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The Contributions of Modern Virtual Programs with an Arab-Islamic Identity to Teaching Arabic to Children - The Muneeben Academic Channel for Children as a Model -

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Abstract:

The massive technological flow that has dominated contemporary human thought has given the world a new life invaded by modern scientific means and techniques. All members of society, regardless of their genders, ages, or even cognitive levels, now follow what this technological life dictates to them. Amidst this vast scientific momentum, we cannot neglect the importance of preserving our Arab Islamic identity without stepping off the train of the new human civilization on one hand, or compromising the components of our unique identity on the other hand, foremost among them the Arabic language in which the Holy Quran was revealed. From here, the efforts of scholars, researchers, and specialists have begun to chart a dual path that blends scientific development with teaching the Arabic language to future generations so that it does not lag behind other languages.

Keywords: Arabic language-education-electronic applications-child-virtual

Research Problem:

How have researchers succeeded in employing modern technological tools and techniques in the service of the Arabic language, while shaping learners' behavior in accordance with the Arab-Islamic identity?

Hypotheses:

Researchers interested in the Arabic language have made use of various modern tools and technologies to teach Arabic to both native and non-native speakers.

The Muneeben Academic Channel, particularly its section dedicated to children, is one of the models that seeks to preserve the continuity and vitality of the Arabic language through the programs and cartoons it offers, which reflect an Arab-Islamic identity.

Significance of the Study:

Through addressing this research problem, we seek to highlight the major efforts made by scholars and researchers concerned with preserving their Islamic identity and their noble Arabic language by making use of digital spaces that guide future generations toward a world that safeguards their cultural and civilizational affiliations while developing their linguistic abilities through daily practice and meaningful participation.

Research Sample:

We have selected a number of examples from the content presented by this channel and sought to identify its main objectives and expected outcomes, focusing primarily on teaching the Arabic language as the ultimate goal and on reinforcing the principles of the Arab-Islamic identity.

1. Introduction:

Before turning to the discussion of teaching the Arabic language through the Muneeben Academic Channel aimed at children, it is necessary to examine the most significant scientific developments that have taken place in the field of media broadcasting through what is referred to as a **channel**: "a media platform intended to provide specific content or a range of diverse media fields."¹

Most media channels have rapidly adopted the products of modern technology and have moved toward the **digitalization of media**. “Many experts in the field of media and journalism point out an important matter: this rush by Arab media outlets toward digitalization is more compulsory than voluntary.”ⁱⁱ

This indicates that modern technology, with its various communication tools and diverse advanced techniques, has entered the world of media and imposed a system of digitalization on everyone without exception. **Digital media** is defined as “the means through which communication with data carried in digital form takes place through devices such as mobile phones, social media platforms, websites, and other similar technologies.”ⁱⁱⁱ

It may also be defined as “the digital methods and activities that enable us to produce, disseminate, and receive media content through various Internet-connected electronic devices, in an interactive process between the sender and the receiver, with a degree of selective control allowing audiences to choose the content they desire at the time and place of their choice.”^{iv}

2. Leveraging Technological Development in Arab-Islamic Countries:

Experts and specialists in Arab-Islamic countries have not failed to capitalize on this major development in digital technologies. Light has largely replaced ink, whether in recording, reading, or retrieval. They have rapidly integrated their media channels with everything made available by modern technologies, particularly the possibilities offered by the Internet. The results have been remarkable, as many institutions and organizations have succeeded in establishing new channels operating through modern digital systems, with all their distinctive characteristics and features, namely: **networking, informatics, interactive interfaces, archiving, interaction, and simulation**.^v

These were among the most significant features that contributed to the modernization of media and its transition from traditional broadcasting to digital technology. Furthermore, “one of the most important characteristics of the digital world is that it constitutes a multimedia environment, combining text, images, and video. In addition, the information it transmits is digital information that can be prepared, stored, and modified. It is also characterized by the diversity of its tools and its ease of use.”^{vi}

More importantly, these channels broadcast their programs over the Internet at the lowest possible cost and within the shortest possible time, allowing them to communicate with their audiences, who no longer necessarily sit in front of television screens or even computers. Instead, they use the smallest and most convenient means of communication in all areas of their lives: **smartphones**.

