ATLANTIS
PRESS

Foreign Language Instruction in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in the Technological Age: The Teachers' Voices

Azkia Muharom Albantani
Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University
Jakarta, Indonesia
azki@uinjkt.ac.id

Ahmad Madkur
State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Metro
Metro, Indonesia
ahmadmadkur@metrouniv.ac.id

Abd. Rozak
Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University
Jakarta, Indonesia
rozak@uinjkt.ac.id

Abstract— **This study aimed at identifying teachers' perceptions of ideal foreign language, in this case, Arabic language, teaching at the elementary education level in the technological age. This study used interview instruments to collect data relating to the research. The object of the study involved 24 Arabic language teachers from a number of *madrasah ibtidaiyah* (Islamic elementary school) selected using a random sampling selection. The results of the study indicated that the use of technology (gadgets) can facilitate the students in understanding Arabic language lessons and increase their motivation in learning. In addition, the instruction of Arabic as foreign language in the primary level preferred using many language game patterns so that the learning process becomes more interesting for students to follow.**

Keywords: foreign language, Arabic language, elementary level, teachers' perceptions, technological era

I. INTRODUCTION

Learning Arabic as foreign language in the context of technological developments in the current era of industrial revolution requires the teachers' creativity in managing the class. The use of technological tools is also very necessary in order to facilitate the learning process of Arabic. This is in line with Aini et al who stated that in the era of technology that is increasingly advanced today. They assumed that the use of computers is increasingly felt to be able to facilitate work because every information produced will always be displayed to in the form of accurate and specific information, whether it is in the field of education or other fields.[1]

Public's attention to Arabic language learning is nowadays getting bigger. This can be noticed from some indicators particularly the fact that Arabic language is leanrt from elementary school to university level. Unfortunately, Arabic language learning at the elementary school level has not developed in the direction of actual Arabic language skills. In the basic education curriculum in public elementary schools, Arabic language subject has not yet gained a position as a compulsory subjects that must be studied; it is only inserted in religious studies. Meanwhile, in elementary schools affiliated to Islam such as *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI)*, Arabic lessons have become a compulsory subject even though it has not been maximized in terms of the desired competencies from the learning outcomes. Also, the pedagogical activities emphasize more on giving Arabic rules which are, in fact, not yet relevant to the age level and are not in accordance with the theory of language learning in children.[2]

In line with the era of globalization and the fast-growing advancement of science and technology, especially in the field of education, the development in the institution education must be done immediately, for the sake of the creation of targeted and qualified education. In doing so, professional and directed management that can support the achievement of educational goals is unquestionably required.[3]

In term of education, the use of information technology in learning, among others, is characterized by the interaction between instructors and students through internet technology, the availability of programmed teaching materials, instructors act as facilitators and the existence of flexibility in the learning process in terms of both time and place. The presence of information technology gives a fresh breeze that can overcome problems in Arabic language learning. Language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing can be improved through computer-based learning and th utilization of telecommunication technology. Therefore, the teachers are highly expected to be literate in technology so that they can use it to overcome learning difficulties experienced by students and increase the interest of participants and quality of learning.

The development of information technology has a positive impact in the world of education including Arabic language learning. Providing the teaching materials become easier and more interesting since teachers are now offered with abudant sources they can access anytime. Due to the fact that technology is a double-edge sword, the teachers need to play a pivotal role in guiding their students in taking advantage of these technologies.[4]

One of the factors that led to the lack of realization of Arabic language skills among learners was that the models and strategies used by educators have not been in accordance with the spirit and character of the students. Students at the *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* level are generally familiar with computers. Their familiarity with various information and communication technologies requires creativity from educators to carry out the learning process according to their souls and needs.[5]

Along with the development of information technology, Arabic language learning as part of the national education process is required to continue to make updates in the methodology, teaching materials, educational facilities and infrastructure including media learning and the quality of teaching human resources.[6]

Based on the various backgrounds above, this study aims to examine the various perceptions of Arabic language teachers in the elementary level to identify ideal Arabic language learning at the *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* in terms of technology utilization, Arabic language skills, and learning characteristics found in several schools where they teach.

II. METHOD

This study used qualitative methods with a case study research model to identify teacher perceptions about Arabic language learning in *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* in the technological era. This study used interview instruments to collect data. It involved 24 Arabic language teachers from *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* selected using the random sampling method. After that, the results of the research data were analyzed using the triangulation method.

