



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**LANGUAGE SKILLS NEEDS, LANGUAGE COMPETENCE, AND
READINESS FOR SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING AMONG NON-
NATIVE SPEAKING TEACHERS OF ARABIC LANGUAGE**

ABDALLA MOHAMED ADAM KHEIR.

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By

ABDALLA MOHAMED ADAM KHEIR

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
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fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Chairman : Professor Datin Sharifah Md Nor, PhD

Faculty : Educational Studies

The present study aims at: (a) determining Arabic teachers' extent of needs for language skills, (b) perceived competence in using language skills, and (c) readiness for self-directed learning. Two groups of Arabic teachers, namely, non-native government religious schoolteachers (*Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama SMKA*) and non-native speaking teachers of Arabic of the Matriculation Center International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), were involved in the study. Approximately, 160 respondents were involved in the study, 70% were religious schoolteachers and 30% were teachers of the Matriculation Center IIUM.

A questionnaire was employed to gather data. The results of data analysis indicated that both schoolteachers and the Matriculation teachers showed high level of needs for language skills, their perceived language competence was also high, but they showed moderate level of readiness for self-directed



learning. They perceived lower in benefiting from external learning factors such as learning resources and learning strategies. Schoolteachers showed higher level of need in language skills, language competence and readiness for SDL compared to Matriculation teachers. Benefiting from external learning factors however, was lower for schoolteachers compared to Matriculation.

The results of t-test and ANOVA indicated no significant difference between Arabic teachers' needs for language skills and language competence in terms of their training, majors and qualifications. However, there is a significant difference in readiness for self-directed learning in terms of training, but no significant difference in terms of majors and qualifications.

The results of stepwise multiple regression analysis demonstrated a significant correlation of three independent variables namely, learning strategies, language competence and teaching experience, with the dependent variable readiness for SDL.

The findings of the study suggest that any effort by the educational authority to assist Arabic teachers for their self development has to take into account their needs, ways to enhance their language competence and ways to improve their readiness for SDL.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**KEPERLUAN, KEMAHIRAN DAN KESEDIAAN GURU-GURU BAHASA
ARAB YANG BUKAN PENUTUR ASLI UNTUK BELAJAR BERSENDIRAN**

Oleh

ABDALLA MOHAMED ADAM KHEIR

April 2005

Pengerusi: Profesor Datin Sharifah Md Nor, PhD

Fakulti: Pengajian Pendidikan

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk: (a) memastikan tahap keperluan tenaga pengajar bahasa Arab untuk meningkatkan kemahiran bahasa, (b) memastikan keperluan kecekapan mereka dalam menggunakan bahasa dan (c) memastikan persediaan mereka untuk pembelajaran sendiri .

Dua kumpulan tenaga pengajar bahasa Arab, iaitu, tenaga pengajar sekolah agama (Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama atau SMKA) dan guru bahasa Arab yang bukan penutur asli di Pusat Matrikulasi, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia, terlibat dalam kajian ini. Lebih kurang 160 orang telah mengisi borang soal selidik kami. 70% adalah tenaga pengajar sekolah agama dan 30% adalah tenaga pengajar di Pusat Matrikulasi, UIA.

Borang soal selidik telah digunakan untuk mengumpul maklumat. Hasil analisis maklumat menunjukkan bahawa kedua-dua kumpulan amat memerlukan kemahiran-kemahiran bahasa. Kecekapan bahasa mereka juga



tinggi tetapi kesediaan mereka untuk pembelajaran sendiri bertahap sederhana. Mereka tidak dapat memanfaatkan unsur-unsur pembelajaran luaran seperti sumber dan strategi pembelajaran. Namun demikian, didapati bahawa guru-guru sekolah amat memerlukan kemahiran bahasa, kecekapan bahasa dan turut menunjukkan kesediaan yang tinggi untuk SDL jika dibandingkan dengan guru matrikulasi.

Keputusan ujian t dan ANOVA tidak menunjukkan perbezaan ketara pada keperluan guru bahasa Arab terhadap kemahiran bahasa dan kecekapan bahasa, jika dilihat dari aspek latihan guru, pengkhususan dan kelayakan. Walau bagaimanapun, perbezaan ketara dapat dilihat pada kesediaan pembelajaran sendiri di antara guru terlatih dengan guru tak terlatih, tetapi tidak dari aspek pengkhususan dan kelayakan guru. Hasil daripada stepwise multiple regression menunjukkan kaitan yang ketara antara 3 pembolehubah tak bersandar; iaitu strategi pelajaran, kecekapan bahasa dan pengalaman mengajar, dengan pembolehubah bersandar untuk kesediaan SDL.

