



Arabic Language Pedagogical Strategies for Generation Z and Generation Alpha: A Scoping-Level Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Generation Z and Generation Alpha have grown up under continuous exposure to digital technology, making lecture-based and memorization-heavy Arabic instruction appear increasingly misaligned with their learning preferences. This scoping-level systematic review maps teachers' and students' experiences and perceptions of Arabic pedagogical strategies used with these two generations, applying the SPIDER framework and a narrative synthesis approach. An initial search through two AI-assisted research tools, Consensus and Scholar Gateway, yielded 70 records; after deduplication, 68 records were screened, and 18 qualitative and mixed-methods studies published between 2016 and 2026 met the inclusion criteria. Five themes emerged: digital and gamified strategies raise motivation but with gendered effects; young learners' perceptions of Arabic are shaped by religious and psychosocial factors; teachers determine adoption success; non-digital strategies remain relevant for early learners; and affective barriers persist. Effective strategies appear hybrid, combining digital elements with stronger teacher-student relationships

Keywords

Arabic language; pedagogical strategy; Generation Z; Generation Alpha; systematic literature review

مستخلص البحث

نمت أجيال Z و Alpha في ظل تعرض مستمر للتقنية الرقمية، مما جعل تعليم اللغة العربية القائم على المحاضرة والحفظ يبدو غير متوائم مع أنماط تعلمهم. تهدف هذه المراجعة المنهجية على مستوى الاستكشاف إلى رسم خبرات وتصورات المعلمين والطلاب تجاه استراتيجيات تدريس اللغة العربية المستخدمة مع هذين الجيلين، باستخدام إطار SPIDER ومنهج التوليف السردى. أجري بحث أولي عبر أداتين بحثيتين قائمتين على الذكاء الاصطناعي، هما Consensus و Scholar Gateway، فأُسفر عن 70 سجلاً، وبعد حذف التكرار بقي 68 سجلاً خضعت للفرز، واستوفت 18 دراسة نوعية ومختلطة نشرت بين عامي 2016 و 2026 معايير الإدراج. ظهرت خمسة مواضيع رئيسية: ترفع الاستراتيجيات الرقمية والتلعيبية الدافعية لكن بأثر يختلف حسب الجنس، وتشكل تصورات المتعلمين الشباب تجاه العربية بعوامل دينية ونفسية اجتماعية، ويُعد المعلمون العامل الحاسم في نجاح تبني الاستراتيجيات، وتظل الاستراتيجيات غير الرقمية مهمة للمتعلمين الصغار، وتستمر العوائق الوجدانية. يبدو أن الاستراتيجيات الفعالة هجينة تجمع بين العناصر الرقمية وتقوية العلاقة بين المعلم والطالب.

المقدمة

Arabic occupies a strategic position in Islamic-based formal education institutions in Indonesia and various other countries, both as a compulsory subject and as a gateway to understanding primary religious sources. Learning outcomes in Arabic remain widely reported as suboptimal, however, with a considerable proportion of students struggling with vocabulary mastery, grammar, and active speaking skills (Zurqoni et al., 2020).

This challenge intersects with a generational shift in learners. Generation Z, born roughly between 1997 and 2012, and Generation Alpha, born from around 2010 through the mid-2020s, have grown up as digital natives accustomed to visual, interactive, and fast-paced information (Aziz, 2025); (Abdurrahman, 2026). Several studies report a mismatch between Arabic teaching approaches still dominated by lecturing and rote memorization and these generations' preference for active engagement, rapid feedback, and playful elements (Darmawati et al., 2025); (Gofur, 2025).

A range of pedagogical strategies has been trialed to bridge this gap, from gamification and digital platforms to strengthened communicative and multisensory approaches at the early-childhood level (Al-Abdullatif & Alsubaie, 2022); (Sri Zulfida et al., 2024). Evidence on how teachers and students themselves experience and make sense of these strategies, rather than merely measuring learning outcomes, remains scattered across journals and has not been systematically synthesized, particularly for the Generation Z and Generation Alpha context taken together. This gap motivates the present review.

