

Arabic Language Fluency among the Undergraduates at the Department of Arabic Language of South Eastern University of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Learning a language is of phenomenal importance in each community to express its intellectuality. There can be no doubt that learning Arabic language should be one of the top priorities among its learners. Indeed, it should be seen as one of the fundamental necessities for a person who wishes to pursue studies in Arabic. In many countries of the contemporary world the studies and streams related to Arabic language is expanded to compete with influence of English around the world. Arabic language is taught as a main subject in the state schools of Sri Lanka and in addition to that, some of the Sri Lankan universities also teach Arabic. There is a department for Arabic language in South Eastern University of Sri Lanka. Majority of the students entering the department of Arabic Language lack fluency in Arabic although it has been taught from first year to third year. The proficiency level of specified students in Arabic Language is inadequate to undertake their studies continuously compared to the learners of other languages. This may be a major reason for the incapability of the graduates to face the linguistic and lingualistic challenges of their respective field. This study aims to identify the factors that lead to the failure in enhancing Arabic language among the undergraduates. For this research, the sample comprised 100 students and 04 lecturers in South Eastern University of Sri Lanka were selected using purposive sampling method. Interview and observation were the primary data collection methods whereas journals, and websites were the secondary data sources used for this study. Collected data were analysed using qualitative method and was presented in a descriptive approach. The study will gain its importance so that it will benefit the undergraduates of Arabic language as well as the Arabic learners in understanding the religious expressions and promote their studies successfully. The research presented some important recommendations including the one that, the learner should be taught in a supportive atmosphere, and should not be afraid of making mistakes as it is a part of learning.

Keywords: Lack, Fluency, Arabic, Language, Undergraduates, Arabic Department, SEUSL

Introduction

Language and education are inherently intertwined and related. We receive our education and knowledge through a language in order to solve the problems with regard to mundane affairs. Arabic language has its own unique place in the current competitive world as it is one of the six official languages in more than 20 countries and there are about 300 hundred million speakers of Arabic across the world. With the advent of Islam in Sri Lanka in the seventh century AD the religion Islam was propagated by the Arabs among the non-Muslim Sri Lankans. The Islamic religious scripture is in Arabic. Specially the five times prayer in Islam is performed in Arabic Language, so there was an bounden need for the Arabs to teach the convert the Arabic Language, the recital of the Quranic chapters as well as the ritualistic verses in the prayers is ubiquitous in the world irrespective of cast ethnicity nation to which the Muslim belong to. That was the very reason the early Muslims of Sri Lanka established Arabic Madrasa system to teach Arabic in Sri Lanka. They acted as a pioneering venture and the precursor for the Arabic Language to be introduced into the academic institution. the

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Jamiya Naleemya Islamic university was one such institution that has produced hundreds of Arabic Language graduates in many disciplines and paved the way for the Muslims of Sri Lanka to show an ardent enthusiasm and passion towards learning Arabic. The conventional madrasas taught only classical Arabic whereas Jamiya naleemiya, the Islamic university has been teaching both classical and communicative Arabic. Because of this methodology teaching in Arabic lots of Muslim students who have been having the unquenching thirst for mastering the Arabic Language are attracted and also Learning Arabic has a ripple effect among the Muslim masses since the establishment of Jamiya Naleemiyyah in Sri Lanka. Another aspect is that, the revolution and the impetus to be drawn to learn Arabic has been due to the Introduction of migrant workers to middle east after 1980s. It has been highly indispensable for the migrant worker to learn communicative Arabic. Therefore, they showed much interest to learn Arabic. Later Middle eastern countries has been in dire need of employing people with academic Arabic knowledge in a variety of Arabic Language of a various field of studies. Nowadays people with proficiency in Arabic language both academic and non-academic go to middle east which lead Arabic to brain drain. Per se, they go in for both economic necessity and personal reasons. If we analyse, The government schools conduct two categories of examinations in Arabic language subjects, while religious based institutes offer eight years Islamic edict (Sharia) certificate courses in Arabic language, and many universities provide such courses at degree level. Students who can speak Arabic well may well have a good opportunity for further education, finding employment, gaining promotion and leading a career in multiple fields such as journalism, industry, education, finance and banking, translation and interpretation etc. The Language played a constructively a crucial role for the survival of the major civilizations of the world the religion made the civilization withstand from being not perished throughout the ages. The religious scripture of Islam – The glorious Quran survived 1400 years without any fabrication, interpolation of the verses of the Quran because of the uniquely poetical and linguistic might of the Arabic Language. The language acts as a sine qua non of the social fabric of an any communities of the world. Arabic is a phonetic Language it is an advantage Arabic cannot be read like any other Languages without knowing the meaning of the word or phrases. This makes the student discourages in grasping or comprehending the Language. In order to be able to read Arabic text one should know the Arabic grammar. I have never ever found these shortcomings in any other Languages so far I have known. This invariably necessitates the learner to be come impassionate from being actively learning the Language. The students who are short of modern Arabic grammar per se grapple with comprehend the Language. This is because they learnt Arabic in their Advanced level by means of conventional Arabic grammatical system. During their tenure of their Advanced level they learn Arabic so as to satisfy their syllabi and not to satisfy their intellectuality in the Language. In the aftermath of this they enrol into the university and there encounter the Arabic Language taught based on modern Arabic adopted by the university as an alien stuff. This is because they struggle in understanding the Language. This situation make them frustrated and as a consequence, they miserably turn away from learning Arabic. This is because the students are implicated in the complication to learn the Language smoothly to their contentment. The striking hiccup is that Arabic is perceptibly is not a career oriented Language in Sri Lanka. The undergraduates learn Arabic for the sake of learning not otherwise.

