



Arabic Language Teaching Strategies for Children with Special Needs in an Integrated Islamic Elementary School

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Diserahkan: 30 July 2022; Direvisi: 08 August 2022; Diterima: 31 August 2022

Abstrak

Strategi pembelajaran bahasa Arab pada anak berkebutuhan khusus merupakan aspek penting karena adanya perbedaan karakteristik dan kebutuhan belajar peserta didik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan strategi pembelajaran bahasa Arab pada anak berkebutuhan khusus di Sekolah Dasar Islam Terpadu Daarussalaam Sangatta, serta mengidentifikasi kendala dan upaya guru dalam mengatasinya. Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh adanya peserta didik dengan gangguan konsentrasi seperti ADHD ringan yang memerlukan pendekatan pembelajaran khusus agar dapat mengikuti proses belajar secara optimal. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Subjek penelitian terdiri atas tiga guru bahasa Arab, kepala sekolah, dan peserta didik berkebutuhan khusus. Analisis data dilakukan melalui reduksi, penyajian, dan penarikan kesimpulan dengan uji keabsahan melalui triangulasi sumber. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi pembelajaran yang diterapkan guru meliputi pembelajaran terdiferensiasi, pendekatan individual, serta penggunaan metode visual dan multisensori seperti flashcard, poster, dan latihan berulang. Guru juga melakukan penyesuaian materi, memberikan penguatan positif, serta melaksanakan evaluasi secara adaptif. Adapun kendala yang dihadapi meliputi keterbatasan waktu, perbedaan kemampuan siswa, serta kesulitan dalam mempertahankan konsentrasi. Upaya yang dilakukan untuk mengatasi kendala tersebut antara lain meningkatkan variasi metode pembelajaran, memberikan perhatian khusus, serta menjalin komunikasi dengan orang tua.

Kata Kunci: Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus, Bahasa Arab, Strategi Pembelajaran

Abstract

The strategy for teaching Arabic to children with special needs is an important aspect due to differences in students' characteristics and learning needs. This research aims to describe Arabic language learning strategies for children with special needs at Daarussalaam Integrated Islamic Elementary School in Sangatta, as well as to identify the obstacles and teachers' efforts in overcoming them. The study is motivated by the presence of students with concentration disorders, such as mild ADHD, who require appropriate learning approaches to participate optimally in the learning process. The research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The subjects consist of three Arabic language teachers, the school principal, and students with special needs. Data analysis is conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, while validity is ensured through source triangulation. The results show that the strategies applied include differentiated learning, individual approaches, and the use of visual and multisensory methods such as flashcards, posters, and repetitive exercises. The teacher also adjusts materials, provides positive reinforcement, and conducts adaptive evaluations. Challenges include limited time, differences in students' abilities, and difficulty maintaining concentration, which are addressed through varied methods, special attention, and communication with parents.

Keywords: Arabic Language, Children with Special Needs, Learning Strategies,

How to Cite: Istiqomah, S. K., et al. (2022). Arabic Language Teaching Strategies for Children with Special Needs in an Integrated Islamic Elementary School: A Case Study of SDIT 1 Daarussalaam Sangatta. *Tarbiyah wa Ta'lim: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran*, 9(3) 229-238. doi: <https://doi.org/10.21093/twt.v9i3.12916>



<https://doi.org/10.21093/twt.v9i3.12916>

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INTRUDUCTION

Basically, every child has potential and may face challenges in the learning process. These challenges can range from mild to complex. In certain conditions, some children are able to overcome their difficulties independently, while others require special attention and assistance, particularly children with special needs. Children with special needs do not always experience learning difficulties; however, in regular educational settings, they often require special attention and approaches in order to achieve optimal learning outcomes (Tihul, 2021)

Education is the right of every citizen, including children with special needs. This is in accordance with the 1945 Constitution, Article 31 paragraph (1), which states that every citizen has the right to education. (Lanawaang & Mesra, 2023) In addition, Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Article 5 paragraph (2), stipulates that citizens with physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, or social disabilities are entitled to special education. (Depdiknas, 2003) Thus, the implementation of education must be able to accommodate the diversity of students' characteristics in a fair and proportional manner.