Communication via mobile phones has greatly facilitated the work of those responsible for broadcasting these various channels and delivering their intended content to their audiences, “owing to the ease with which it can be exchanged among a large number of users, regardless of the distance separating them.”^{vii} This is achieved through various social media platforms, such as **WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook, YouTube, and others**. Subscribing to a channel and activating its notification bell now enables users to receive its programs as soon as they are broadcast.

2.1. Establishing the Munebeen Academic Channel :

Amid all these scientific and technological developments, every nation seeks to disseminate its culture and promote it throughout the human world, claiming that it represents the ideal, sound, and correct model that should be followed. In this context, Arab-Islamic countries have assumed the role of protecting the identity of their future generations amid this overwhelming convergence of scientific, intellectual, and cultural influences.

The **Munebeen Academic Channel** is one of many channels that work to disseminate content related to Arab-Islamic identity and culture. On the one hand, it seeks to safeguard the foundations of the individual’s identity, while on the other, it aims to teach learners correct and sound Arabic.

2.2. The Channel’s Sections and Programs:

The Munebeen Academic Channel is divided into two main sections: one section dedicated exclusively to women and another aimed at children, who are usually under their mothers’ supervision when using mobile phones and accessing the Internet. Thus, the two sections complement each other in a logical and integrated manner.

When examining the programs broadcast by this channel, we notice a remarkable diversity and richness of topics, which helps prevent boredom and encourages continued engagement. Moreover, the channel’s use of the latest technologies in broadcasting its programs captures children’s attention and interest, thereby enabling them to engage with content that is more consistent with their cultural environment rather than following content published by other channels that may have little connection with the culture of the society to which they belong.

3. The Main Programs Adopted:

The channel offers a diverse range of programs, including sessions for memorizing and reciting the Holy Qur’an through Zoom or Telegram, instruction in the noble Prophetic Sunnah, stories of the Prophets and the righteous, lessons on the rulings of Islamic law, and **Fiqh al-‘Ibādāt** (jurisprudence of acts of worship), including prayer, zakat, fasting, and Hajj. It also covers **Fiqh al-Mu‘āmalāt** (jurisprudence of social dealings), including etiquette of the road, etiquette of maintaining relationships, neighbors’ rights, mosque etiquette, and other related topics.

The channel also addresses important matters related to strengthening children’s self-discipline and self-monitoring. It regularly organizes competitions at the end of each week and has developed an excellent application that

helps children begin learning reading and writing. For example, when a child places a finger on a word, the application provides the correct pronunciation of that word, as well as instruction in the rules of Qur'anic recitation (**Tajweed**).

The following is a descriptive reading of a selection of programs chosen according to the diversity of their topics. It should be noted that we focused on recently published programs that coincided with the beginning of **Dhu al-Hijjah**. During the first ten days of this month, the channel focused on topics related to this religious occasion, as follows:

3.1. Cartoon Series Entitled: "The Sacred Sites" Hajj":

Each episode lasts **9 minutes and 53 seconds** and is divided into the following subtopics:

The Holy Kaaba:

In a dialogue-based scene, the episode presents information about the Holy Kaaba, the Sacred House of God, described as the first house established for people to worship God on earth. The discussion is interspersed with Qur'anic verses as supporting evidence, including the following verse: "And [mention] when Abraham was raising the foundations of the House, and [with him] Ishmael..." (Qur'an, Al-Baqarah, 2:127).