III. DISCUSSION

A. *Teachers' Profile*

The interview results showed that eight teachers (33%) were graduates of the Arabic Language Education Department (*Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* or PBA), six teachers (30%) surprisingly were graduates of the English Language Education Department (*Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris/*PBI), and ten teachers (37%) were graduates of the Islamic Education Department (*Pendidikan Agama Islam/*PAI). This shows that Arabic teachers are not always graduates of S1 Arabic Language Education. However, it should be noted that non-PBA graduate teachers must be prepared to be able to teach Arabic language well.

Chart 1. The departments from which the Arabic language teachers graduated
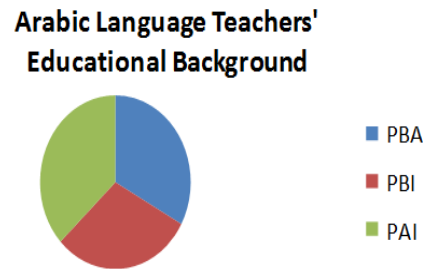
This considerably large percentage of teachers graduating from non-Arabic language department certainly affected the instruction of Arabic language subject. This is because the teachers' background qualifications evidently influence the students' learning motivation [7] and the students' achievement.[8] Educational policies adopted by goverment regarding teacher education, licensing, hiring, and professional development may bring a significant difference in the qualifications and capacities that teachers bring to their work.[9]

B. *Arabic Language Learning with Gadgets*

The interview results show that not all teachers used gadgets in learning activities. Some teachers used gadgets in order to provide students with listening assignments of simple Arabic videos available on YouTube. In addition, the teacher also downloaded Arabic song videos to teach new Arabic vocabularies. The students were also interested in the creation of Arabic material presentation using the media. Some teachers used YouTube to present Arabic conversations about daily activities to the students.[10] The Arabic vocabularies were pronounced repeatedly by the students so that they master Arabic vocabulary. According to the teachers, the use of gadget in learning activities could allow the students to do the work, and get the learning materials. These teachers' perceptions on the benefit of technological devices in classroom activities were in contrast with Skenderi and Skenderi who found that there is no positive contribution of technology to the development of communication skills among the students since it can make them more less socialized.[11]

Some Arabic language teachers at *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* required the students to do conversation *(muhadatsah)* activity every day. They used the projectors to display powerpoint files made by the teacher so students can see simple dialogues in Arabic and study the variety of Arabic vocabulary. However, the teacher also still used the blackboard to write.

Gadget is very familiar to the so-called digital students in this technological era. The use of gadgets is very helpful for teachers as learning media that can facilitate the students in learning Arabic. The gadget allows teachers to be able to use multimedia in

learning Arabic that is very interesting and attractive to students. As proved by Borisova et.al., using gadgets was effective to improve students' academic achievement and reduce the time spent on the learning process.[12]

Different situation was showed by some teachers who teach in Islamic boarding schools were less familiar with using gadgets in learning Arabic language. They used traditional methods in learning, such as presenting some Arabic vocabulary in a day. Thus, the students must repeat the vocabulary together with the teacher so that they are good at mastering the vocabulary. In addition, the use of gadeget is not permitted so that students remain focused to learn.

Some of teachers used the gadgets in learning Arabic to add their insights, such as use google and youtube. Some used the *Maktabah Syamilah* application that stores various Arabic-language books from all branches of science so that it is very helpful to improve teachers' insight in order to improve the quality of the learning process. The other reasons were that technological devices were considered to be more effective and efficient in making the students more active in the learning process in the classroom.[13] To illustrate, teachers provided a laptop using focus and loudspeakers to make the students watch and listens to shows related to Arabic. In addition, the use of gadgets in learning Arabic eased the students when learning particular materials.[14] For example in the material about الألوان or color in English, teacher prepared videos related to color in Arab later in the show when the learning process. Thus, students became more enthusiastic to learn Arabic.

Teachers who did not use gadgets in learning choose other alternatives such as the use of books; the students were asked to look up the meaning of Arabic vocabulary in the text of the book, then copied it in a notebook. After that, the teacher explained the material to the students. Then, the teacher asked students to memorize certain Arabic vocabularies which were considered very important to be practiced outside the lesson. In addition, the teacher asked students to make simple sentences to see how well they are able to compile simple and correct Arabic language sentences. Why did not they use the gadgets or other technological facilities to teach? The reaosns vary. Some teachers were not aware of the different character of millenial students. In other words, Arabic language teachers still encounter big obstacles to be well-prepared for dealing with their "digital" students.[15] The other teacher said that they had no sufficient capability to operate the technology. This is in line with the research findings that a number of teachers have lack of effective training, limited time and competency in operating the technological tools.[16] This different perceptions of teachers were also found in other study by Yosra Bugis revealing that Teachers have diverse points of view on the impact of using technology in teaching Arabic language.[17]

C. Advantages and Disadvantages

According to the teachers, the advantage of using technology was that it makes it easier for students in the process of learning Arabic langue. It is not monotonous to enhance the students' insight abour Arabic language through technology. In addition, the use of gadgets made the Arabic language learning increasingly easy for students to know the words and sentences of contemporary Arab context. The other plus point of the use of gadgets was stimulating the students to learn and reducing their boredom to participate in learning.