This review addresses the question of how Arabic teachers and Generation Z and Generation Alpha students experience and perceive the various Arabic pedagogical strategies used with them, including the challenges, preferences, and factors influencing successful implementation. Its contribution lies in synthesizing experiential and perceptual evidence across these two learner generations together, an angle that existing, largely outcome-focused reviews have not centered.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. The Method section describes the review design, eligibility criteria, and search strategy along with its limitations. The Results and Discussion section presents the characteristics of the included studies and the thematic synthesis, interpreted in relation to prior theory.

The Conclusion section summarizes the findings, states this review's limitations transparently, and outlines directions for further work.

طريقة البحث

This review was designed as a Systematic Literature Review with a narrative synthesis approach, following the PRISMA 2020 reporting structure, and applying the SPIDER framework, Sample, Phenomenon of Interest, Design, Evaluation, Research type, to formulate the review question and eligibility criteria, as this framework best suits qualitative and mixed-methods questions about experience and perception.

SPIDER element	Formulation
Sample	Arabic teachers and Generation Z or Generation Alpha students in formal education
Phenomenon of Interest	Experiences and perceptions of Arabic pedagogical strategies of all kinds
Design	Qualitative and mixed-methods empirical studies
Evaluation	Perceptions, experiences, challenges, and preferences
Research type	Qualitative and mixed methods

Studies were included if published between 2016 and 2026 in indexed journals, written in Indonesian, English, or Arabic, reporting primary empirical data, and using a qualitative or mixed-methods design. Purely conceptual studies, literature reviews without primary data, and purely quantitative designs were excluded, consistent with the protocol set prior to screening.

Searching at this stage was conducted through two AI-based research tools connected to broad academic corpora: Consensus, filtered to the education and linguistics fields from 2016 onward, and Scholar Gateway, using natural-language queries. Six queries were run on Consensus and one broad query on Scholar

Gateway, covering terms such as Arabic pedagogical strategy, Generation Z, Generation Alpha, gamification, and digital learning, in both Indonesian and English. These two tools are relevance-ranked rather than reproducible named-database queries. Consistent with this review's own stated protocol, results from Consensus and Scholar Gateway are treated strictly as a preliminary scoping layer and do not substitute for manual searching of Scopus, Web of Science, and Sinta or Garuda, which remains mandatory before this review can be considered fully PRISMA-compliant and eligible for submission to an indexed journal. This section will be updated once manual exports from these three databases are available.

Title and abstract screening was applied to all unique records against the inclusion and exclusion criteria above. Because of network access limitations in the working environment at the time of writing, full-text retrieval for further verification could not be performed at this stage, so eligibility screening stopped at the abstract level. The following diagram summarizes the selection flow using the actual counts from the searches conducted.