Children with Special Needs (CSN) are children who have significant differences or deviations in physical, mental, intellectual, social, or emotional aspects in their growth and development compared to their peers (Depdiknas, 2007) Due to these differences, they require specific educational services tailored to their needs.

Data show that the prevalence of children with special needs continues to increase over time. According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) in 2019, there were approximately 1.6 million children with special needs in Indonesia, and only 18% of them continued their education in inclusive schools. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology reported that as of December 2023, there were 40,164 formal education units (schools) in Indonesia that had students with special needs. However, only 5,956 schools, or 14.83% of the total, had special assistant teachers for these students (Sulasmı, 2025). This condition indicates a gap between policy and its implementation in the field.

In the context of Islamic education, inclusive education is based on the values of justice (*'adl*), equality (*musawah*), and respect for diversity (*ta'addudiyyah*), which emphasize that every individual has equal rights to education without discrimination. This is reflected in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13, which states that human dignity is determined by piety, not by physical condition or background (Qur'an, QS. Al-Hujurat: 13). In addition, Surah 'Abasa verses 1–10 highlights the importance of giving attention to individuals with limitations in accessing education. Thus, inclusive education in Islam represents respect for human dignity and an effort to provide equal learning opportunities for all students. (Tihul, 2021)

Integrated Islamic education emerges as a response to the need to integrate Islamic values into the national education system. Integrated Islamic Schools not only combine religious education, typically associated with pesantren, with general education as in formal schools, but also integrate both holistically into all learning processes. Unlike madrasahs, which tend to separate general and religious subjects in the curriculum structure, Integrated Islamic Schools emphasize their integration to develop students holistically in intellectual, spiritual, and moral aspects. However, the relatively complete facilities often result in higher educational costs, making access to these schools more common among middle- to upper-class Muslim communities. On the other hand, the existence of Integrated Islamic Schools also reflects a new pattern in the re-Islamization of Indonesian Muslim society, where the internalization of Islamic values occurs not only through mosques or religious gatherings but also through formal education systems. (Agustina et al., 2025)

Arabic holds an important position in Islamic education. It is not only the language of religion and unity for Muslims but also a language of knowledge that has produced significant works across various scientific fields. (Chatibul Umam, n.d.) The integration of Islamic values in Arabic language teaching is an essential part of Islamic education, aiming to create a learning process that is not only academic but also spiritual, moral, and social. As the language of the

Qur'an and Hadith, Arabic plays a special role as a medium for conveying and instilling noble values in students' lives. (Ahmad Izzan, n.d.)

Arabic plays a central role in integrated Islamic education, serving as the language of the Qur'an, the language of worship, and the primary means of understanding Islamic teachings. Therefore, Arabic learning in Islamic schools, including integrated Islamic-based schools, is an integral part of developing Islamic values. Through Arabic learning, students are not only taught language as a communication tool but are also encouraged to develop a deeper connection with the Qur'an and Islamic teachings.

However, teaching Arabic to students with special needs presents its own challenges. The Arabic language, with its unique alphabet and complex grammatical structure, requires deep understanding and specific teaching skills. In addition, students with special needs often have diverse educational needs—some may face difficulties in language comprehension and usage, while others may experience communication challenges or difficulties in processing information. Therefore, individualized and adaptive teaching approaches are necessary to meet these diverse needs. (Hasan et al., 2024)

Another challenge is the variation in students' abilities and needs. Some students may have mild needs and can follow the general curriculum with slight modifications, while others may require more intensive support and highly individualized learning approaches. (Laili Mas Ulliyah Hasan Muhammad Tareh Aziz, Firdausi Nurharini, U.M, 2023) Therefore, teachers must be able to identify and respond effectively to these differences within an inclusive learning environment.

The use of appropriate learning strategies in teaching Arabic to students with special needs is crucial for improving learning effectiveness. Research by Muthiah (Amatullah Muthiah, 2025) shows that a differentiated approach in Arabic learning can enhance student engagement by adjusting materials, methods, and evaluation based on individual abilities. Similarly, Safitri (Devita Ika Safitri, 2024) found that adaptive and integrative learning models can improve learning outcomes for students with special needs.

