learning by connecting classroom instruction with learners' everyday experiences (Nafila & Sofa, 2025).

Storytelling and role-playing are widely recognized as effective strategies in foreign language learning because they provide authentic opportunities for communication. Through Wayang Golek performances, students engage in dialogue, narrative construction, questioning, and collaborative interaction, all of which support vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, speaking fluency, and listening comprehension. Furthermore, the moral messages conveyed through the stories contribute to character education by fostering values such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, empathy, and respect. Consequently, Wayang Golek offers a dual pedagogical function as both a language-learning medium and a vehicle for character development (Sofa et al., 2021).

Although previous studies have investigated communicative Arabic language teaching and the educational use of local wisdom independently, limited research has integrated these perspectives into a comprehensive instructional framework (Sa'diya et al., 2026). Most studies discuss cultural media as supplementary teaching aids rather than as the foundation of a systematic learning model. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by proposing a Wayang Golek-based Arabic language learning model that combines local wisdom, communicative language teaching, storytelling, collaborative learning, and reflective activities. The proposed model contributes to the advancement of Arabic language pedagogy by providing an innovative framework for enhancing communicative competence while preserving Indonesia's cultural heritage within Madrasah education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative case study approach to investigate the implementation of a Wayang Golek-based learning model designed to strengthen character education and literacy among elementary school students at SDN Lemah Kembar, Sumberasih, Probolinggo (Arifin & Sofa, 2025b). A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because it facilitates a comprehensive understanding of educational practices within their real-life context. The approach enabled the researchers to examine how Wayang Golek, as a form of local cultural heritage, was integrated into classroom instruction to foster students' character formation, literacy development, and active engagement in meaningful learning experiences (Muchlis & Sofa, 2025).

The participants in this study included the school principal, classroom teachers, students, and local artists who participated in the educational Wayang Golek program (Arifin & Sofa, 2025b). Data were gathered using multiple qualitative techniques, including semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis. The documentary sources comprised records of learning activities, school documents, photographic evidence, and relevant media publications, which were used to provide comprehensive contextual information and support the credibility of the research findings. (Sofa, 2026). Interviews with teachers and school leaders explored the objectives, implementation process, and educational benefits of using Wayang Golek as a learning medium, while student interviews provided insights into their learning experiences and perceptions. Documentation was utilized to support and verify the findings obtained through interviews and observations (Sukandarman & Sofa, 2024).

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive analytical framework proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes the processes of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification (Zainal & Sofa, 2026). This analytical procedure was employed to explore recurring themes and relationships concerning the implementation of the Wayang Golek-based learning model, its role in strengthening character education, and its impact on enhancing students' literacy competencies within the elementary school learning environment (Sofa, 2026). To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking by comparing information obtained from interviews, observations, documentation, and published reports. These validation strategies enhanced the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that the implementation of a Wayang Golek-based learning model at SDN Lemah Kembar, Sumberasih, Probolinggo, constitutes an innovative educational practice that integrates local wisdom into elementary classroom instruction. Rather than serving merely as a traditional cultural performance, Wayang Golek was transformed into a pedagogical medium for delivering educational content related to character education, literacy development, the prevention of early marriage, and the importance of pursuing formal education. The learning process encouraged active student participation through storytelling, interactive discussions, and reflective activities, creating a contextual learning environment in which cultural appreciation was integrated with moral and educational values.

The implementation of this learning model was reinforced through collaboration between the school and professional performers from the Pustaka Wayang Bergerak community. This partnership enabled students to engage directly with authentic cultural performances while receiving educational messages embedded within the narratives. As explained by Ambar Susanti, a classroom teacher at SDN Lemah Kembar, *"This activity is intentionally presented to entertain and educate students at the same time. We collaborate with artists to deliver educational messages through wayang golek performances."* Her statement illustrates the school's commitment to integrating local cultural heritage into instructional activities to create meaningful, enjoyable, and value-oriented learning experiences. Moreover, the collaboration highlights the strategic role of partnerships between educational institutions and cultural communities in promoting innovative and culturally responsive learning.