Muzdalifah:

Muzdalifah is introduced in the second dialogue between the same cartoon characters who appeared in the scene about the Holy Kaaba. The presentation is supported by real-life images. Using the same approach and the same characters, the episode also presents:

The Day of Arafah: Video Images:

These are some screenshots taken from the cartoon film explaining the Day of Arafah:



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Mina: Video Images:

These are some screenshots taken from the cartoon film explaining the Hajj ritual of **Mina**:



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These images provide examples of the type of content and presentation adopted by the channel in addressing topics aimed at children, using modern, high-quality digital technology. It can also be observed that the channel uses sentences formulated in **Modern Standard Arabic**, which constitutes the primary focus of this study.

3.2. The “Best Deeds for the Best Days” Series: The First Ten Days of Dhu al-Hijjah

The series presents the following topics over a duration of **9 minutes and 54 seconds**, featuring new cartoon characters throughout all episodes of the series:

1. **The Virtue of the First Ten Days of Dhu al-Hijjah**
2. **The Life of the Hearts**
3. **Countless Blessings**
4. **The Qur'an Guides Me**
5. **What We Love**
6. **My Prayer on Time**
7. **My Supplication Is Answered: As Though You Were Performing Hajj**
8. **The Day of Arafah**

9. Eid

The following are some selected images from the published videos for illustrative purposes:



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3.3. A Post Featuring the Most Recommended Forms of Remembrance (Dhikr) During the First Ten Days of Dhu al-Hijjah:

Accompanied by schematic illustrations showing children the locations of the Hajj rituals, such as **the Kaaba**, **Mount Arafat**, and **the stoning of the Jamarat**, among others.



In this section, the channel focused on posters and images highlighting the virtues of the Day of Arafah and the importance of supplication on this day.

3.5. Publishing Announcements Encouraging Frequent Supplication During These Special Days:

This is followed by the Day of Sacrifice, when Eid greetings are sent through animated images featuring bright colors, balloons, and decorative lettering embellished with various shapes and colors. These greetings are accompanied by an Eid song, along with a collection of wonderful games and applications related to Hajj and Eid.

3.6. A Post Summarizing the Virtues of the Day of Sacrifice:

Finally, an invitation was sent to followers to attend the closing ceremony of the second academic term, which was held jointly for women and children. An audio recording of the ceremony, which lasted **2 hours, 45 minutes, and 41 seconds**, was subsequently published.

Note: The Muneeb Academic Channel uses social media platforms, including **WhatsApp, Telegram, and Facebook**; WhatsApp was subsequently discontinued.

4. Analysis of Program Content:

In analyzing the content, we relied on direct participation in the programs for a period of no less than three full months, from the middle of Sha‘ban to the beginning of Dhu al-Hijjah. The participants included a group of children from different countries around the world—Europe, Asia, Africa, and America—most of whom were non-native speakers of Arabic, in addition to a number of children from Algeria. Following the presentation and observation of the programs, we reached the following conclusions:

4.1. Reading and Memorization of the Holy Qur’an and the Noble Prophetic Hadith:

Learners participate in sessions devoted to reading and memorizing the Holy Qur’an and the Noble Prophetic Hadith, under the supervision of a group of female teachers. Each session lasts no more than one hour and thirty minutes and is held three days a week, distributed throughout the week: Monday, **Wednesday, and Friday**. The learners are divided into groups according to age as follows:

- **Group One:** 4 to 6 years old.
- **Group Two:** 7 to 9 years old.
- **Group Three:** 10 to 12 years old.

After a series of such sessions, the child acquires proper and accurate Arabic language skills as follows:

A. Phonological Level:

The child learns the correct articulation points of Arabic letters and distinguishes between similar sounds, such as **ḍād/ẓā’**, **ṣād/sīn**, and **dāl/dhāl**. This can be illustrated by the following Qur’anic verses:

“And he is not a withholder of [knowledge of] the unseen.” (Qur’an, Al-Takwir, 81:24)

and:

“And he was certain that it was the [time of] separation.” (Qur’an, Al-Qiyamah, 75:28)

as well as:

“O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin.” (Qur’an, Al-Hujurat, 49:12)

The word **ḍanīn** derives from the verb **ḍanna** meaning to be miserly or withholding. The second word, **ẓanna** can mean to suppose or believe, while the third, **ẓann**, refers to doubt or suspicion. Thus, the child also acquires new meanings for words that contain similar or closely related sounds.

