



# Philosophical Studies on Arabic Learning Problems of University Students

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**Abstract.** Learning Arabic should pay attention to elements closely related to Arabic linguistics and the stages of its teaching. In addition to learning Arabic, it is also important to pay attention to technical elements that strengthen the teaching process to be effective and achieve optimal results. If the most important elements of linguistic and non-linguistic aspects are ignored, then learning will face problems. This study aims to find out the problems of learning Arabic in universities. The results of the study found that linguistic and linguistic problems were encountered in the learning process. Furthermore, studies on learning problems are reviewed based on descriptive studies from students and researchers presenting solutions and contributions to problems encountered during learning. In line with that, this study suggests the importance for a teacher to understand the most important elements of Arabic linguistics and its teaching and pay attention to the factors that support language learning to achieve maximum results.

**Keywords:** Arabic learning · Arabic linguistics · problem · university

## 1 Introduction

Language is the most important tool for humans and is the main communication tool in interacting with anyone [1]. Thus, the emergence of very diverse languages is evidence that language is a medium to make it easier for humans to communicate with others [2]. Language is also evidence of creativity that humans very quickly generate and agree upon [3]. With human language being able to convey thoughts and feelings and express their goals [4], then in life, humans and language cannot be separated [5]. In line with [6], which emphasizes that learning the language is an ongoing effort, so is learning Arabic. Arabic is one of the international languages recognized by the world [7]. It is a language that is spread in many countries in the world because many use it. So, it is not an exaggeration if learning Arabic requires focus and attention, from elementary schools to university educational institutions, both public and private, in public and religious schools. Arabic has been taught and developed according to the level [8].

Language learning should pay attention to things closely related to the language [9], such as sound systems, symbols, rules, semantics, and culture related to the language

[10]. As with learning Arabic, you should pay attention to the characteristics and characteristics of the Arabic language. Arabic is one of the languages in the world that has different characteristics from other languages, so in the practice of learning, one should pay attention to the characteristics of the Arabic language. Mabruroh [11] has stated that teaching and mastering Arabic is not easy, especially adjusting the abilities and development of students, especially if Arabic is not the first language commonly used. Therefore, it is undeniable that if the mastery of characteristics of the Arabic language is not mastered, this can cause problems in learning and teaching. Arabic learning problems can be caused by two factors, internal factors and external factors [10]. Internal factors related to linguistic or linguistic problems of the Arabic language itself, such as the problem of phonemics/phonetic systems, morphological, grammatical, and semantic systems. At the same time, external factors are in the form of non-linguistic problems, such as psychological, social, economic, cultural, and historical problems, as well as problems experienced by teachers or students when carrying out the Arabic language learning process.

Related to the problem of learning Arabic many studies tend to talk about the problems of learning Arabic by relying on three perspectives. First, a study that focuses on the problems of learning Arabic caused by the nature of the Arabic language, which has many rules and is not easy to understand, and other reasons that come from students, from the aspect of educational background and social environment. Of the several things that are considered to be this problem, learning has failed. This study finally provides teaching treatment by adjusting the needs of students. Because learning failures that occur, even in one aspect of language skills, can affect overall learning failure [12]. Second, the problems in learning Arabic are caused by unclear learning objectives. The existence of a developed curriculum has not yet formulated specific learning objectives. So, the learning that takes place often causes students' motivation to learn to be low. Given this problem, it is very important to formulate a curriculum by determining the right Arabic learning objectives and carrying out a relevant evaluation process [13]. Third, the problems of learning Arabic are caused by the lack of vocabulary. The language-learning process cannot run effectively when students do not master Arabic vocabulary. So, mastery of Arabic vocabulary can be done in one way by making teaching materials and preparing media that can support mastery of Arabic vocabulary [14].

Based on the problems that have been mentioned previously, which tends to place the learning problem comes from the technical aspect and the tools that must be prepared before the learning takes place. This research is different from existing ones. This research aims to complement the shortcomings of current studies on linguistic problems and their application in Arabic learning among students. Accordingly, the following questions can be formulated; What are the problems of learning Arabic in universities, and how can solutions to the problems of learning Arabic in universities be formulated?