Penemuan kajian menunjukkan bahawa sebarang usaha yang dijalankan oleh badan-badan pendidikan untuk membantu tenaga pengajar bahasa Arab dalam mengembangkan keupayaan diri perlu mengambil kira keperluan mereka, cara-cara mempertingkatkan kecekapan bahasa, dan cara-cara mempertingkatkan kesediaan mereka untuk SDL.

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I gratefully record here my thanks to religious schoolteachers in different states and non-native speaking teachers of Arabic at the Matriculation Center of International Islamic University Malaysia IIUM and their cooperation is deeply appreciated.



I certify that an Examination Committee met on 11 April 2005 to conduct the final examination of Abdalla Mohamed Adam Kheir on his Doctor of Philosophy thesis entitled "Language Skills Needs, Language Competence, and Readiness for Self-Directed Learning among Non-Native Speaking Teachers of Arabic Language" in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

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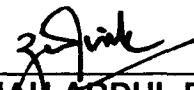
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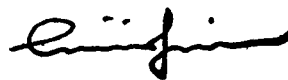
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or currently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.



ABDALLA MOHAMED ADAM KHEIR

Date: 11 April 2005



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Language has overwhelmed the entire field of human activity. All human societies use language when they communicate. Language is so vital in our lives that it provides us with the richest means to take our place in society, to express our needs, to exchange information, to understand one's own religion, to learn about people and the world around us.

The information revolution resulted in the rapid advancement of knowledge and the challenges of globalization leads people not only to rely on their native language when they communicate study or understand religion but also to rely on other languages as well. Consequently, bilingualism and multilingualism are increasingly becoming worldwide norms. According to Rivers (1981), people learn foreign languages for numerous reasons such as to acquire knowledge for multicultural education, to understand and appreciate one's cultural heritage and that of the others.

Like other major languages in the world, Arabic has been used in different fields of human endeavor. Arabic is also used as a medium of instruction across different disciplines. For a long period of time, the Arabic language had contributed to early history and civilization. Besides its status as a religious language, it was also used to record the great contributions of famous Muslim thinkers in the fields of science, literature and arts (cited in Madkour, 1982).



In Malaysia, people regard the Arabic language as the holy language of their religion rather than to be used in communication. It is a vital spiritual component in their daily lives. Accordingly, they hold a great deal of respect for it. This concern stems from the fact that Arabic is a vehicle of the Islamic faith. The Qur'an was revealed in Arabic and the Hadith, and traditions of the Prophet of Islam, are in Arabic as well. For these reasons the position of Arabic as a religious language continues to be unchallenged.

Parallel to the growing global interest in learning foreign languages there has also been an increasing demand for language teachers due to the fact that without teachers, the interaction of language learning components (e.g. curriculum, textbook, methods, educational aids, learners, etc.) would not result in successful or effective learning (Sharif and Hanan, 1983). To this end, therefore, the role of the language teachers is crucial and especially so for language teachers who have a lot of influence on their students more than teachers of other subjects. They provide the models for the students as far as the spoken and /or written discourses are concerned (Sharma, 1992).

The situation, in Malaysia has put even more pressure on Arabic language teachers. Teachers devote their time to provide active communication activities in the classroom so as to fill the gap that is caused by the absence of environment conducive to learning or an access to the Arabic language outside classroom, for example, support of media, and personal interaction with native or native-like speakers. In second and foreign language context, teachers are expected to have a balanced level of subject knowledge and

professional skills. These two levels could be gained if teachers take the initiative, with or without help of others, in their self-developing process. It is increasingly recognized that self-directed learning (SDL) is the best alternative to one's own development (Knowles, 1991). This is needed the most in Malaysia for the following reasons:

1. There are many Arabic teachers who teach at government secondary religious schools all over the country. Being dispersed in such multiple-sites, conventional training would be costly and time consuming. Self-Directed Learning (SDL) is the most effective approach to allow these teachers to proceed towards self-learning.
2. Self-directed learning contributes mainly to the development of personal knowledge of an individual. This, in turn, would enhance Arabic teachers to become more responsive to the rapidly changing demand of particular knowledge of the language they teach.
3. Self-directed learning is flexible to encompass all language skills that are discerned as needs of individuals who are involved in self-development.
4. Self-Directed Learning would enable educators to avoid weakness of other types of training design.
5. In relation to the expected needs of non-native speaking teachers of Arabic, self-directed learning would be an effective factor to satisfy their needs (Nadler and Nadler 1993).

