

The Impact Of Arabic Language Proficiency On Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy

Received 2025-06-29

Accepted 2025-12-09

Published 2025-12-27

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To cite this article: Bin Wan Daud, Wan Ab Aziz., Bin Abdul Ghani, Mohammad Taufiq., Binti Tai'tullah, Asma Salsabila., Ramlee, Shah Iskandar Fahmie., Bin Muhamad Yusoff, Mohd Akasyah. (2026). The Impact Of Arabic Language Proficiency On Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy. *Ijaz Arabi: Journ El Saeid, al of Arabic Learning*, 9 (1), 130-138, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18860/ijazarabi.V9i1.35028>

Abstract

This study examines the correlation between Arabic language competency and entrepreneurial self-efficacy, drawing insights from a qualitative analysis of 293 participants engaged in entrepreneurial endeavors. Although prior research has examined numerous factors influencing entrepreneurial confidence, the impact of language ability, particularly within Arabic corporate environments, remains inadequately investigated. This research employed thematic analysis of open-ended survey responses to identify the primary pathways through which Arabic language proficiency influences entrepreneurial self-efficacy. The results indicate three main dimensions: improved communication abilities (85%), augmented market access potential (67%), and bolstered professional confidence (63%). The analysis of respondent narratives suggests that language proficiency enhances entrepreneurial self-efficacy through several avenues, including improved business negotiations, heightened cultural competency, and expanded international networking capabilities. The research highlights substantial obstacles, notably the acquisition of technical vocabulary (78%) and insufficient practical exposure (72%), which are identified as primary impediments to effective corporate communication. These findings enhance both entrepreneurship development and language acquisition theory by providing a framework for understanding how language proficiency affects entrepreneurial confidence. The research has significant implications for professional development programs and language training initiatives, highlighting the need for integrated approaches that combine language acquisition with the development of practical entrepreneurial skills. This research provides valuable insights for language training institutions, corporate development initiatives, and aspiring entrepreneurs in Arabic-speaking regions.

Keywords: AR; Arabic Language Proficiency; Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy; Students Development; Language Acquisition

INTRODUCTION

Language competence is a critical factor in determining the success of an entrepreneur in the present global business scene. This is especially true in economically viable sectors such as markets that speak Arabic. According to Siddiqui et al. (2023), the significance of language proficiency in international company operations has increased, particularly with regard to the influence it has on the development of entrepreneurial qualities. In spite of the significance of the topic, there has been a paucity of study conducted on the connection between self-efficacy in business and competency in the Arabic language. The concept of entrepreneurial self-efficacy relates to an individual's belief in their capacity to successfully carry out the roles and responsibilities associated with being an entrepreneur. According to Graham (2022), it is commonly accepted as a strong indicator of both the intentions to engage in entrepreneurial activity and eventual success. The impact of language competence, particularly within Arabic business environments, has not been thoroughly addressed, despite the fact that numerous research have investigated the various aspects that influence entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Goossen (2006) emphasises the significance of combining theoretical knowledge with practical application in the field of entrepreneurship education. He also indicates that language competency is vital in the process of bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Language competency in business contexts extends beyond basic communication abilities, encompassing both cultural competence and specific business terminology (Warsame & Ileri, 2017). Due to the fact that cultural nuances and personal connections play a crucial role in shaping commercial partnerships in Arabic-speaking markets, having a strong command of the language is very necessary. According to the findings of recent research conducted by bin Wan Daud and colleagues (2024), a new paradigm for language entrepreneurship has emerged within Malaysian institutions. This paradigm highlights the growing recognition of the importance of language skills in the growth of entrepreneurial endeavours. For the purpose of this study, the theoretical framework incorporates sociolinguistic theory and literature on entrepreneurship. According to the findings of Graham's (2022) study on self-efficacy in language learning, linguistic competence may have a major impact on an individual's perception of their potential to be successful in business endeavours. There is a tremendous need for research in the field of the relationship between language proficiency and entrepreneurial confidence, particularly with regard to Arabic as a medium of communication in the business world. Despite the fact that the study focused mostly on English language situations, Naqvi (2020) discovered that there is a favourable link between language proficiency and entrepreneurship skills among Arab learners. While Mureşan and Paştii (2016) revealed that combined language and entrepreneurship training is successful, it is important to note that their research did not exclusively concentrate on Arabic language situations. Through the use of a qualitative analysis that includes 293 respondents, this study explores the influence of Arabic language ability on entrepreneurial self-efficacy. The respondents were recruited using the sampling process developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

The awareness of this link has substantial consequences for the development of programs that teach language skills, programs that teach entrepreneurship, and programs that teach international commerce. One way to improve methods for training entrepreneurs for success in Arabic-speaking markets is to have an understanding of the influence that language ability has on entrepreneurial self-efficacy. This is because global marketplaces are becoming more integrated.

METHOD

This study employed a purposive sampling technique followed by stratified random sampling to ensure comprehensive representation across Malaysian public universities offering Bachelor of Arabic Language programs. The sample size of 293 respondents was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling table, with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. From the total population of approximately 1,200 Bachelor of Arabic Language students across Malaysian public universities, five universities were selected: Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIAM), and Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM).