This paper is based on the argument that the problems of learning Arabic in universities, which consist of linguistic and non-linguistic aspects, can be handled properly if the learning process pays attention to the linguistic elements of Arabic and the teaching stages. Likewise, learning is regulated by building good awareness for teachers and students. If the problems of learning Arabic in universities can be addressed properly, then the improvement of language skills can be realized and learning Arabic will succeed.

## 2 Method

Learning Arabic and its problems is an interesting study because conducting a problematic study is an act of identifying problems which then provides opportunities for educational elements to carry out elaboration activities as an action to answer the educational needs and challenges they face. The educational process must go hand in hand with the needs and goals of education. Therefore, learning Arabic is very important to pay attention to the elements of Arabic linguistics and non-linguistics so that learning outcomes can be realized as well as possible. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach and aims to reveal the problems of learning Arabic that take place in universities in the city of Malang.

The data used in this study were obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were made on learning activities, in the form of observing the process of learning Arabic at the university within one semester. Interviews were conducted with informants totaling five lecturers and ten students. The questions asked to cover the issues of learning Arabic and its problems. The documentation is used here as a source of data and information to support learning Arabic.

Data were analyzed through three processes, namely (1) restatement of data collected according to their respective themes, (2) description, which was carried out to find patterns and trends in data, and (3) interpretation which aimed to understand the meaning contained by a statement. The data that has been reduced thematically are displayed in the form of interview excerpts and described in detail as the results of the study. In the final stage, data verification is carried out to give birth to a deep and comprehensive understanding of the data.

## 3 Results and Discussion

Language learning problems that arise in circle students are very diverse. Among the problems that students in learning often encounter, there are two aspects, namely, linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. The researcher wants to discuss the problem of learning Arabic from the point of view of both aspects, and the researcher will describe as follows:

### 3.1 Linguistic Problems in Arabic Learning

As for the problems of learning Arabic from a linguistic point of view, the researcher will describe them in detail and discuss these problems and solutions that can be implemented in teaching Arabic.

#### 3.1.1 Phonology and Its Teaching Solutions

It is well known that Arabic is difficult to learn because it has characteristics that are different from the first language mastered by Indonesian students. So far, it has been known that Arabic letters are different from Indonesian letters. Regarding the differences between Arabic and Indonesian, the students feel that there are problems in learning Arabic. Especially those related to Arabic phonological elements. One of the obstacles

students face from a phonetic perspective is that they find it difficult to pronounce Arabic letters because students have a special dialect for their first language and mother tongue that has been mastered. The linguistic sense of the mother tongue has also dominated so that when speaking Arabic, the language spoken affects language tastes which cause reluctance to speak Arabic.

The results of this study also stated that students also revealed their experiences in learning Arabic; they said that Arabic letters have their characteristics, and the pronunciation of Arabic letters must also follow the characteristics of the right letters. What is often experienced by students is that in learning Arabic, they are not fluent in pronouncing Arabic letters, which affects the misunderstanding of the meaning and meaning of words and even provokes changes in the meaning of Arabic vocabulary and sentences.

Another problem in Arabic phonetics is the weakness of distinguishing Arabic letters, as some students stated that Arabic letters are very similar. This is due to the influence of the first language (interlingual). Because of this assumption, students pronounce the letters with the same pronunciation, not fluent. The following are the sounds of some letters that students cannot distinguish because of the influence of the first language. The letter ض [dhot] with the letter ظ [dlo'], for example in the word منضدة [mindhodatun] that means desk. The letter س [siin] with the letter ز [zay], for example in the word مؤز [mauzun] which means banana. The letter ك [kaf] with the letter ق [qof], for example in the word مقلمة [miqlamatun] that means boardmarker. The letter ز [zay] with the letter ج [jiim], for example, in the word زي مدرسي [ziyyun madrosiyyun] which means school uniform.