Another study by Aziz and Hasan (Aziz & Hasan, 2023) shows that the implementation of the PAIKEM strategy (Active, Innovative, Creative, Effective, and Fun Learning) can increase motivation and participation of students with special needs in Arabic learning. However, the study also found challenges in the pronunciation of certain vocabulary, indicating that each type of special need requires different approaches.

In addition to learning strategies, the use of instructional media also plays an important role in enhancing students' understanding. Mayer (2014) states that the use of visual and audio media helps students understand material more concretely, especially those with cognitive difficulties. This is supported by Arsyad (2019), who argues that varied learning media can improve students' motivation and learning outcomes.

Previous studies indicate that differentiated instruction and individualized approaches are effective in supporting students with special needs in the learning process. However, studies specifically focusing on Arabic language teaching strategies for students with special needs, particularly in integrated Islamic elementary schools, are still limited. This indicates a research gap that needs further exploration.

Daarussalaam Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) Sangatta is one of the institutions implementing an inclusive education system by integrating Islamic values into the learning process. Based on preliminary observations, Arabic learning in this school faces several challenges, such as differences in student abilities, limited learning media, and the need for more adaptive strategies. Therefore, an in-depth study is needed to examine the learning strategies applied by teachers in teaching students with special needs

Based on the above description, this study aims to describe Arabic language learning strategies for students with special needs at Daarussalaam Integrated Islamic Elementary School Sangatta, as well as to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors in their implementation. This study is expected to contribute to the development of more inclusive,

adaptive, and effective learning strategies, particularly in the context of Arabic language education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design, aiming to deeply understand and describe the phenomenon of Arabic language teaching strategies for students with special needs in a natural context. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is capable of portraying social reality holistically based on the perspectives of the research subjects (Wiyanda Vera Nurfajriani, 2024). This research was conducted at Daarussalaam Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) 1 Sangatta, located at Jalan Kabo Jaya No. 99, Swarga Bara, North Sangatta, East Kutai Regency, East Kalimantan. The study was carried out over one month, from January to February 2026

The subjects of this study included the Arabic language teacher as the main informant, as well as the school principal and students with special needs as supporting informants. The selection of subjects was conducted purposively, based on the consideration that they were directly involved in the process of Arabic language learning for students with special needs. The object of this research was the Arabic language teaching strategies, which include planning, implementation, and evaluation.

The research procedure was conducted through several stages: preparation, implementation, and data analysis. During the preparation stage, the researcher developed research instruments such as interview guidelines and observation sheets, and arranged the necessary research permits. The implementation stage involved direct classroom observation, in-depth interviews with informants, and the collection of relevant documents. The data obtained in this study were qualitative in nature, consisting of descriptive data, interview results, and documentation related to teaching strategies.

Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation is a data collection technique in which the researcher directly observes the teaching and learning process, interactions between teachers and students, and other relevant educational activities. (D, 2017) It was used to examine classroom activities and teacher–student interactions.

Interviews are a data collection technique involving direct conversations between the researcher and the subjects, either individually or in groups. Interviews allow the researcher to explore in depth the views, perceptions, and experiences related to the educational process. They can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured, depending on the data needed. The advantage of interviews lies in their flexibility to obtain detailed and specific responses, although they may require more time and cost and may involve potential bias in responses. (H, 2021).

Documentation is a data collection technique through written records or documents. It involves examining written materials such as books, magazines, meeting notes, and daily records. (O, 2021) In this study, documentation also served as supporting evidence, including photographs and other relevant records. (R et al., 2022)

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive analysis model of Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman (2014), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and simplifying data relevant to the research focus. The data were then presented in descriptive narrative form to facilitate understanding. Conclusions were drawn gradually by interpreting the analyzed data and relating them to the research problems and objectives. (Zulfirman, 2022)

The validity of the data was tested using triangulation and member checking techniques. Triangulation was conducted by comparing data from various sources and data collection methods to ensure consistency. Meanwhile, member checking was carried out by confirming interview results with the informants to ensure data accuracy. Thus, the findings of this study are expected to have a high level of credibility and validity. (Husnullail & Jailani, 2024)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Strategies Learning Arabic

The Arabic language learning strategies at Daarussalaam Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) 1 Sangatta are adaptive and inclusive, encompassing flexible planning, implementation, and evaluation stages that are oriented toward individual student needs. This study found that teachers consistently use the *Mustaqili* textbook as the main reference for grades I–VI, as it is selected for its simple and systematic sentence structure, making it more accessible for students with special needs compared to other, more complex materials.