every religion teaches good ethics and morals to guide the humanity. Moreover, student's poor dedication and unhealthy learning environment are some of the reasons hindering the progress.

In addition to that, shyness and disinterest are the major causative factors which give rise to discourages them to actively participate in the learning process of the. Continual Practice of the student is more encouraging factors to the student to grasp the language without any hindrends. As per some of the university system, Arabic language is taught from first year to third year, yet the issue is multifactorial in terms of fluency of Arabic Language among the undergraduates. This study is conducted in order to identify the major factors that lead to decrease the proficiency of Arabic learners, especially the undergraduates of the Department of Arabic Language of SEUSL.

Methodology

This study is conducted in SEUSL . Translation and Arabic linguistics are considered as the main subjects of the department among the undergraduates to fulfil the degree program. Purposive sample method is used for this study and the sample size is 100 students and 04 lecturers in the Arabic language department. Interview and observation are the primary data collection methods at the same time journals, articles, and websites are the secondary data sources used for this study. Collected data are analysed by using qualitative methods and presented in texts in descriptive manner.

Findings and Discussion

The study finds that, most students lack fluency and interest in learning Arabic Language. Many students are tested in examinations only to find their proficiency in their examination but they failed to identify the holistic approach to the Language paradigms not to increase their language proficiency. Due to being faced with multitude of problems, in Learning Arabic the students find it a conflict rather than a solution. Learning a Language is not solely depend on one particular method if Learning rather It rely on individual make up. It has become an established conviction among the masses that Arabic learning is solely for religious purposes (to be able to read the Koran) so they are not for mundane affairs. This psyche has been ingrained in their mind that Arabic is not for worldly purposes. When they have problems in both communicative sand literally skills they poorly understand even the quranic verses which is considered to be most sacred.

The students have good knowledge of grammar and a wide ranging vocabulary in order to be able to pass exams but still then , they find it difficult to speak. This proves that there is no enough care of the language in the university. The students have a good knowledge of grammar and a wide vocabulary, which help students to pass their exams, but they find it difficult to speak. To be fluent in a language the learners should be practice it. Though some students work very hard since they believe that fluency in Arabic speaking will lead to a good position after graduation, majority of the students do not realize the importance. To gain fluency in a particular language the Language must be taught along with the practice of the language as well as the lecturer's guidance. Some students work very hard despite they believe that speaking Arabic fluently will lead them to a greater status and prestige when they leave university while majority of the students do not realize the importance of the language.

The study explored that, the undergraduates do not pay much attention in excelling the language because this trend leads to poor performance in their language skills of the students. The main negative scope of the Universities and religious based schools (madrasas) education system is that the Arabic language is not a paramount requisite in order achieving success in the respective field of study for the graduation. The highlighted issues have resulted in the lack of proficiency.

Conclusion

Language is a medium of communication, when the language loses its entity of communication it is pointless studying the language. This idea is applicable to any other language including Arabic. Though, Arabic language is taught throughout the religious school, and some of the university studies in Sri Lanka, students face challenges and obstacles in gaining fluency. In this context, the study aptly find out the root causes which can possibly ameliorated accordingly.

Most of the undergraduates learn to speak Arabic in the same way as a child learns to speak its first language. Indeed, a child doesn't usually learn to speak until they are a year old and doesn't become fluent for several years. In my view, study of Arabic language at least needs of undergraduates of 5 years duration because the difficulty and the slow learning process of the Arabic attributable to that it is one of the few classical Language of the world. The students are not provided sufficient supportive environment to practice, Syllabus based curriculum and poor practices of Arabic language, inappropriate guidance, lack of interest, motivation and the shyness of the students are the major contributory factors which lead to this situation among the students. In other hand, the case in point is

that, a limited vocabulary and grammar are not sufficient to boost the students language ability. Most students do not pay much effort to improve their Arabic speaking skill (Khalid, 2004). According to Amilrudin (2003), this problem is pervasive, including even the advanced students, as they are extremely shy to speak Arabic, anxious of being ridiculed and accused of being show-off. In common, a religious scholar with a sound Arabic knowledge can only leads its community.

The one who excel in the Arabic language can guide the Islamic society in the correct path. Those who follow Arabic language should standard in the Language. To be fluent in Arabic language the learner should be instilled as to be realised its need. proper actions should be immediately taken in order to overcome this issue which has a great impact on not only the future of the students but also the development of the Islamic nation.

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