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Effective Technique of Teaching and Learning Arabic Language in the Classroom: A Case Study in Selected National Religious Secondary Schools (SMKA) In Selangor

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ABSTRACT

Issues of Arabic proficiency as a foreign language in Malaysia are never-ending and have always been the concern of policy makers and interested groups. This study aims to investigate students', teachers' and parents' (STP) towards effective technique of teaching and learning Arabic Language in the classroom at SMKA. The study employs a qualitative method. The informants of the study were three students, three teachers and three parents from three identified SMKAs in Selangor. The participants were chosen by purposive sampling procedures. The study revealed that the effective technique of teaching and learning Arabic Language namely contents, the material, strategy of teaching, the teacher behavior, structure of teaching, learning climate, the students, and time allocated of lessons. As shown in the findings, there was lack of teaching methods which was the main factor of failure in teaching and learning Arabic Language. At the same time, the study revealed that applying a good strategy in teaching and smart learning was the key to success in acquiring Arabic Language. A suggested model, namely effective technique for the success of Arabic Language (ETESAL) is recommended for the success teaching and learning in Malaysia through the case study of STP in SMKA.

Keyword: STP, SMKA, ETESAL.

Introduction

Eventhough the Arabic Language has gained a formidable stronghold especially on the onset of 21st century, the same cannot be said of the achievements of students in this regard (Chee Pee, 1991). Findings in researches conducted, found that the teaching and learning of Arabic Language in Malaysia has still not been able to meet the desired aims and objectives (Kamarulzaman et al., 2002). According to Mat Taib Pa (2006), the mastery of Arabic Language amongst Malay students are very weak. Their weaknesses are also more profound to that of their predecessors, even though they have better text books, a solid curriculum and more qualified teachers. It seems that the decline is worsening.

Weakness of students in their mastery of the Arabic Language have always remained a prevailing debate (Kamarul Syukri, 2009). The majority of students who took on Islamic studies and Arabic Language are still weak in their mastery of the language (Muhammad Fauzi, 2010). Mohd Helmi (2011) reported that less empowerment of Arabic Language was identified as factors of Malaysian students' failure at Al-Azhar university. Among 786 students, 361 students failed in the study session of 2010/2011 at Al- Azhar. The significant number of failing students shocked all parties in Malaysia. The fact that most students were sponsored by the Malaysian government gave a negative impact at a country which had produced good quality graduate students in terms of competence in Arabic Language. This findings show that Malaysian students failed in acquiring this language. Attesting to this problem, Muhammad Faisal Hashim (2011) corroborated in his research that the failure of learning Arabic Language is due to the non-ability of the students to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills using Arabic Language eventhough they were studying in countries where Arabic is widely spoken.

Ab. Halim (2007) commented that the mastery of the Arabic Language amongst students in post tertiary studies who specialised in Arabic as a language, did not achieve the desired level. Muhamad Pisol et al. (2005) stated that the weakness of higher institution of learning (IPTA) students in the acquisition of this

language is evident and disheartening. They were also not able to read and understand the language used in Arabic newspapers. Apart from that, the percentage of students who mastered Arabic Language especially Arabic grammar has declined. In a few studies conducted by Abdul Aziz (1998), Che Kamarudin (1999) and Abdul Ghani (1999), among their findings included the fact that those who were weak in the mastery of their Arabic Language were predominantly weak in the foundation of the language.

In an effort to solidify the process of teaching the language, language educators must identify issues and problems plaguing the language taught, the learning environment, and issues related to students or educators (Abdul Rahim & Naimah 2004). The efficacy of a teaching and learning process needs to be measured according to their achievement. This is because there are the target of teaching and learning. The efficacy rests on the positive changes undergone by students in whatever subject they are learning (Al-Muslim & Zamri Arifin, 2012).

Teaching and learning is an interaction process which occurs between three important components i.e. teacher, student and lessons in the classroom. These three components are inter related through methods. The teaching of language refers to the process of delivering the lessons pertaining to language by teachers to students. The learning of language is defined as the changes in the behaviour of students pertaining to language as a result of their involvement in the teaching process which occurs directly in the classroom (Atan, 1980).

Mikāi'l Ibrahim (2006) quoted that many educators and developmentalists advocated that the learning process should be an active process in which learners would be the active participants before learning could take place. Grolnick & Ryan (1987) believed that learning would occur optimally when learners were intentionally willing to be involved and assimilate information or when they are volitionally interested in learning activities.