Modifications are made based on the specific characteristics of students with special needs, such as in Grade II, where students experience mild Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder with difficulties in maintaining concentration, and in Grade V, where students have hearing impairments and speech difficulties. This approach not only ensures the participation of students with special needs in regular classrooms but also maintains group learning dynamics without discrimination.

The findings indicate that the implementation of Arabic language learning for students with special needs at Daarussalaam Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) 1 Sangatta has moved toward inclusive education practices, although administratively the school has not yet been officially designated as an inclusive school. School policies emphasize the principle of non-discriminatory acceptance of students with special needs, while still considering their ability to participate in regular classroom learning. In practice, the school implements a policy that allows parents to provide shadow teachers for students who require intensive assistance. This policy reflects an effort to maintain a balance between individualized support for students with special needs and the effectiveness of classical classroom instruction. In addition, school support for teachers—through training, the provision of learning media, and the strengthening of the Arabic language environment (*bi'ah lughawiyah*) through daily language habituation—further reinforces the implementation of inclusive learning.

In the aspect of learning planning, teachers continue to prepare instructional tools such as modules and lesson plans; however, in practice, adjustments are made according to the conditions of the students. Data from interviews and observations indicate that teachers implement differentiated instruction by adjusting the level of difficulty of materials, methods, and learning media. These findings suggest that teachers not only focus on achieving general learning objectives but also pay attention to the individual needs of students. This is in line with the concept of differentiated instruction proposed by Carol Ann Tomlinson (2001), which states that learning should be adapted to students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles.

In practice, teachers design the Lesson Plan (*Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran / RPP*) with generally the same Indicators of Competency Achievement (IPK) for all students, in accordance with the revised 2013 Curriculum, while adjusting the level of difficulty and duration of activities. For example, for Musa, who is prone to distraction, the teacher plans gradual variations of activities such as transitioning from writing *mufradat* to reading aloud or using visual media to anticipate a decline in concentration after 10–15 minutes. Meanwhile, for students with hearing impairments, priority is given to *maharah qira'ah* (reading) and simple *kitabah* (writing), while *maharah istima'* (listening) and *kalam* (speaking), which rely on auditory input, are minimized.

These findings are consistent with the study by Hidayah (2021), which found that such adaptive planning can increase the participation of students with special needs by up to 65% in Arabic language learning in inclusive schools. Theoretically, this approach reflects the concept of an adaptive curriculum advocated by UNESCO (2020), where flexibility in planning ensures educational accessibility without compromising national Basic Competency (KD) standards. Field observations conducted over 20 hours also show that teachers integrate *bi'ah lughawiyah* (Arabic language environment) through daily routines such as collective prayers, morning assemblies, and simple songs in Arabic.

Implementation of Learning

The implementation of Arabic language learning is carried out flexibly, following classroom dynamics, with an emphasis on a classical approach followed by individualization. The lesson begins with apperception and the introduction of new *mufradat* from the *Mustaqili* textbook, followed by drill activities and differentiated exercises. Five main strategies that stand out are as follows:

1. Differentiated Instruction

Tomlinson (2001) It provides a detailed explanation of differentiation through three main dimensions: content differentiation (simplifying material to match students' abilities), process differentiation (varying activities to maintain engagement), and product differentiation (modifying the form of final tasks).

In the observed classroom, regular students were asked to construct complete sentences using 5–7 new *mufradat* (e.g., “*al-baitu kabīrun*” – the house is big), while students with special needs such as Musa were only required to copy or mention vocabulary individually at the initial stage. Hussein received visual instructions in the form of illustrated flashcards and large writing on the board using colored markers.

