

# The Prominence of Creating Language Environment in Developing Arabic and English Speaking Skills in Islamic Universities

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**Abstract**—This article portrays the prominence of creating language environment in developing Arabic and English-speaking skills in Islamic Universities. Arabic and English are compulsory courses in Islamic universities. Students are expected to be able to study about Islamic science and go along with the development of globalization era. Arabic and English have become scientific, academic, and popular language for the international community. Therefore, it is important to learn Arabic and English as a tool to study science. This article focuses on creating language environment for teacher candidates of Education and Teacher Training Faculty in Islamic universities in Indonesia. As the teacher candidates, students of Education and Teacher Training Faculty are obligated to communicate actively using Arabic and English. In consequence, creating language environment well will affect students' mastery of Arabic and English. Language environment in language learning turns out to be an essential factor for learners to master language. Creating language environment is also critical for their natural language skills development.

**Keywords:** *creating language environment, speaking skills, Islamic universities*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language is a tool of communication which is used by people to interact each other. Language is universal so that it can be used by any races, tribes, social status, nations or continents [1]. People can express their idea, thought, feeling or information to others orally or written using language. Arabic and English are foreign languages used as scientific and communication language. Arabic and English are also international languages and officially used in United Nations. One of the formal educational institutions which teaches foreign language is Islamic universities. Arabic and English become a compulsory course in Islamic universities.

Arabic and English have unique characteristic such as dynamic in personal or social order. In personal order, language can be developed through ages and language use experiences. In social order, language can be maintained through interaction and communication among language users [2]. Seeing the important role of foreign language, this study portrays the prominence of creating Arabic and English language environment in developing language mastery in

Islamic Universities. The non-existence language environment considered becoming fundamental problems and hindered students' foreign language mastery in educational institution. The students' glitches to get use to speaking foreign languages both in Arabic and English awaken the linguists and academician to make innovations on language teaching. There is a program called boarding school for students in Islamic universities in Indonesia. The boarding school program allow students to stay in a dormitory located in the university area. Regarding to the minimum amount of students' Arabic and English mastery, the boarding school program is implemented.

## II. LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Human language acquisition begins from learning speaking in children's age. The first language that acquired by children is called native language. Language learning involves certain processes when children learn their second language after they acquire their first language. Therefore, language acquisition is closely related to the first language. Meanwhile, language learning occurs when children learn the second language [3]. There are many theories underlaying language acquisition both first and second language. The fundamental theories of language acquisition are behaviorism and cognitive theory. The behaviorists claimed that an infant was born with no capacity, so language environment becomes essential for language acquisition.

Different from behaviorism, nativist theory argued that an infant has innate ability to acquire language called Language Acquisition Device (LAD). A child can acquire language through their language acquisition device. The LAD is a blockage without the support system from the environment [4]. Behaviorism theory put emphasize on the role of environment to give imitation stimulus, reinforcement and positive or negative response [5]. Reference [6] also states that behaviorism approach in language acquisition realizes that children's environment becomes the main factor. Environment provides imitation models for children to imitate and some reinforcement that resulting on the rise of children's knowledge. Experts believe that every child uses the same strategy to acquire their mother tongue. This similarity is not only influenced by biological and neurological basis of human but also mentalist factor that reveals children were born with

innate properties. Whereas, in the second language acquisition, there are 2 types of language acquisition, namely: naturalistic and formal types [7].

### 1. Naturalistic Type

Naturalistic type is commonly found around the world. People are more heterogeneous in the cities, for example, cultures and dialects in social life. Language used in daily life can be clearly seen when there is family gathering. They use their local dialect and also their second language [8].

### 2. Formal Type

In the book entitled "The McGill Conference in Honour of Wallace E. Lambert" stated that language acquisition and learning will be developed effectively only if the language is practiced in the social life [9]. However, experts believe that language acquisition in formal type produces more outputs than naturalistic type. This kind of type usually occurs inside classroom with teachers scaffolding, instructional materials, media and learning tools that have been well prepared.

## III. BASIC CONCEPT OF LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT (ARABIC AND ENGLISH)

### A. Definition of Language Environment

Literally, environment based on the Indonesian dictionary means the circumstances that affect someone's growth. Environment in English dictionary also means something which is related to surrounding or atmosphere. The meaning of environment from the two definitions is the circumstance or atmosphere that affects human being growth and development [10]. Language is the system of sound symbol which is used by community to work, interact and communicate politely [11]. From the above definition, language environment is a situation on a certain area where the language nurtures, develops and is used by the speakers.

In foreign language learning, language environment means Arabic and English. In formal education, Arabic and English atmosphere can be created by teachers or lecturers at schools or universities. There are two kinds of language environment, as follows:

- formal environment includes all aspects of formal and non-formal education, and mostly situated inside classroom or laboratories. Formal environment gives input to students' language skills or systems such as science of language, based on the types or teachers' teaching and learning methods, and
- informal environment allows more natural language skills mastery and mostly occur outside the classroom setting [12].