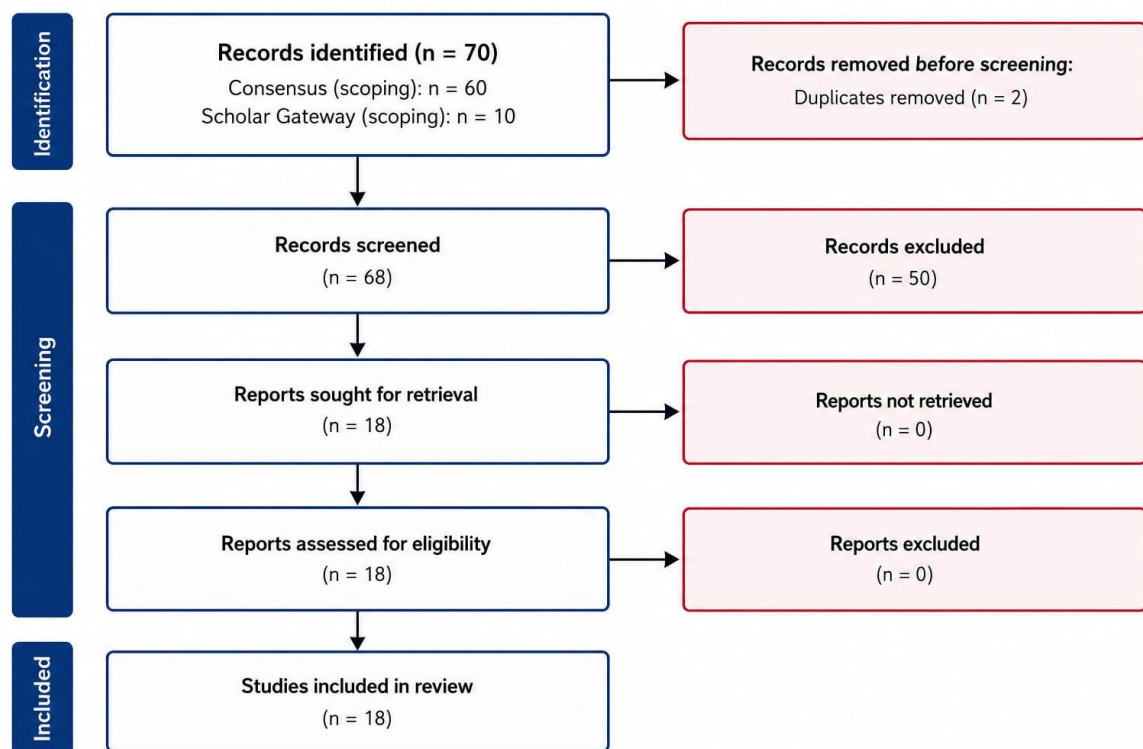


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram based on the Consensus and Scholar Gateway searches

Characteristics of included studies

A total of 18 studies met the inclusion criteria, comprising 12 qualitative and 6 mixed-methods studies, conducted across Indonesia, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia, published between 2019 and 2026. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of each study. Beyond the five themes discussed below, three further studies in Table 1 add contextual texture to the synthesis: (Akmaliyah et al., 2021) described a child-friendly approach spanning teacher role, materials, process, and evaluation in a pesantren setting; (Asmawati et al., 2020) documented the implementation of active-learning strategies across the four language skills at senior-high level; and (Wan Daud et al., 2024) reported generally positive student perceptions of learning Arabic through digital games at the higher-education level, reinforcing the digital-strategy pattern in Theme 1.

No	Author (Year)	Context	Sample	Design	Strategy focus
1	Akmaliyah et al. (2021)	Indonesia (pesantren)	Teachers, students (case study)	Qualitative (observation, in-depth interview)	Child-friendly approach across teaching components (teacher, materials, process, evaluation)
2	Tang & Calafato (2021)	United Arab Emirates	100 Arabic teachers	Mixed quantitative-qualitative (survey + open-ended questions)	Use of students' multilingualism for self-regulation and language awareness
3	Zurqoni et al. (2020)	Indonesia (MA, 3 provinces)	27 teachers, 9 principals, 45 students	Qualitative phenomenological (FGD, questionnaire, interview)	Evaluation of Arabic learning implementation and factors of failure
4	Asmawati et al. (2020)	Indonesia (Palu)	High-school teachers and students	Qualitative (observation, interview,	Implementation of active-learning strategies across

				document analysis)	four language skills
5	Al-Abdullatif et al. (2022)	Saudi Arabia	285 Arabic teachers	Mixed (UTAUT2 survey + semi-structured interview)	Teacher acceptance of a digital Arabic literacy platform
6	Rahmawati et al. (2025)	Indonesia (UIN Walisongo)	Millennial and Gen Z students	Qualitative phenomenological (in-depth interview)	Comparison of millennial and Gen Z perceptions of using DeepL for Arabic learning
7	Darmawati et al. (2025)	Indonesia	Gen Z teachers and students	Mixed (interview, classroom observation, survey)	Transformation of nahwu (grammar) teaching from lecture-based to digital
8	Brosh (2019)	Not stated (university)	120 Arabic students	Mixed (questionnaire + interview)	Arabic learning-strategy preferences among students
9	Wan Daud (2024)	Not stated (higher education)	30 students	Qualitative (semi-structured interview)	Student perceptions of learning Arabic through digital games
10	Rara Salvia Sari et al. (2025)	Indonesia (IAIN Kerinci)	Fourth-semester students	Qualitative phenomenological (interview, FGD)	Students' perceptions of, and affective barriers in, Arabic learning
11	Abdurrahman et al. (2026)	Indonesia (pesantren)	4 students, 2 teachers	Qualitative narrative case study	Creative hybrid bridging strategy between classical texts and Gen Alpha's visual-digital logic
12	Aziz et al. (2025)	Indonesia (Islamic-based institution)	Generation Alpha students	Qualitative descriptive-analytic	Generation Alpha's perception of

