

Effective Methods in Learning Arabic Language as a Foreign Language

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rosni bin Samah

Fariza Puteh-Behak

Noor Saazai Mat Saad

Suraihi Mohd Ali

Ramiaida Darmi

Haliza Harun

Faculty of Major Languages, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia; rosni@usim.edu.my

Doi:10.5901/mjss.2016.v7n3p349

Abstract

Students who learn Arabic as a foreign language in a foreign country usually face difficulties to achieve proficiency in the language. This is primarily because of the lack of Arabic language resources. However, this situation does not hinder the emergence of a group of outstanding students who achieve fluency in Arabic by using their own methods. This study investigated the methods used by these students to be used as a guideline for other students. To collect the data, a set of questionnaire was developed from the Imitation Strategy Instrument introduced by Rosni Samah (2014). The questionnaires were distributed to 50 outstanding final year students from the Arabic language department, Faculty of Major Languages, Islamic Science University of Malaysia. The results showed that effective strategies for learning Arabic language as a foreign language were gathering, enhancing and applying. The targets are new vocabulary and sentence. The tools to perform the strategies were Arabic materials and language activities. This study recommends that in learning Arabic language as a foreign language, the three methods mentioned above should be applied. The Arabic materials should be provided and language activities should be organized. The effective methods used by outstanding students should be used as a guideline for other students to be more proficient in Arabic Language.

Keywords: methods, foreign language, Arabic language, learning, Malaysia.

1. Introduction

The teaching and learning of Arabic language in Malaysia at this present moment is facing an enormous challenges. The main problem is the pedagogical approach usually employed by most Arabic language teacher who use the traditional method in teaching. According to the research conducted by Azhar et al. (2008); Amarulzaman et al. (2002) and Abdul Halim (2005) some Arabic language teachers prefer to us a teaching method which concentrates more to the teacher and has less students' involvement. M. Fadli and M. Syukki Othman (2012) stated that some teachers rarely contribute to the student's achievement.

On the other hand, the problem originates from the students themselves. They are weak in their Arabic proficiency and also use the traditional method in learning Arabic. This is witnessed by studies by Tarmizi (1997); Anida (2003); Naimah & Aini (2005); Kamarulzaman & Nik Rahimi (2005); Nasimah (2006); Ab. Halim (2007) (2009) Zarima et al. (2008); Mat Taib (2008); Kamarul Syukri (2009); Zawawi Ismail et al. (2011); Nur Amirah (2011) and Rosni Samah (2012). M. Hanan (2011) explained that most students prefer to just sit and listen to the teacher in learning the Arabic language. Moreover, they feel afraid to speak and be involve in activities in the Arabic Language class. As a result, Syakirah (2004) found that students face difficulties in understanding the Arabic Language subject.

Rosni b. Samah (2013) expressed that the weakness actually comes from the students' personality or passive attitudes. This attitude can be seen through the actions of the students in the class. It occurs because they rarely apply proper learning strategies and coupled with the lack of awareness. This statement is supported by Anida (2003); Nurazan (2004); Kamarul Syukri (2009); Sueraya et al. (2010); Mastura & Kaseh (2012) and Rosni Samah (2014).

Conversely, there are groups of students who showed excellence in their Arabic Language experience which is the

medium of instruction in their studies. These are the final year students who have achieved outstanding results in their studies. In their pursuit of becoming outstanding students in Arabic studies, they have used an effective method in learning Arabic which has been used from their first year until their final year of studies. This effective method can be used as a guideline for other students to emulate. Based on this fact, this study tried to investigate their methods in learning Arabic language and expose them to others.

2. Methodology

2.1 The participants

The participants were selected from final year students from the Arabic language department from the Faculty of Major Languages, Islamic Science University of Malaysia for session 2014/2015. They are 50 outstanding students (28% males and 72% females) who achieve the cumulative grade point average (CGPA) between 3.0 to 4.0. Among them 26% of the students have the CGPA of 3.5 and above while 74% of them are between the CGPA of 3.0 until 3.4. According to the result obtained from the questioners, they are 98% students have high motivation in learning Arabic language and 100% students have their self (internal motivation) motivated them.

2.2 Instruments

To gather the information, a set of questionnaire was distributed to each of them. The questionnaire was developed based on the Imitation Strategy Instrument introduced by Rosni Samah (2014); which was based on the opinions of Ibn Khaldun (1987). This instrument was chosen based on its success and it has been proven by the other researchers and previous studies. The excellent students from the Faculty of Major Languages, Islamic Science University of Malaysia for session 2013/2014 proved their success in Arabic language by using this strategy. The instrument highlights three main strategies that are gathering, enhancing and applying. There are three sub strategies components; target, activities and materials. The three main strategies above have been changed into three methods for learning Arabic language. Each method has its own steps to be implemented. It has a 73-item instrument that required students to report the frequency on the usage of language learning methods.