However, it should be noticed that technological media also has disadvantages. To make an example, in presenting various media, the teacher must prepare some supporting tools such as laptops, projector, and so on by taking a quite long time. Other than that, students easily find new things in the lesson by maximizing the use of gadgets so that they can learn Arabic independently but still under the guidance of the teachers at the school. In other words, the role of teachers determine the use of technology in the classroom because technology may not be effective without the teachers who are well-informed about both the technology itself and its execution to reach the educational goals.[18]

The other weakness was that technological tools may cause the students lazy to learn directly or read books in Arabic. Their dependence on gadgets made books and dictionaries in Arabic is no longer in demand.

The orther thing that should be aware of was that sometimes the teacher instantly used learning media obtained from the internet without considering the suitability of the students' needs and conformity with the learning syllabus that has been prepared previously. As a result, gadget-based learning can impact the instructional activity negatively since it may reduce the intensity of teacher and students' face-to-face.[19] As a consequence, sometimes there are some students who do not perceive of the importance of courtesy to the teacher.

It is generally accepted that the gadgets can access online information which is very rich in content. Not even a few negative content that can be accessed by students. As a consequence, it becomes another chore for teachers in order to lead students to not access negative things through the gadget.

D. Arabic Language Skills

There are four Arabic language skills that need to be mastered as a whole because they are related to each other.[20] By being able to listen *(istima')* Arabic language words, the students will be able to talk *(kalam)* in Arabic language. Then, their ability to

read (*qiraah*), allows them to write (*kitabah*) things in Arabic.

The media used in *istima* and *kalam* proficiency is sound (*al-shaut*). It can be conducted through direct communication between the speaker and the listener or through listening Arabic speaking talks. Whereas *qiraah* and *kitabah* proficiency are obtained through media written in Arabic learning.

Based on the teachers' statements in the interviews, *istima* skill is to find out how to pronounce Arabic language with the correct language and accent. This can be mastered by listening to what the teacher conveyed and exemplified. Besides that, listening to the recitation of the Qur'an is also a way to train students to become familiar with Arabic language. Whereas, the *kalam* skill is to pronounce the correct Arabic letters *(makhraj)* and use the Arabic accent. This is practiced through memorizing mufradat which was spoken in every day activities.

Meanwhile, reading skills need to be mastered to be able to obtain information that comes from language symbols contained in Arabic language. Teaching Arabic reading skills is certainly not an easy thing considering many things are different between Indonesian and Arabic. While writing skills also need to be mastered to be able to write letters, words, and Arabic sentences with the correct writing. The *hijaiyah* letter cannot be written in any writing; it needs its own method to be able to train the students to be adept at Arabic writing through *imla'* and *khat*.

E. The Characteristics of Arabic Language Learning

The results of the interviews also showed that some teachers applied a distinctive Arabic learning model. For example with the game *Tom* and *Jerry,* the teacher explained the Arabic text to students. Subsequently, the students were required to read clearly and memorize it by standing. If students were able to memorize and explain to other students, then the student would be allowed to sit.

Arabic language learning at the *madrasah ibtidaiyah* is different from *pesantren. Madrasah* students simply learnt Arabic language in classroom since they do not practice Arabic language skills at home. While *pesantren,* especially the modern ones, students always practice Arabic language skills in daily activities because they are part of the pesantren rules that must be implemented.[21]

Some teachers only instructed their students to search for new Arabic vocabulary meanings found in Arabic texts. Then students were asked to memorize the vocabulary. After that, they were asked to compile a sentence or conversation according to the vocabulary contained in the book. The teacher then gave some *muhadatsah* exercises in order to facilitate the students interact with each other in Arabic.

The majority of teachers made habituation of vocabulary mastery with a period of one week. The vocabulary that had been memorized by students was asked to be written in a notebook to strengthen their vocabulary mastery. In addition, vocabulary was taught and trained in the context of simple sentences with more difficult sentences.

The tendency of students to learn at the elementary level preferred learning with a variety of games. Thus, teachers who offerred the creativity of learning Arabic with various language games were preferred more by the students.