				(interview, observation)	Arabic from a psycho-sociolinguistic perspective
13	Sri Zulfida et al. (2024)	Indonesia (Islamic elementary school)	Early-childhood learners	Qualitative descriptive (observation, interview, document)	Visual, audio, thematic, repetition, and TPR strategies for vocabulary
14	Rio Kurniawan et al. (2021)	Indonesia (Solo Raya)	Integrated Islamic elementary school	Qualitative case study (constructivist paradigm)	Hammerly-style cognitive, collaborative, natural, and communicative approach
15	Gufron et al. (2024)	Indonesia (pesantren, NTB)	Elementary-school graduates in a pesantren	Qualitative (observation, interview, document)	Communicative, context-based approach in a pesantren environment
16	Darmawansah et al. (2026)	Indonesia (elementary, grade 3)	52 students (2 classes)	Mixed (quasi-experiment + epistemic network analysis)	Gamification based on analytical thinking skills and gendered perceptions
17	Gofur et al. (2025)	Indonesia (MAN Cirebon) 1	5 students	Qualitative phenomenological (in-depth interview)	Motivation and challenges of using Quizizz
18	Rajab et al. (2025)	Malaysia	290 teachers (survey), 5 teachers (interview)	Mixed sequential explanatory (TAM survey + interview)	Teacher preference for interactive Arabic modules versus traditional methods

Table 1. Characteristics of included studies

Thematic synthesis

Cross-study thematic analysis produced five main themes, interpreted below in relation to relevant theoretical framing.

Theme 1: digital and gamified strategies raise motivation but with effects that differ by gender and teachers' digital literacy. (Darmawansah et al., 2026) found that an analytical-thinking-skills-based gamification approach increased elementary students' motivation and engagement, though boys tended to prefer competitive elements while girls were more motivated by interactive, narrative activities. (Al-Abdullatif & Alsubaie, 2022) reported that teachers' acceptance of digital platforms was strongly shaped by hedonic motivation and habit rather than technical ease alone. (Gofur, 2025) noted that Quizizz raised motivation through competitive elements, though limited internet access and data quota remained real constraints in the field. Read together with Theme 3 below, this pattern indicates that the success of digital strategies depends heavily on teacher readiness, both in perceived benefit and technical competence, consistent with Rajab et al. (2025)'s finding that awareness was a stronger predictor than perceived ease of use. This suggests that investment in teacher training matters as much as, or more than, procuring new devices or applications.

Theme 2: young learners' perceptions of Arabic are shaped by religious and psychosocial factors, not technology alone. (Aziz, 2025) found that Generation Alpha's motivation to learn Arabic was largely driven by religious factors, though perceived difficulty of the language still dampened their interest. (Abdurrahman, 2026) reported that a creative hybrid-bridging strategy combining digital aesthetics with classical texts shifted the learning experience from passive memorization to active, game-based discovery while preserving the religious depth of the text. Rahmawati (2025) linked Generation Z's technology-adaptation patterns to Prensky's digital native theory, Piaget's constructivism, and Bandura's social learning theory, together suggesting that this generation's technology acceptance runs in parallel with how they construct meaning socially and constructively, rather than merely responding to digital stimuli.