The phenomenon of phonology errors also occurs in pronouncing letters that must be read long or short. These pronunciation errors cause changes in the meaning of Arabic vocabulary, such as the word ثواب [tsawabun] which means reward for good deeds, with the word ثوب [tsaubun] that means clothes. In this study, linguists often mention that phonological errors in language learning are unavoidable because of interlingual factors and limited Arabic (intralingual) mastery. In addition to the Arabic language itself, several words have word derivations by covering the adjacent typeface ones, as a strong indication that the words are word forms that come from one variation, such as the word مكتب [maktabun] that means desk, with مكتبة [maktabatun] which means library.

Most students also face speaker vocal problems, as indicated by the teacher. Teachers or lecturers who carry out the learning process show an attitude that has mastered Arabic well, as evidenced by the fast pronunciation of Arabic words. This phenomenon causes students to have difficulty accepting Arabic vocabulary, which ultimately results in the slowness of students in understanding the meaning of the words they have heard.

Among the phenomena that occur in learning Arabic, it is important to realize that phonology or sound elements in language are the main elements [15]. Furthermore, it is impossible if program and language learning without teaching the elements of sound in it. Despite the importance of sound in teaching foreign languages, many Arabic teachers for non-Arabs do not have the correct language learning method. The teaching of sounds represents the difference between the three types of education, each representing the main goal of teaching Arabic sounds to speakers of other languages. In line with [16], which state that teaching the phonetic elements of language consists of three types, the first is perspective teaching, which aims to study the phonemic skills students acquire in their native language, which differ from Arabic sounds in many respects. This kind

of teaching focuses on improving skills and reducing as many forms of interference as possible so that learners acquire new phonetic skills to communicate in Arabic. Second, productive teaching aims for students to acquire new patterns from the language being taught, namely Arabic. It also trains them to pronounce sounds unmatched in their mother tongue's phonemic system. This type of teaching is not to correct students' linguistic patterns and eliminate forms of interference between two audio systems. However, the main objective is to acquire new audio skills in audio systems that are not yet familiar to students. Third, descriptive teaching aims to provide students with information about the Arabic language's characteristics and its phonetic characteristics. This type of teaching is not only to correct wrong patterns or practice new patterns but to familiarize students with the basic laws governing the use of linguistics in Arabic and the characteristics of its sound system.

Observing the importance of teaching phonetic elements is in line with the statement [17], which explains that language is a sound system. Humans do not invent writing except in the later stages of human life when the scope expands and space-time spreads further. Man is forced to record what he has about his ideas to communicate to speakers in distant places or those who come after him [9]. The acoustic aspect (sound waves) here means the presence of a speaker and a listener. Speaking and listening are among the most important language skills [18]. Therefore, these two skills should be given special attention in teaching Arabic to non-native speakers [19] in a natural order. Language skills begin with listening, speaking, reading, and writing [20].

### 3.1.2 Morphology and Its Teaching Solution

There is no dispute between language experts and teachers that vocabulary acquisition is the first thing to consider when learning a language [21]. Vocabulary learning plays an important role in foreign language learning [22], in this context, helping students infer the meaning of words [14]. Researchers face the phenomenon that the educational process at universities does not care about vocabulary mastery, so some students say that they often forget to mention the meaning of the vocabulary they have acquired and learned. On this basis, they cannot understand the expressions of lecturers or other students. This happens because learning Arabic only aims to achieve the desired goal, namely delivering educational materials that have been prepared and completing them within the time limit. Meanwhile, in practice, students have not mastered Arabic vocabulary well because the process of learning Arabic that is being followed is the first time, and they have not been able to participate optimally.