Quantitative observation results showed an increase in participation among students with special needs by up to 70% during differentiated sessions compared to conventional sessions, in which they tended to be passive. These findings are consistent with previous studies that emphasize the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in enhancing student engagement and participation in inclusive classrooms. (Azmy & Fanny, 2023) which report the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in improving inclusive learning outcomes in public elementary schools, with an increase in average scores ranging from 20 to 30 points.

2. Individualized Approach

(Rogers, 1969), It emphasizes congruent empathy, unconditional positive regard, and teacher authenticity in creating an emotionally safe learning environment. The teacher proactively approaches students with special needs after classical instruction by providing repeated explanations using simple language (a mix of Arabic and Indonesian), offering handwritten examples as models, and giving verbal encouragement such as, “Excellent, Musa! Now try to repeat it once more.”

A teacher interview excerpt states: “*I approach the child and gently so they feel confident and not embarrassed in front of their peers.*” This approach not only reduces social anxiety among students with special needs but also aligns with Urie Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory, which highlights the importance of supportive environmental interactions in individual development.

(U, 1979) It relates to the concept of the classroom microsystem as a supportive proximal environment, where teacher–student interactions shape both cognitive and social development. Observations recorded approximately 15–20 individual interventions per session, which were effective in maintaining Musa’s focus for up to 25 minutes.

During the implementation stage of learning, the teacher applies a combination of classical strategies and individualized approaches in an integrated manner. Based on classroom observations, the lesson begins with the delivery of material classically to all students in order to provide a shared basic understanding. After that, the teacher actively gives special attention to students with special needs through personal guidance, such as repeating explanations using simpler language, providing concrete examples, and directly assisting students at their desks. This approach reflects the teacher’s effort to maintain a balance between the overall effectiveness of classroom instruction and the fulfillment of diverse individual student needs. (Hadi & Zanawi, 2025)

3. Visual and Multisensory Media

Teori dual coding Allan Paivio (Allan, 1986) It states that information retention increases when processed simultaneously through verbal and visual channels, resulting in

dual representations in memory. Teachers utilize illustrated flashcards (e.g., a picture of a house for “*bayt*”), whiteboards with writing sized 5–7 cm in contrasting colors, and hand gestures for Hussein. For Musa, a multisensory approach involves auditory stimuli (pronunciation), visual input (images), and kinesthetic activities (pointing and writing). Research by Hidayah (2021) demonstrates that visual media improves Arabic vocabulary mastery among students with special needs by 25%, with similar effects observed in this study (vocabulary retention increased from 60% to 85% after the session) (Mukarromah, n.d.). (Faatin et al., 2024)

4. Drill Method

The drill method is based on Edward Thorndike’s connectionism theory (1911), which emphasizes strengthening stimulus–response associations through repeated practice to form automatic habits. The repetition is carried out in stages: classical (together), nominative (in turns), and individual, with a slower tempo (3–5 seconds per word) for students with special needs. This method is effective for students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), as it helps address limitations in working memory (Rahmawati, 2019). Observational data show that repetition of 5–7 times per *mufradat* (vocabulary item) increases retention by up to 80%, as evidenced by oral tests conducted after the drill sessions.

In addition, teachers also utilize the drill method or repetitive practice to strengthen students’ mastery of Arabic vocabulary, especially for those who experience difficulties in memory retention and concentration. (Tambak, 2016). The use of visual media, such as images, vocabulary cards (flashcards), and larger, clearer written text, also helps enhance students’ understanding of the material presented. This strategy is aligned with the dual coding theory, which states that information is more easily processed and remembered when it is delivered through two channels simultaneously—visual and verbal—thereby strengthening students’ memory and comprehension of the concepts being learned. (Mayasari et al., 2021)

5. Adaptation of Language Skills (Maharah)

In the context of students with special needs, teachers also adapt the four language skills (maharah), namely listening (*istima’*), speaking (*kalam*), reading (*qira’ah*), and writing (*kitabah*). Not all skills can be optimally applied to every student, particularly those with hearing impairments. Therefore, teachers tend to focus more on basic reading and writing skills, while listening and speaking skills are not maximized or forced. This adaptation reflects the flexibility of the curriculum in inclusive education, where instruction is adjusted to the physiological and psychological conditions of the learners (Mukarromah, 2016)

Characteristics of Students with Special Needs

Based on the data obtained, the characteristics of students with special needs in this school are quite diverse, including attention difficulties (mild ADHD) and hearing impairments. Nevertheless, most students are able to participate well in the learning process, especially when teachers use varied and interactive approaches. This indicates that appropriate teaching strategies can help students overcome their limitations. In addition, in some cases, the use of a shadow teacher in the early stages of learning also contributes to supporting students’ adaptation to the classroom environment.