Theme 3: teachers act as the decisive factor in the success of new-strategy adoption. (Tang & Calafato, 2021) found an unexpected negative relationship between teachers' own multilingual proficiency and the extent to which they actually drew on students' multilingual repertoires in teaching, indicating that teachers' language competence alone does not automatically translate into better pedagogical practice. (Rajab et al., 2025) found that teacher awareness of an interactive module's benefits was the strongest predictor of technology acceptance,

stronger than perceived ease of use itself. (Zurqoni et al., 2020) linked implementation failure to a combination of student input factors, limited instructional hours, and facilities, rather than teacher competence alone.

Theme 4: non-digital and integrative strategies remain relevant, particularly at the early-childhood level. (Sri Zulfida et al., 2024) reported that a combination of visual, audio, thematic, repetition, and Total Physical Response strategies was most effective for vocabulary retention among early-childhood learners. (Rio Kurniawan, 2021) identified the application of Hammerly-style cognitive, collaborative, natural, and communicative approaches in an integrated Islamic elementary school, while (Gufon, 2024) emphasized the importance of a pesantren environment that supports intensive Arabic use outside the classroom. Together with the pattern in Theme 1, this suggests that Generation Alpha's pedagogical needs are better understood as a need for active, multichannel engagement rather than a need for digital devices as such.

Theme 5: affective barriers such as language anxiety and prior learning trauma remain widely reported. (Rara Salvia Sari et al., 2025) found that, alongside linguistic difficulties such as grammar and phonology, students also reported learning trauma from past experiences, language anxiety, and a sense of meaninglessness stemming from rote-oriented instruction. (Brosh, 2019) found that students tended to prefer strategies involving direct interaction with instructors and oral practice, indicating a need for personal relationships in the learning process rather than material or media alone. Read alongside Theme 2, this indicates that Generation Alpha's strong religious motivation, a distinctive lever compared with other foreign languages, risks being eroded by unaddressed affective barriers unless paired with a supportive pedagogical approach.

Overall, this synthesis supports the view that Arabic pedagogical strategies responsive to Generation Z and Alpha are hybrid in nature, combining digital and gamified elements with strengthened teacher-student relationships, sensitivity to learners' sociocultural and religious context, and explicit attention to the affective dimension of language learning.

Overall summary

The 18 qualitative and mixed-methods studies synthesized in this review indicate that Arabic teachers' and Generation Z and Generation Alpha students' experiences and perceptions of Arabic pedagogical strategies are multidimensional, spanning technology, teacher readiness, religious and psychosocial motivation, the continued relevance of non-digital strategies, and affective barriers. The most promising strategies are hybrid and centered on strengthening teacher-student relationships, rather than simply adding digital tools.

Limitations

This review carries significant methodological limitations that must be read explicitly alongside its findings. First, and most importantly, the literature search has not yet included manual searching of Scopus, Web of Science, and Sinta or Garuda, so the coverage is not yet reproducible and cannot be claimed as a named-database search meeting the full PRISMA standard expected for Q1 or reputable indexed journals. Second, the actual indexing status of each source journal, including in Scopus, Web of Science, or Sinta, has not been directly cross-verified. Third, eligibility screening stopped at the title-and-abstract level because full-text access was not available at the time of writing, so a number of inclusion decisions remain tentative pending re-verification against full texts. Fourth, bibliographic details for several references, such as volume, issue, and page numbers, remain incomplete due to limited metadata returned by the search tools and need to be completed against the original sources before submission. Fifth, because the synthesis is narrative rather than a meta-analysis, no formal risk-of-bias assessment using a standardized instrument such as MMAT was conducted; this is recommended for a subsequent revision. Readers and editors should treat this manuscript as a scoping-level draft rather than a submission-ready PRISMA systematic review until these points are addressed.

Further research

Future work should complete manual searching of Scopus, Web of Science, and Sinta or Garuda, verify the full text of all included studies, complete missing bibliographic details, and add a formal risk-of-bias assessment, before this review can be considered a complete and submission-ready PRISMA systematic review for an indexed journal.

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