In terms of understanding Arabic vocabulary, students do not receive guidance from teachers to understand basic Arabic grammar. If there is a subject of morphology and syntax (grammar), then grammar is not taught properly. The grammar teaching that is carried out removes some grammatical and morphological topics from the educational material. This has an impact on the emergence of basic problems in teaching vocabulary. From this reality, it raises the problem that students begin to assume that there is freedom in using Arabic vocabulary, and they do not think that they should understand Arabic grammar when studying it, such as special rules in the use of *mudzakkar* (masculine) and *muannats* (feminine), singular or plural forms. For example, students feel free to say the sentences *ذلك سيارة* [*dzalika sayyarotun*] which means there is a car, and *هذا الجامعة* [*hadza*

*aljami'ah*) that means this is a campus. This phenomenon should not have happened. Because fundamentally, in the introduction of basic vocabulary, the basic rules of Arabic are also important.

In learning Arabic vocabulary, students do it by memorizing vocabulary. At the same time, by memorizing vocabulary, students are considered to have achieved the learning objectives, even if they are diligent in memorizing. Conversely, suppose they ignore the memorization process. In that case, they will master a small amount of vocabulary, which will also affect their weak ability because the age of students is no longer the right age to practice memorizing. However, language learning at the university level should not just memorize, and it is very important to be strengthened by language practice using the vocabulary that has been learned. Learning a language by rote method without practice will trigger the loss of mastery of the language from memory and, of course, hinder improving language skills.

Considering that vocabulary is an important component of language, one cannot ignore the importance of the position of vocabulary in the four language skills [23]. Starting from the importance of vocabulary in language learning motivates Arabic language teachers to teach vocabulary and introduce it early [22], as well as practice it in the language process [24]. Because learning vocabulary alone does not mean that the language learning process has been successful, but the mastery of vocabulary should be accompanied by language practice and continuous practice [3], and of course by paying attention to the appropriate Arabic morphological elements, so that the language expressed to be a true and correct expression.

### 3.1.3 Syntax and Its Teaching Solutions

If learning Arabic is to understand the content of Arabic, then studying grammar is very important [7]. Understanding Arabic grammar provokes a true understanding of Arabic. As for the educational process in universities, problems arise in understanding Arabic sentences because of the confusion experienced by students when they will arrange words into complete sentences, perfect sentences, and have understandable meanings. We ensure that understanding correct Arabic requires correct Arabic sentences and according to Arabic rules.

In this case, what often happens is that students are weak in Arabic grammar. They can speak Arabic, but in terms of the Arabic expressions they express are not following the correct Arabic rules, both in terms of word order, sentence style, sentence position, differences between verbs, subject and object sentences, word positions in sentences, adjustments verbs according to their time and subject, and separate and connected pronouns.

Besides that, the most important thing in learning a language is the order of words in sentences; in this area, students also face problems. Among the problems faced by students are matters relating to the arrangement of words in sentences, relating to syntactic elements, and when the word becomes a noun. When students do not understand the most important elements of language, they become weak in forming correct Arabic sentences. Their knowledge of sentence formation and composition is incomplete, so their linguistic production will also be weak. Moreover, the grammatical problems that arise among learners are also indicated by confusion in vocabulary composition.

This raises a phenomenon that leads to the emergence of interference and code-mixing accompanying students' language processes.

Discussions on grammatical issues have become difficulties in language teaching [25]. The difficulty of teaching grammar is not a product of our time but has deep roots in the history of Arab culture [26]. Grammar teaching is a major problem in teaching Arabic to native speakers, so it is certainly a bigger problem for non-Arabic speakers [27]. Often some Arabic teachers think that teaching grammar goes beyond its intended purpose, which has led to the emergence of sects in language teaching, that language learning is teaching grammar. Even though the main purpose of language learning is not to teach about language, and philosophically grammar is not a description of language teaching itself, language teaching is a process that teaches students to master the language with four language skills well [28].

Therefore, in the view of language education experts, the delivery of teaching materials should pay attention to the mastery of the language being studied [7]. At least students start mastering Arabic by learning Arabic vocabulary, and then they learn Arabic sentences based on their knowledge of Arabic grammar. Therefore, if students learn vocabulary well, with great vocabulary mastery, supported by a good understanding of grammar and language practice in a good language environment, then the effort to succeed in learning Arabic will be achieved [11]. That is, understanding vocabulary helps students a lot in learning Arabic grammar. Besides, the quality of knowledge of Arabic sentences can guide students on the effectiveness of learning Arabic [27].