Teachers must initiate a paradigm shift in their teaching and not relying solely on 'chalk and talk'. This is because the method is boring and it decreases students' motivation to learn. Teachers must increase the quality of their teaching and learning in line with the current challenges of education with facilities which could help their understanding and help them towards more meaningful learning (Abdul Rahim & Hayazi, 2010).

Eventhough research findings discovered that many students were interested in learning the Arabic Language, many amongst them did not master the Arabic Language correctly. The interest needs to be nurtured by earnest preparation towards more effective learning. This approach coupled with a varied exposure can be important elements in efforts to attract students to be more interested and excited to learn this language. Authorities who are directly involved in this field must be more sensitive towards the change in the teaching and learning approach of this language. Methodology and attractive teaching method must be created by lecturers to improve the teaching and learning of the Arabic Language among students who have no mastery in the language. Weak students must be encouraged to attend additional classes and further to that, remedial classes incorporating different styles of teaching must be instituted (Rofian et al., 2013). Therefore, this study seeks to investigate students', teachers' and parents' towards effective technique of teaching and learning Arabic Language in the classroom at SMKA schools. The SMKA schools are religious government schools which offer Arabic Language subject from Form One until Lower Six. So, this case study has chosen the right participants from those schools as representatives of other schools who offer the same subject which is Arabic Language. It is believed that the three years (from Form One to Form Three) of students' exposure to Arabic is considered sufficient for students to be competent in the subject.

Research Methodology

Descriptions of the Participants

The total number of participants involved in the present research was nine individuals: Three students, three teachers and three parents. All participants were selected from three schools of SMKAs in Selangor.

Students

The researcher has selected three students for the face to face individual interview. One student was selected based on her Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) examination results year (2010) with straight A's in nine subjects taken. The second student was a male student with 8A's except a Grade C for Arabic Language. The third student was also a male student with moderate results, 3A, 5B and 1C in Arabic Language.

Teachers

The first teacher selected was an *ustaz*, who was also the head of Arabic Language at his school and has had the experience teaching Arabic for sixteen years. He was awarded the excellent teacher in teaching Arabic Language by Ministry of Education, Malaysia. The second teacher was an *ustazah* with six years experienced in teaching Arabic. The third teacher was also an *ustazah* with nine years experienced in teaching Arabic.

Parents

The first parent selected by the researcher was a father of four children and he sent all his children to SMKA Hamidiah Kajang. He is a lawyer who has his own company in Ampang. He is the former President and Vice President of Teachers Parents Association (PIBG) in SMKA Hamidiah Kajang from year 2006 until year 2010. The second parent selected was a mother who was also an English teacher at the same school with her daughter in SMKA Kuala Selangor. Her daughter scored all A's for her PMR in 2010. And the last informant in the case study was a father whose daughter scored all A's for her PMR in 2010. This case study is unique because her daughter previously took PMR at secondary school which offered Arabic subject as an optional subject, and she learned Arabic subject in the evening after the school ended. This class was known as KAA (Kelas Aliran Agama), specially designed by the SMK schools.

Research Question

What are the most effective learning and teaching technique in classroom?

Research Finding

Students preferred a teacher who could teach by making jokes while teaching them in Arabic class. Besides that, S1 viewed that an interesting way of teaching Arabic was by using simple example in introducing grammatical topics. These examples could be applied to the student's life by relating to the words that they had learned before. Later, students were asked to write their sentences on the whiteboard. Additionally, when students understood the grammatical concepts, they could understand the grammatical topics taught. One of the most effective techniques was when the teachers asked the students repeatedly if they have understood the topic. Students were also asked by the teacher to write down newly acquired vocabulary after they had learnt that word. In learning Arabic, S1 said students must understand grammar before they were able to make the right sentences. Students were also divided into different classes according to their grades (A, B, C and D) after the trial examination to be more focused in teaching. Sometimes, her school used trial exam papers from other states for the students to do revision. S1 also claimed that she likes outside classroom activities because they were more relaxing and fun.

S2 said that teachers who used *Bahasa Melayu* in the classroom while teaching Arabic made the students understand better. When exams are impending, teachers always used the textbooks and exercise books to revise lessons. Therefore students can score. S2 expressed that study in groups made learning more effective. Teacher motivated the students by giving a lot of exercises. When students were sleepy, they would be asked to go to the toilet to wash their faces to keep them awake. While learning, he said students must read the textbooks, practice it, make notes, and write down notes in their notebooks.