2.3 Data analysis

To evaluate students' performance, this questionnaire has 5 scales from 1 until 5. The indicators are as mentioned by Oxford (1990) 1 = never or almost never true of me, 2 = usually not true of me, 3= somewhat true of me, 4 = usually true of me and 5 = always or almost true of me. Students were asked to choose only one of the five options pertaining to their performance in learning Arabic language. To analyze the data, the data obtained from the checklist were codified and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 16). Descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean of the statements in the checklist. A range of 3.5 to 5 on the item is thought to reflect the high use of that method.

3. Results and Discussions

The results showed that students had two main instruments in learning Arabic language that are Arabic materials and language activities. The Arabic materials were text books, dictionaries, magazines, newspapers, advertisements, internet, cartoon materials, radio programs, TV programs, recorded materials, friends, teachers, and Arabic speakers. The language activities are reading, listening, interaction, and writing activities. The success of using those materials has been proven by Nurhamimi Zainul Abidin & Muhamad Fiham Muhammad Ghalib (2012). The effectiveness of language activities has been proven by Madkur & Iman (2006); Rim Adil at-Tarik (2011); Mahmud Mohamad Ali & Nursabila Muhamad (2011); Tinggari (2011); Daud (2011); and Yasir & Rahmah (2011) who stressed that language activities played the most important role in improving students' proficiency.

For these students, their targets were usually new vocabularies and sentences. To be successful in the acquisition of new vocabularies and sentences they have planned a way of learning method such as gathering, enhancing and applying. In implementing their way of learning, they had named the steps for each method as mentioned above.

4. Gathering Method

The gathering method had four steps namely searching, recording, asking and referring. The results are as follows:

Table 1: Results for gathering method.

No.	Steps	Targets	Activities	Materials	Means
1	searching	New vocabulary and sentence	reading, listening	text books, dictionaries, magazines, newspapers, advertisements, internet, cartoon materials, radio programs, TV programs, recorded materials	3.8200
			interaction	friends, teachers, and Arabic speakers	3.5284
2	recording		reading, listening and interaction	text books, dictionaries, magazines, newspapers, advertisements, internet, cartoon materials, radio programs, TV programs, recorded materials, friends, teachers, and Arabic speakers	3.5267
3	asking		reading, listening, writing and interaction	friends, teachers, and Arabic speakers	3.6283
4	referring		reading, listening, writing and interaction	Dictionaries, friends, teachers, and Arabic speakers	3.8850

Using Arabic material was considered as a tool to acquire new vocabularies and sentences. The outstanding students used that Arabic materials to gather and acquire the language. The studies conducted by Nur Wahdah (2011); Nur Hashimah (2012); Khairul Sakinah (2012) and Siti Asiah (2013) supported the effectiveness of using this method.

In gathering new vocabularies and sentences, they applied searching, recording, asking and referring methods to acquire new vocabularies and sentences. The effectiveness of using those steps was witnessed by Wan Nur Zaidah, (2012); Idham Muslim, (2013); Muhamad Thaqif, (2013); Wahdah Asma' (2011); Rohana Nawi (2012) and Ibrahim Adisola (2013).

To perform the four steps in gathering new vocabularies and sentences, the outstanding students used the language activities as a medium in learning Arabic language. The language activities provided opportunities for reading, listening, writing and speaking or interaction. The studies conducted by Nur Farhana (2012); Nur Khadijah Abu Bakar (2012); Mohamad Faris (2012); Ibrahim Adisola (2013) and Siti Aishah (2013) supported the effectiveness of this method in gathering new vocabularies and sentences.

5. Enhancing Method

After gathering the new vocabularies and sentences, the excellent students used a second method that was applying an enhancing method via eight steps such as memorizing, imitating, interacting, recording, repeating, correcting the errors, translating, and building the sentences. They implemented them in the language activities such as reading, listening, interaction or communication and writing by using the Arabic materials as a reference as well as in the first method. Researchers such as Ain Nabihah Ahmad (2011); Ismail (2011); Nadwah Ibrahim (2011); Yayan Nurbayan (2011); Khadijah Salma (2011); Nur Khadijah (2012); M. Fauzi (2012); Rohaizaf (2013); Rosni et al. (2013); Amizan (2013); Shafriol (2013); NurFazila Ismail (2013); Harnani Abu Bakar (2013); and Azlan (2013) witnessed the effectiveness of using the above steps. The results are as follows:

Table 2: Results for enhancing method.