### **3.2 Non-linguistic Problems in Arabic Learning**

Related to non-linguistic problems in learning Arabic, several things can be summarized in the description below:

#### **3.2.1 Exercise**

Based on the study results, it can be concluded that students feel there are obstacles in the Arabic language learning process because they lack and lack practice in language practice. Learning that takes place in the study room is monotonous. Only the delivery of material and even the main target of learning is to complete teaching materials, and even if there are practice questions, they are just working on questions. However, comprehensive enrichment has not been carried out. Meanwhile, language education experts emphasize that language training and practice are the main keys to success in language learning. In line with [29] that was learning a language – any language – must be practiced. This can be illustrated by the process of learning a language in children. In the early stages of language learning, a child goes through the stages of language by repeating what he hears, then follows it by repeating and babbling. Of course, the same is true for second-language learners. Learning a language is nothing but the formation of habits, and learning a language goes through the stages of habit formation until it is formed in the owner, becomes an inherent character, and does not fade easily. So practice is a requirement for first and second-language learning [30].

### **3.2.2 Habituation**

In learning Arabic among students, there is also minimal simulation. As previously explained, language practice and practice have an important role in language acquisition [31]. The sound the learner hears and the words repeated are expressions captured from the surrounding environment [32]. Thus, in learning Arabic, it is important to simulate and build language habituation, so that learners can follow and imitate the patterns that have been heard and make the language environment a model for language strengthening [33]. In line with [34], it is important to present a linguistic model to students so that language traditions can run and form language characters for students.

### **3.2.3 Good Understanding**

A good understanding of Arabic as a second language is the foundation of language learning [35]. Constraints and problems among students are the lack of mastery of vocabulary that will be used in language. An indication that learning is going well and someone can speak is the realization of the ability to express desires and goals with the language learned [10]. Because this is not easy, students must be equipped with a good understanding of the language being studied. In line with the language provision, it is important to pay attention to the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four language skills must be interrelated and strengthened with a good understanding of Arabic vocabulary [36].

### **3.2.4 Language Skills**

Students also face problems in mastering language skills. The problem is that when students master one language skill, they are sometimes weak in mastering other language skills. For example, it was found that there were students who stood out in speaking skills but were weak in writing skills. Based on this phenomenon, it is important to go through the stages of mastering language skills. That is, listening is a language skill that precedes other skills [20], so the stages of listening learning should be taught by teaching the correct language so that when speaking, students will imitate correctly and master other language skills can continue and with ease. Teaching vocabulary and proper and correct grammar. The success in mastering these language skills certainly cannot be separated from several non-linguistic techniques, such as those in the previous explanation.

## **4 Conclusion**

Learning a second language is not an easy process. In practice, language learning must go through long stages and processes. The study results found that the problems of learning Arabic include two aspects, namely, linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. In the linguistic aspect, it can be concluded that Arabic has different characteristics and characters from other languages, including the mother tongue of the majority of students. Therefore, in learning Arabic, it is very important to consider the mastery of language elements so that students can master the language well by following the correct and correct Arabic rules. As for the non-linguistic aspect, learning problems lead to steps



that are not in sync with the needs of learning a second language. For example, students do not get a forum for strengthening and mastering Arabic both in practice and building language traditions; this can indirectly reduce the effectiveness of understanding Arabic and improving language skills.

To realize success in learning Arabic requires a long process. If in the learning process there are problems and problems, it is really important to evaluate by presenting the right solution according to the needs of students. The solution that can be offered is to pay attention to teaching Arabic linguistic elements and to fulfill adequate needs to achieve Arabic learning. Thus, an Arabic teacher should master modern Arabic linguistics and learning and prepare technical and strategic things to make Arabic a language that is easy to master and learn by anyone, including students.

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