S3 preferred the teacher who gave him a break in between classes and allowed the class to resume whenever the students were ready. The teacher was very helpful in helping them acquire new vocabulary, using the Arabic dictionary to find meanings. He mentioned that he preferred doing activity in groups because it could inculcate co-operativeness among friends in the group. The other advantage was that students could learn Arabic actively, besides providing the opportunity to speak Arabic, and sharing knowledge between friends. Another technique was learning outside the classroom which proved very significant in inspiring students' mood to learn as they were happier with the ability to do so. Furthermore, students loved Arabic week organized by the school because the activities in this program such as Arabic Explorace provided them a different way to acquire a foreign language. Students become more positive. Teachers' approaches to the lesson should be interesting, so that the students would be able to learn effectively and not be bored. The teacher could always ask the students to ask questions, repeat the lesson, gives more exercises, especially in

memorizing new vocabulary. Effective learning is giving full attention while in the class and asking the teacher questions when they did not understand any part of the lesson.

According to T1, the most effective technique of learning and teaching in class was the varied activities performed such as conversing, translating, acting, games and competitions. He said that learning and teaching in class was easy if the textbook they are using is easily understood, then the lessons would be easy to follow. Apart from this, other techniques were utilized to aid memorization of Arabic terms, using the correct Arabic grammar, sentence build up, basic words so that acquisition of language could be facilitated. Both *Bahasa Melayu* and Arabic Language were used to explain to students, conduct exercises and show examples. Students were forced to memorize new vocabulary.

Meanwhile, T2 would always ask her students to memorize five new words in Arabic before class. She noted that students' act positively by competing to raise their hands whenever they are able to answer her questions. Then the teacher would always repeat and reinforce learning by using the same words as this method was applied in Gontor, Indonesia until the students are able to memorize. Students learn Arabic in discussion groups and they were compulsory to use the dictionary. T2 preferred not to give homework to the students, instead discussions between both teachers and students are being held in class where students would list up all the words they need to memorize and after *tasmi'*, then the teacher would give her signature. This is done on a daily basis where the teacher would give five new words daily and would quiz them about these words at the beginning of the class. Four skills in teaching and learning Arabic must be practiced directly from the Qur'ān. The most important is knowing the meaning of the Arabic word. The second would be to build Arabic sentences in *jumlah ismiah or jumlah fii'liyyah*. Sometimes she would use *Bahasa Melayu* to facilitate students' understanding of the lesson. Nevertheless she agreed that the most effective way to learn and teach Arabic is without using *Bahasa Melayu* as a medium.

T3 stated that teachers must have a good model, followed by students who are disciplined in speaking Arabic and subsequently, enforcement would be required to ensure that students memorize their Arabic words. Apart from that, teachers must also ensure that Arabic Language is used in daily conversations, that students read frequently and find meaning of new words in Arabic. Besides these, different methods to teach Arabic must be created and introduced and creative Arabic Language games such as introduce new words by playing games. Students could then be encouraged to consistently remember the new word and successfully learn Arabic by using textbooks and finding meanings together with the teacher in class. They must learn with the intention of pleasing Allah through group discussions, make presentations and motivate students to compete with each other.

P1 viewed that language must be taught in a conducive environment, where everybody uses Arabic to communicate, if they do not, usage of the language would deteriorate. P1 suggested that there should be invitation for; Arab Saudi's Islamic counselor or native speakers from IUM to deliver *khutbah* every *Jumaah* prayer in Arabic. Teachers must not teach in *Bahasa* while teaching Arabic Language. They should use Arabic from beginning until the end of the class. Teacher also advised to be creative in teaching Arabic Language, and do adequate preparations before entering the class. Currently, every school has Arabic lab, so they should use it. They also should use Arabic module via technology to attract students' interests. Teacher should be using Information Technology (IT) in class. However, these contradicted with P2 who said that teachers should emulate the teaching methods and module used in teaching by the exemplary schools. P3 said that teachers must have good inner and outer character, and sincere in teaching, besides having the right skills to teach Arabic Language. From that, the teaching and learning would be blessed by Allah and students could easily understand Arabic. Teachers should always attend *ḥalā'iqah* of knowledge, at the same time, transfer the knowledge he obtained to his students with *du'ā'*. The important thing, teaching and learning Arabic Language could purify the soul, and build good character.

Discussion and Conclusion

Underlying theory of factors in effective of teaching by Burden & Byrd (1999) listed eight factors that should be considered in effective of teaching. There are the contents, the material, strategy of teaching, the teacher behavior, structure of teaching, learning climate, the students, and time allocated of lessons. However, the study would highlight to the six factors.