In light of the reasons above; SDL could expose Arabic teachers to sufficient information on features of contemporary Arabic language. This, in



turn, would enable them to provide their students with extra functional structures beyond the textbook because exposure to the target language in any form of language activities increases learner's competence (Bialystok, 1981).

Background to the problem

The recent efforts made by the Ministry of Education Malaysia had pointed to the fact that Arabic language is becoming increasingly important in the National Integrated Curriculum (*Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah, KBSM*) According to the Ministry of Education: Planning and Research Division, (1997); it is sufficient to point out that:

- 1- Arabic language is an essential prerequisite subject in Government Religious Secondary Schools (*Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama SMKA*) whose number has now reached over fifty. One may also note that in five of these schools Arabic language has become the medium of instruction for Islamic studies (*Jabatan Pendidikan Islam dan Moral –JAPIM*). If the experience gains success it would be implemented gradually in many more religious schools,
- 2- In the lower secondary classes of the government religious schools, the time allocated for Arabic language is 240 minutes or six lessons per week, which, in fact, is quite a considerable duration of time (Ab. Rahim, 1993:10),
- 3- In primary schools, the curriculum allocated 13% of time-on-task of pupils for Islamic studies. This can be seen as a crucial stage in favor of Arabic language because pupils would become familiar with the Arabic



language, particularly when they memorize or recite the Qur'an as the Arabic language is the voice of the holy Quran, which contains the entire elements of Arabic language. In the primary schools, Arabic syllabus has been recently approved for testing in ninety-nine primary schools nationwide. According to the Islamic Education and Moral Department (Jabatan Pendidikan Islam dan Moral - JAPIM), this number would be increased from time to time, depending on the level of success achieved by piloted schools.

The Arabic language curriculum had been implemented through a textbook series of five volumes "Communicative Arabic" (*Al-Arabiyya al-Ittisaliyya* العربية الاتصالية), which emphasizes communicative competence as well as expose Arabic language skills in a balanced manner. The ultimate goal is to lead students to a reasonable competence in the Arabic language. For instance, they are expected to be able to understand the simple printed materials and to enhance their ability in reciting the Quran correctly and to be able to read the text of "Sunnah" for religious purposes. Furthermore, the curriculum also emphasizes also on the supplementary exercises beyond textbook which are needed to be prepared by the teachers. The reason for adding these exercises could be traced to the lack of the supporting environment. This indicates that students rely only on teacher's efforts due to the following reasons:

- 1- Textbooks and teachers are the only sources for learning the Arabic language,
- 2- There are no opportunities for learners to use the language outside the classroom setting. Language is above all practice, and the learning of a second or foreign language needs which needs at least some minimum support from outside the classroom (Rivers 1981).

There are other efforts which are devoted by many states in the cause of Arabic language. There is a great number of religious schools under the states which follow the same national syllabus used in government religious schools. These states aim to offer a wide range of opportunities to meet the need of the population who are interested in such schools for their children as the government religious schools are limited (above fifty nationwide). Some states establish special administration for the management of these religious schools. Many of these schools are very successful.

Besides the above stated efforts, there are other efforts devoted to the teaching and learning Arabic language through private religious schools which belong to individuals and run by them. These schools which were approved by the Ministry of Education also followed the syllabus used by the national religious schools. Furthermore, there are also other categories of private schools or institutions (Ma'ad) that focus on learning the Quran (*Tahfiz*). Therefore, it could be said that all these efforts directly or indirectly help to spread and to promote the Arabic language among Muslims in Malaysia. Hence, the teachers are expected to play greater role to achieve

the aims of these different efforts. They need assistance to continue in self-improvement. However, teachers of Arabic language in government religious school are expected to be examples in developing the skills of the language they teach. This could be either through personal effort or with the assistance of educational authorities. This is because almost all the state authorities and private efforts involved in teaching the Arabic language similar to government's syllabus development of Arabic teachers' language skills.

Another recent move in favor of Arabic language is that Arabic is one of the languages which will be offered this year (2003) under an additional language called *Bahasa Tambahan*. Arabic, Mandarin and Tamil will be offered as options for primary and secondary pupils. This move will be pilot tested in eighty primary schools. However, it was not decided whether the *Bahasa Tambahan* would be a strong requirement (New Sunday Times, 12 April, 2002).

In line with the national policy of the Arabic language, the Ministry of Education has recruited graduates who majored or minored in Arabic from both local and overseas universities. But the number of these graduates has not fulfilled the actual number of teachers needed at religious secondary schools. In order to meet this need, graduates who have pursued their university or tertiary studies through the medium of Arabic were also included and those who teach Islamic studies were allowed to carry on teaching the Arabic language. Almost all these teachers have been trained