Foreign language mastery, Arabic and English, is accomplished by the presence of both formal and informal language environment through different ways eventually. Informal environment provides input for language mastery, while formal environment offers input as monitor to edit and revise language mastery [13]. Formal and informal processes in

foreign language learning both in class and outside class will multiply the students' language mastery.

There are five language environments in the context of foreign language development, Arabic and English. The first language environment that should be considered is visual environment such as pictures, leaflet, wall magazine and information board that is written in Arabic. The second is audio visual environment, for example, khutbah speech, Islamic lecture, academic lecture, music, radio programs, and Arabic TV channel. The third is social interaction or teaching and learning activities using Arabic. The fourth is academic environment comprises schools or universities policy to require students use Arabic and English in certain occasions. Lastly, encouraging psychological environment such as building positive image on Arabic and English [14].

### B. Environment as Language Learning Sub-system

Language environment fully supports the effectivity on Arabic and English language learning process in particular educational institution. Environment plays an important role to succeed the learning process as proposed by Pavlov. Pavlov was the predecessor of behaviorism and followed by Edward L. Thorndike with his law of effect and came after that B.F. Skinner with his theory of reinforcement which believed in language environment manipulation was an effective technique to language mastery [15]. Therefore, environment is the significant source of stimulus to help students learn their second language. Language mastery can be acquired through habit formation.

### C. Requirements to Create Language Learning Environment (Arabic and English)

Basically, the process of creating foreign language environment in universities is not trouble-free. There are many compulsory requirements that should be fulfilled prior to the students' language mastery. The requirements are:

- firstly, related parties such as Arabic and English lecturers, the head and secretary of language department and faculty members, and students as well as academicians should put concern and show positive attitude toward Arabic and English language learning. Showing gratitude and positive attitude in language learning can maintain language skills development, trigger students' motivation and needs [16],
- secondly, there is a clear rule and guide on Arabic and English language environment format and model from the faculty or department. The rule is very essential to make commitment and unify vision as well as mission to develop Arabic and English language environment,
- thirdly, there is a figure who is able to use Arabic and English actively. The presence of native speaker must be augmented in terms of its function and role to support and develop Arabic and English language skills, and
- fourthly, funds must be provided to afford the facilities as support system in creating Arabic and English language environment.

#### D. Supporting and Hampering Factors to Create Language Environment

There are some supporting factors on how to create Arabic and English language environment, such as:

- availability of language mentors whose language competence are sufficient in the field of creating language environment both in Arabic and English Language Department,
- relevant curriculum and various learning methods which are developed creatively and innovatively,
- media for language teaching and learning,
- instructional materials in Arabic and English for students extracurricular activities,
- language consultant and supportive teams, and
- strict rules, discipline and punishment.

The hampering factors in creating Arabic and English language environment are as follows:

- students' lack of awareness to use Arabic and English in university area,
- least control in university area because students are put together with the other departments, and
- minimum amount of instructional materials that are written Arabic and English.

Those three hampering factors are caused by learning atmosphere in the university. This condition is tolerable due to the fact students do not stay dormitory. Seeing from the psycholinguistic aspect, language learning environment contributes to significant effect on raising students' awareness of using foreign languages [17].

The hampering factors can be solved by exceeding the number of lectures using foreign languages to deliver the course. The second, optimizing language coaching and training in department by hiring enough tutors who are credible in foreign language. The third, drilling discipline in language by forming language court. The fourth, organizing activities for language practice such as discussion, seminar, journal publication, language proficiency olympiad, etc.

Furthermore, there should be a policy from the stakeholders such as the head of the department to officially declare language day, Arabic and English Day when students and lecturers are obligated to speak Arabic and English. This kind of program is the first attempt to create Arabic and English language environment in students public service, consultation, announcement, and information around university [18].

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Ideal Arabic and English language environment is an atmosphere that possibly makes students and lecturers feel convenient and enjoyable when learning Arabic and English. The challenge to create foreign language environment has heavily emerged on the human resources and funds. However, success can be achieved by bold commitment and keep focusing on learning Arabic and English. Thus, the first strategy to create

and develop Arabic and English language environment is to formulate vision, mission and orientation to learn Arabic and English in university.

The departments must design and create Arabic and English language environment to achieve vision, mission and orientation of Arabic and English language learning. Besides that, the department should also arrange and uphold the rules such as discipline on using Arabic and English in university area or implement a jargon "No Arabic and English Means No Public Service" for students and lecturers. It is expected that by upholding such jargon, Arabic and English language environment in Faculty of Education and Teacher Training can go beyond in terms of the graduate qualities and graduate competences in the future.

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