1) Content

P2 said the effective teaching & learning techniques of the Arabic Language in her school was by sharing modules from great schools. T1 said when the textbook is easy, the others will also be easy.

2) Material

The effective learning & teaching technique in class as T1 said are talk, translation, acting, games, and competition. As T3 said create language games in Arabic to introduce new words, and P1 using information technology (IT) in class.

3) Teacher Behavior

Teacher behavior was identified as an effective technique because students in this case study preferred a well-behaved teacher who could teach well while teaching them in Arabic class. P3 addressed that teacher must have good inner, character, sincere besides having skills to teach Arabic subject. From that, the T&L will be blessed by Allah and students will have more understanding towards learning. And T3 said it must start with the teacher, followed by students who are disciplined in speaking Arabic. Meanwhile, all students prefer to the teachers who make jokes while teaching to avoid them from feeling bored in classroom.

4) Strategy of Teaching

S1 viewed interesting ways in teaching Arabic by using simple example in introducing grammar topic, and relate them to student's life and student free to write their sentences on the whiteboard. T1 agreed and added that, other technique includes memorizing Arabic terms, using the right Arabic grammar, building simple sentences, using basic words to learn, using dual-language to explain as best as they could to understand the student, doing example and using the example given by student.

While S2 expressed that group study makes learning more effective as agreed by S3. He likes activity in groups because it inculcates co-operation between friends in group, learning Arabic actively, given the opportunity to speak Arabic, sharing knowledge between friends and then feeling happy. T2 agreed that students preferred the group discussion in learning Arabic.

S3 said teacher pushed the students by giving a lot of exercises. When students felt sleepy, they will be asked to go to the bathroom to wash their faces to keep them awake. While learning, he said students must read the textbooks, practice, and making notes. He also preferred the teacher to given them breaks in between lessons. Teacher helped students to understand new vocabulary, using the Arabic dictionary to finding meanings.

While T2 said, the effective methods she used was by asking her students to remember five new words in Arabic every time before class, asked them these words before the start of each class and students' response are positive when they competed to raise their hands. She said the four skills in teaching and learning Arabic must be practiced, and take examples directly from the Qur'ān. T3 said teacher must use different methods to teach Arabic. Using repeat technique also encourages to enhancing teaching and learning process because the repetition is the mother of learning.

5) Learning Climate

S1 said that she likes outside class activities as they are more relaxed and fun. Agreeing to that is S3 who prefers teachers to teach outside class, for example at school compound and introducing the school's surrounding with Arabic word. It is found interesting because it inspires mood to learn and forms happy feeling. Activities in groups are mostly preferred by many students as they presented the meanings of word because they are sharing knowledge and it makes students participate actively. Reason is to train them to speak in front of the class. Besides that, Arabic week which organized participants to participate in explore required the participants to identify Arabic words by showing places like hostel, *surau*, tree, class etc. and students prefer outside activities because of the different environment that could change their mood to a more positive one.

P1 said language must be taught in a good environment, where everybody use to talk in Arabic for communication, instead of that Arabic Language would diminish in importance, such as invite Arabic speakers to Malaysia to visit Islamic counselor in Arab Saudi to hear *khutbah* every *Jumaah* prayer in Arabic, native speakers from IIUM university.

6) Student

T3 said effective techniques encourage the student to memorize Arabic word. Some examples are used the Arabic Language in daily speeches, reading a lot, searching new words in Arabic, have good intentions to learn Arabic because of Allah and students are encouraged to be consistent in remembering the new word towards in learning Arabic, use Arabic textbooks and find meaning together with teacher in class.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Therefore, this study has suggested and recommended several effective techniques of teaching and learning Arabic Language in the classroom.

- 1) Task of learning is given in group work.
- 2) Do more exercises in memorizing Arabic word because Arabic Language its' nature language in Malaysia is foreign language.
- 3) Intensive in reading and memorizing means students have to read lots of Arabic material in textbooks or other printed sources, so they can get more vocabularies of Arabic word.
- 4) Teacher should force the students to memorize Arabic vocabulary words.
- 5) Exam paper comes through out the textbooks, so the students cannot avoid from reading textbook to success in learning.
- 6) Provide a pocket book to bring anywhere at any place. Pocket book must contain of Arabic vocabularies.
- 7) Students should give full attention in class during the teaching process.
- 8) Using Arabic language in living life means students have to speak with Arabic language and not intensively for subject study, but make it in their daily lives because the nature of study in language subject, students must speak with that language rather than study the language.

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