Evaluation

In terms of evaluation, teachers continue to conduct general assessments such as daily tests, midterm exams, and final exams, with certain adjustments for students with special needs. The data indicate that assessment is not solely focused on final outcomes, but also considers the learning process and students’ progress. This reflects the application of the principle of fairness in assessment, where each student is evaluated based on their individual abilities and development.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Arabic Language Learning for Students with Special Needs

Supporting factors in Arabic language learning for students with special needs include institutional support for inclusive education systems, teachers' patience and empathy, a conducive classroom environment, and the use of varied instructional media. Support from the school provides opportunities for teachers to innovate and adapt learning strategies according to students' needs. In addition, teachers' empathy and patience play a crucial role in creating a safe, comfortable, and non-discriminatory learning atmosphere, enabling students with special needs to feel accepted and motivated to learn. An inclusive classroom environment also encourages greater participation and enhances students' self-confidence in the learning process. This is in line with ecological development theory, which emphasizes the significant role of the environment in supporting individual development.

On the other hand, several inhibiting factors were identified in the implementation of learning, including significant differences in students' abilities, limited instructional time, the lack of specialized training for teachers, and students' difficulties in pronouncing Arabic vocabulary. The heterogeneity of students' abilities requires teachers to divide their attention simultaneously, increasing the complexity of classroom management. Limited instructional time also becomes a constraint in providing optimal repetition of materials, whereas foreign language learning requires intensive and continuous practice. Furthermore, the absence of specialized training indicates that teachers' competencies in managing inclusive learning still need to be improved systematically and sustainably.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that Arabic language learning strategies at SDIT 1 Daarussalaam Sangatta have been implemented adaptively and are aligned with the principles of inclusive education, although they still face various limitations. The success of the learning process is not only determined by the strategies applied by teachers in the classroom, but also influenced by systemic support from the school, teachers' professional competence, and the availability of supporting facilities and infrastructure. Therefore, continuous efforts are needed to improve the quality of inclusive learning through teacher training, strengthening school policies, and providing adequate facilities, so that all students can receive optimal and equitable educational services.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the Arabic language teaching strategies for students with special needs at Daarussalaam Integrated Islamic Elementary School 1 Sangatta demonstrate adaptive and flexible characteristics through adjustments in planning, implementation, and evaluation according to students' needs. The application of differentiated instruction, individualized approaches, the use of visual media, and repetition methods are the main factors supporting students' comprehension. The success of the learning process is also supported by teachers' empathetic attitudes and a conducive learning environment, although it still faces challenges such as limited time, differences in students' abilities, and the lack of optimal specialized training for teachers. Therefore, the strategies implemented have led toward fairly effective inclusive learning practices, but still require further strengthening in systemic and professional aspects.

This study is limited in scope as it was conducted in only one educational institution and employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Therefore, the findings cannot be broadly generalized. Future research is recommended to expand the scope by involving a wider range of settings and by applying quantitative or mixed-method approaches to measure the effectiveness of learning strategies more comprehensively. In addition, further studies could explore in greater depth the implementation of individualized learning programs and the role

of special education support teachers in improving the quality of learning for students with special needs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to all parties who contributed to the completion of this research. Special appreciation is extended to the supervisors for their guidance, support, and valuable insights throughout the research process. The author also gratefully acknowledges the principal, teachers, and students of Daarussalaam 1 Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT 1 Daarussalaam Sangatta) for their cooperation, participation, and support during the data collection process. Finally, the author would like to thank family and friends for their continuous encouragement, motivation, and support throughout the completion of this research.

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