IV. CONCLUSION

Arabic language teachers actually come from a variety of backgrounds, not all of them are graduated from Arabic language department. This seemed to cause unsuccessful learning of Arabic. However, this solution can be given by involving teachers in various trainings to improve their quality in teaching. In addition, the use of technology may ease the students' understanding about Arabic lessons and increase their motivation to learn. In addition, learning Arabic for the elementary level was preferred by using many language game patterns so that the learning process becomes more interesting for students to follow.

REFERENCES

[1] N. Aini, L. A. Abdillah, and J. Jemakmun, "Perangkat Lunak Bantu Mengenal Huruf Arab Melayu Ke Bentuk Huruf Latin Bahasa Indonesia," *J. Ilm. MATRIK*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2006.

[2] S. Tajuddin, "Pengembangan Model Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Tingkat Sekolah Dasar Untuk Meningkatkan Kemampuan Berbahasa Arab Siswa," *J. Parameter*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2017.

[3] Z. Zulkhairi, Djailani. AR, and N. Usman, "Manajemen Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Berbasis Teknologi Informasi (T.I) Pada Jurusan Bahasa Arab Fakultas Tarbiyah Iain Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh," *J. Pendidik. Serambi Ilmu*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2012.

[4] H. Haniah, "Pemanfaatan Teknologi Informasi Dalam Mengatasi Masalah Belajar Bahasa Arab," *-Tarib*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2014.

[5] M. Ritonga, "Pengembangan Model Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Berbasis Teknologi Informasi dan Komunikasi di Kota Padang," *Arab. J. Pendidik. Bhs. Arab Dan Kebahasaaraban*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2016.

[6] M. Azzuhri, "Metode dan Media Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Berbasis Internet di Era Teknologi Informasi," *INSANIA*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2009.

[7] T. Y. Qin *et al.*, "Teachers' background factors and its relation to motivation," *Malays. Online J. Educ. Manag. MOJEM*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2015.

[8] A. J. Kola and O. S. Sunday, "A Review of Teachers' Qualifications and Its Implication on Students' Academic Achievement in Nigerian Schools," *Int. J. Educ. Res. Inf. Sci.*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2015.

[9] L. D. Hammond, "Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: A Review of State Policy Evidence," *Educ. Policy Anal. Arch.*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2000.

[10] A. M. Albantani and A. Madkur, "Musyahadat Al Fidyu: Youtube-Based Teaching and Learning of Arabic As Foreign Language (AFL)," *Din. Ilmu*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2017.

[11] L. Skenderi and F. Skender, "Teachers Perceptions of Technology Use in Schools," presented at the 14th International Conference "The Power of Knowledge, 2017.

[12] O. V. Borisova, D. G. Vasbieva, V. B. Frolova, and E. M. Merzlikina, "Usıng Gadgets in Teachıng Students Majorıng in Economıcs," *IEJME-Math. Educ.*, vol. 11, no. 7, 2016.

[13] S. Ghavifekr and W. A. Wan Rosdy, "Teaching and learning with technology: Effectiveness of ICT integration in schools," *Int. J. Res. Educ. Sci. IJRES*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 175–191, 2015.

[14] M. S. Sahrir, N. Zainuddin, and M. S. Nasir, "Learning preference among Arabic language learners via mobile learning management system platform (mobile LMS) using i-Taleem," *Int. J. Curr. Res. Life Sci. IJCRLS*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 509–514, 2016.

[15] S. Jouejati, "Integrating Technology into Arabic Classroom Engaging the iGeneration," presented at the 12th ISNA Education Forum, Chicago, 2011.

[16] S. Ghavifekr, T. Kunjappan, L. Ramasamy, and A. Anthony, "Teaching and Learning with ICT Tools: Issues and Challenges from Teachers' Perceptions," *Malays. Online J. Educ. Technol.*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2016.

[17] Y. Bugis, "The Impact of Using Technology and Media in Teaching Arabic Language: An Interpretive Analysis of the Experience of Volunteer Teachers in Arabic School in Northern Colorado," in *Proceedings of E-Learn: World Conference on E-Learning in Corporate, Government, Healthcare, and Higher Education*, Kona, Hawaii, United States, 2015.

[18] I. Decoito and T. Richardson, "Teachers and Technology : Present Practice and Future Directions," *Contemp. Issues Technol. Teach. Educ.*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2018.

[19] M. M. Nazarlou, "Research on Negative Effect on E-Learning," *Int. J. Mob. Netw. Commun. Telemat. IJMNCT*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 11–16, 2013.

[20] F. Al-Omari., "Teaching Arabic Language for Non-Native Speakers in the light of Modern Linguistics," *Dirasat Hum. Soc. Sci.*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2016.

[21] I. Makruf, "Manajemen Integrasi Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab di Madrasah Berbasis Pondok Pesantren," *Cendekia*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2016.