No.	Steps	Means
1	Students interact by using vocabulary and sentence in reading, listening, interaction and writing activities	3.9500
2	Students translate vocabulary and sentence in reading, listening, interaction and writing activities	3.7600
3	Students correct the errors of vocabulary and sentence in reading, listening, interaction and writing activities	3.7367
4	Students repeat vocabulary and sentence in reading, listening, interaction and writing activities	3.7067
5	Students build the sentences in reading, listening, interaction and writing activities	3.7017
6	Students memorize vocabulary and sentence in reading, listening, interaction and writing activities	3.6900
7	Students record vocabulary and sentence in reading, listening, interaction and writing activities	3.6833
8	Students imitate vocabulary and sentence in reading, listening, interaction and writing activities	3.6600

Those results showed that interacting has the highest score which shows that students always use it in learning Arabic language. The effectiveness of interaction was supported by Shahidah (2012); Nur Khadijah (2012), and Nur Farhana (2012).

There were four steps that have the means of 3.7 and above. They were translation, correcting the errors of vocabulary and sentence, repeating and building the sentences. This result shows that students always use them in enhancing their new vocabularies and sentences. The effectiveness of translation in enhancing the language was supported by researchers such as Muhamad Ridwan (2013) and Nur Hanim (2013). The effectiveness of correcting the errors of the vocabularies and sentences in enhancing the language was also witnessed by Azlan bin Saif Baharum (2013). Nur Khadijah (2012), Rohaizaf (2013) Mohd Fauzi Abdul Hamid (2012), Shaferol (2013), Rosni Samah et al. (2013) and Amizan Hilmi (2013) who all supported that using repetition help students to improve their language proficiency. Mohd Fauzi Abdul Hamid (2012), Haslina (2013), Muhamad Thaqif (2013) and Shaferol (2013) stressed that the effectiveness of building the sentences in various activities can improve language proficiency.

The remaining three steps achieved the range of means of 3.6, indicating students used them quite regularly. They were memorizing, recording and imitating the new vocabularies and sentences. Nur Khadijah (2012); Haslina (2013); and Siti Aishah (2013) indicated the effectiveness of memorizing new vocabularies and sentences in various activities to enhance language proficiency. Wan Nur Zaidah (2012), Idham Muslim (2013) and Muhamad Thaqif (2013) stated that students always record the new vocabularies and sentences in various activities to enhance their language proficiency. Mohd Fauzi Abdul Hamid (2012), Shaferol (2013), Rosni Samah et al. (2013) and Amizan Hilmi (2013) supported the effectiveness of imitating to enhance the language skills.

6. Applying Method

In the process of acquiring the language proficiency, students used language activities as a tool to practice the language in the real language situation. Muhamad Faris (2012), Ruzila Zakaria (2013), Muhamad Farid (2013), Muhamad Thaqif (2013) and Ibrahim Adisola (2013) suggested that the language activities should be organized to give students the opportunities in using newly acquired vocabularies and sentences. Among them are language camps, language theater, language competition, language debate, language exploration, language writing competition, language movie and language public speaking.

The results showed that students used the applying method which has nine steps namely communicating, interacting, presenting, acting, doing role play, translating, writing, listening and reading in learning Arabic language. For the success of this method, students have the Arabic environments to use the language as suggested by Ibnu Khaldun (1987). The results for the nine steps are as follows:

Table 3: Results for applying method.

No.	Steps	Targets	Activities	Means
1	interacting	using vocabulary and sentence acquired	In language activities	4.0200
2	communicating			3.9800
3	listening to			3.9800
4	writing			3.9000
5	reading			3.8400
6	translating			3.8200
7	acting			3.8000
8	doing role play			3.6400
9	presenting			3.5918

The results above show that the interaction by using acquired vocabularies and sentences in language activities has the highest score of 4.0200. It indicated that students always use it to apply their acquired language. It is followed by communicating, listening to, writing, reading, translating and acting. The lower steps were doing role play and presenting. Those results revealed that students always use those nine steps to applying their acquired language in language activities. The effectiveness of using those nine steps in learning Arabic language has been proven by Nur Syaifura (2011); Ismail (2011); Ghazali Yusri et al. (2012); Mashurah (2013); Nur Afifah (2013); Asmuni (2013); Nasimah Mukti (2013); Siti Nur Huda (2013); Nur Azrin Muhamad (2013); Nur Najwa Jamaluddin (2013); Nur Aisar Nurudin (2013); Siti Asiah Muhamad (2013) and M. Abdul Latif (2013).

7. Conclusion

Apart from the above results, it seems that the outstanding students have their own methods in learning Arabic language as a foreign language. They build their own situations in acquiring the new language. Moreover, they possess their own methods and steps to be applied in language activities that later will be practiced in the real language situation. Additionally, they also provide the Arabic materials as a reference. The effectiveness of their methods are also supported by other researchers. The overall results of using the above methods are as follows:

Table 4: Results for overall methods.

No.	Methods	means
1	Gathering	3.6361
2	Enhancing	3.7358
3	Applying	3.8425
4	Overall using	3.7382

From the sequins above, it shows that students use applying method more that enhancing and gathering methods. For that reason, they have high level of proficiency even though they learn Arabic in a foreign country which is situated so far from Arabic countries and Arabic culture. Hence, their methods can serve as a guideline for other students.

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