The results also indicate that the use of Wayang Golek positively influenced students' learning motivation and classroom participation. During the performances, students demonstrated high levels of enthusiasm by listening attentively, responding to teachers' questions, sharing opinions, and engaging in discussions about the moral lessons conveyed through the stories (Mh et al., 2026). The narratives introduced values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, perseverance, respect for parents and teachers, appreciation of education, and awareness of the risks associated with early marriage. These findings suggest that traditional storytelling provides an effective medium for affective learning by linking moral education with students' everyday experiences, thereby reinforcing both character development and literacy competencies.

Furthermore, document analysis reveals that the Wayang Golek-based learning model supports literacy development through integrated listening, speaking, reading, and reflective communication activities (Arifin & Sofa, 2025a). Students were encouraged to interpret storylines, communicate their ideas, ask questions, and analyze the moral values represented by the puppet characters. These learning experiences enhanced critical thinking, oral communication, and cultural understanding while promoting active student engagement. The findings indicate that literacy learning becomes more meaningful when it is embedded within culturally relevant narratives, enabling students not only to develop language skills but also to interpret, evaluate, and communicate ideas effectively in authentic social and cultural contexts. The above data is reinforced by the following documentation:

Figure 1. Developing a Wayang Golek-Based Learning Model to Strengthen Character Education and Literacy among Elementary School Students.



Figure 1 illustrates the Wayang Golek-Based Learning Model proposed in this study as an innovative framework for strengthening character education and literacy among elementary school students. The model comprises five integrated stages: cultural orientation, interactive storytelling, collaborative reflection, literacy enrichment, and character reinforcement. These interconnected stages combine the principles of local wisdom with experiential learning to cultivate students' moral character, literacy competencies, critical thinking, and appreciation of Indonesia's cultural heritage through authentic and meaningful learning experiences.

From an educational innovation perspective, the findings suggest that Wayang Golek serves as an effective instructional approach that simultaneously promotes character education, literacy development, and cultural preservation (Saputra & Sofa, 2026). Drawing on the empirical findings, the proposed model begins with cultural orientation, where students are introduced to local cultural values and learning objectives, followed by interactive storytelling that delivers educational content through Wayang Golek performances. The third stage, collaborative reflection, encourages students to analyze and discuss the moral lessons embedded in the stories, while literacy enrichment develops students' reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills through story-based learning activities. The final stage, character reinforcement, focuses on helping students apply the values acquired during learning to their daily attitudes and behaviors (Ilahi et al., 2025). Collectively, these stages form a comprehensive pedagogical framework that integrates local wisdom, experiential learning, literacy education, and character development into elementary school instruction (Arifin & Sofa, 2025a).

Overall, the findings indicate that the integration of Wayang Golek into classroom learning provides meaningful, engaging, and culturally relevant educational experiences for elementary school students. Beyond enhancing students' literacy competencies, the proposed learning model effectively promotes the development of positive character values while contributing to the preservation and revitalization of Indonesia's rich cultural heritage within the educational process (Sa'diya et al., 2026). Consequently, the proposed learning model offers a practical and sustainable innovation that can be adapted by other elementary schools seeking to integrate local wisdom into character education and literacy development.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Wayang Golek-Based Learning Model represents an innovative pedagogical approach that effectively integrates local wisdom into elementary education. By transforming Wayang Golek from a traditional cultural performance into a structured instructional model, learning becomes more contextual, interactive, and student-centered. The integration of storytelling, collaborative learning, and reflective activities creates meaningful learning experiences that simultaneously strengthen students' literacy competencies, critical thinking, communication skills, and character development.

The proposed model consists of five interconnected stages: cultural orientation, interactive storytelling, collaborative reflection, literacy enrichment, and character reinforcement. These sequential stages provide a systematic framework for integrating experiential learning with local cultural heritage, enabling teachers to deliver character education and literacy instruction in an engaging and culturally responsive manner. The findings further demonstrate that the model encourages active student participation while fostering values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, cooperation, and respect.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of local wisdom-based learning by proposing a comprehensive instructional model that bridges cultural preservation with contemporary educational practices. Practically, the model offers an alternative pedagogical framework that can be adapted by elementary schools to improve the quality of learning while preserving Indonesia's cultural heritage. Future studies are recommended to evaluate the effectiveness of this model in diverse educational settings and to explore its integration with digital learning technologies and other forms of local cultural heritage to support sustainable educational innovation.

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