Another example can be found in the Qur’anic verse:

“[Some] faces, that Day, will be radiant, looking at their Lord.” (Qur’an, Al-Qiyamah, 75:22–23)

B. Lexical Level:

The child enriches their linguistic repertoire with a vast number of new vocabulary items, because, as **Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī** states, language consists of sounds. Since the Holy Qur’an is characterized by rhythm and rhyme, it is easier for children to memorize and repeat. In this regard, we may recall **Al-Jāhīz’s** famous statement: “What the Arabs expressed in fine prose is far greater than what they expressed in fine verse; yet only a tenth of their prose was preserved, whereas not even a tenth of their verse was lost.”⁸

In addition to the examples mentioned above, the child acquires a large number of new words and expressions, thereby considerably expanding their lexical repertoire.

4.2 Narrative Stories and Biographies:

The Holy Qur’an makes extensive use of the narrative style, as it is closer to human nature and has a greater emotional impact. An example of this is found in the following Qur’anic verses:

“Thamūd denied [the truth] in their transgression, when the most wretched of them went forth. And the Messenger of Allah said to them, ‘[Do not harm] the she-camel of Allah and [do not prevent her from] her drink.’ But they denied him and hamstrung her, so their Lord brought down destruction upon them for their sin and leveled them [all]. And He does not fear the consequences thereof.” (Qur’an, Al-Shams, 91:11–15).

The story of **Thamūd**, the people of the Prophet **Ṣāliḥ**, and what they did to the she-camel is one of the most memorable Qur’anic stories that children can learn from and derive valuable lessons and moral insights. The channel

presents a number of Qur'anic stories in the form of a **children's story series**, using a simple, fluent, and clear narrative style. These include Solomon's Ant, the Companions of the Trench, and the Companions of the Sabbath, among many others.

These stories become particularly engaging when they are presented online through modern technologies, including **artificial intelligence (AI) techniques**.

5. Conclusion:

Through this study, we have sought to shed light on the tremendous efforts undertaken by specialized institutions and organizations to guide and educate children living in environments different from their own, introducing them to the principles and values embodied by the Arab-Islamic civilization. In doing so, these institutions seek to capitalize on scientific and technological advances and to employ all modern tools and techniques to attract and engage this particular group. By examining what this academy has presented as a case study, we have reached the following conclusions:

- Providing children with access to a range of channels that broadcast cartoons using modern digital technologies captures their attention more effectively and directs their thinking toward content that is beneficial to them.
- These cartoons employ a narrative approach in presenting carefully selected and focused topics, thereby creating an environment free from boredom, while at the same time preserving children's natural right to enjoy their own time for entertainment and play.
- Animated stories translate abstract concepts, which children are normally unable to grasp at an early age, into behaviors and situations enacted by cartoon characters with whom they can identify.
- Once children acquire these behaviors, they are likely to seek to apply them in their real lives, adopting them as a means of interacting and communicating with others.
- Continuous engagement with the sequence of events presented in cartoons enriches children's minds with a vast quantity and variety of vocabulary and linguistic structures.
- The memorization of the Holy Qur'an and the Noble Prophetic Hadith, as well as daily **adhkār** (remembrances) and various supplications, enriches children's memory with an extensive linguistic repertoire.
- The linguistic repertoire acquired in this way consists of sound and accurate Arabic.
- Entering the world of online broadcasting and employing modern digital technologies for teaching Arabic has become an imperative that can no longer be ignored. Rather, continued efforts are needed to develop and expand this approach so that it can compete with the vast body of global digital productions led by technologically advanced societies.

These are the main findings we reached through our analysis of only a small portion of the content broadcast by the channel throughout the year, which is organized into academic terms interspersed with periods of recess.

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