This study utilized a comprehensive sampling approach to ensure representative data collection across major Malaysian public universities offering Bachelor of Arabic Language programs. The research encompassed a total of 293 respondents, carefully distributed among five prestigious institutions. At Universiti Malaya (UM), 60 students participated, representing 20.5% of the total sample. Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) and Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA) each contributed 58 respondents, accounting for 19.8% of the sample respectively. The Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIAM) provided 59 participants (20.1%), while Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) contributed 58 respondents (19.8%). To maintain balanced representation across different stages of academic progression, the sampling strategy incorporated a systematic distribution across all years of study. The distribution was nearly equal, with 73 students (25%) each from the first, second, and final years, while the third year had a slightly higher representation with 74 students (25%). This balanced distribution across academic years was crucial for capturing perspectives from students at different stages of their Arabic language education journey, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of how language proficiency develops and influences entrepreneurial self-efficacy throughout the undergraduate program.

This stratified sampling approach ensured that the study captured a diverse range of perspectives and experiences from students across different geographical locations and academic stages in Malaysia. The relatively equal distribution among universities and academic years strengthens the representativeness of the sample and enhances the validity of the research findings. This careful attention to sample distribution helped minimize potential bias and ensured that the research findings would be applicable across the Malaysian higher education landscape in the context of Arabic language education and entrepreneurship.

The proportional distribution across both institutions and academic years provided a robust foundation for analyzing how Arabic language proficiency influences entrepreneurial self-efficacy at different stages of academic development and across various institutional contexts. This comprehensive sampling approach enhanced the study's ability to draw meaningful conclusions about the relationship between Arabic language proficiency and entrepreneurial development in Malaysian higher education. The respondents were selected based on specific inclusion criteria: current enrollment in a Bachelor of Arabic Language program, Malaysian citizenship, completion of at least one semester of study, and exposure to basic business Arabic vocabulary. The sampling process achieved an 83.7% response rate, with 293 completed responses from 350 distributed surveys. Data was collected through open-ended questions administered via an online survey platform, allowing respondents to provide detailed responses about their

experiences with Arabic language learning and its relationship to entrepreneurial activities.

The analysis of qualitative data, derived from open-ended responses collected through a quantitative approach involving 293 respondents, was carried out using a rigorous and systematic process with ATLAS.ti (version 22), a sophisticated qualitative data analysis software. The study adopted Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework, which was meticulously applied through the software's comprehensive analytical tools. The analysis process began with a thorough familiarization phase, where all responses were imported into ATLAS.ti and subjected to multiple careful readings. During this initial phase, the researchers created detailed memos capturing preliminary observations and insights. The software's word cloud feature was utilized to identify frequently occurring terms and patterns in the responses, providing an initial overview of potential themes.

In the second phase, the coding process was initiated using ATLAS.ti's coding features. The researchers developed an initial coding system through open coding, resulting in 156 distinct codes. The software's advanced features enabled systematic categorization and organization of emerging patterns in the data. The third phase focused on theme development, utilizing ATLAS.ti's network view functionality. This phase revealed three primary themes: Communication Enhancement, Professional Development, and Confidence Building. Under Communication Enhancement, sub-themes included business interactions, market negotiations, and cultural exchange. Professional Development encompassed technical vocabulary, business communication, and industry-specific terminology. The Confidence Building theme incorporated aspects such as public speaking, business presentations, and client interactions.

Theme review and refinement constituted the fourth phase, where ATLAS.ti's co-occurrence tools were extensively used to analyze relationships between codes and verify theme consistency. This process helped in identifying pattern codes and examining theme hierarchies, resulting in a comprehensive theme map that illustrated the interconnections between various aspects of Arabic language proficiency and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. The fifth phase involved theme definition and naming, utilizing ATLAS.ti's query tool to extract relevant quotations and establish clear theme boundaries. This phase was crucial in ensuring that each theme accurately represented the underlying data and contributed meaningfully to answering the research questions. The software's analytical capabilities enabled the researchers to validate theme names and definitions through systematic examination of associated quotes and codes.

Finally, the report production phase utilized ATLAS.ti's reporting features to generate comprehensive documentation of the analysis. This included theme frequency reports, code co-occurrence tables, network visualizations, and quote compilations. These analytical outputs provided a solid foundation for interpreting the findings and drawing meaningful conclusions about the relationship between Arabic language proficiency and entrepreneurial development. The utilization of ATLAS.ti throughout the analysis process enhanced the rigor and transparency of the study, providing a systematic approach to handling and analyzing the large volume of qualitative data. The software's sophisticated features enabled the researchers to maintain consistency in coding, establish clear relationships between themes, and generate comprehensive analytical outputs that supported the study's findings and conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of 293 responses revealed three major themes regarding the relationship between Arabic language proficiency and entrepreneurial development. Each theme is supported by direct quotations from respondents and analyzed through the lens of entrepreneurial capability development.

Facilitating Communication for Business Success

The analysis of responses indicated a remarkable finding: 85% of respondents (249 out of 293) underscored the essential significance of Arabic language skills in promoting entrepreneurship. The substantial majority emphasised that proficiency in the Arabic language is essential for corporate growth and market expansion. The issue of entrepreneurial facilitation prominently surfaced through direct business relationships and international market involvement. In direct business encounters, respondents repeatedly highlighted that competence in Arabic enhances the effectiveness and confidence of commercial negotiations. Respondent 45 from UIAM stated, "*mudah untuk berinteraksi*" [easy to interact], indicating that proficiency in Arabic alleviates communication barriers and fosters a more seamless corporate atmosphere. This feeling was reflected in numerous comments, suggesting that language competency not only aids fundamental communication but also permits sophisticated business talks and negotiations.

Respondent 87 from UMK underscored the global aspect of Arabic language ability, stating, "*melalui komunikasi dan interaksi internasional dengan negara luar*" [via communication and international interaction with foreign countries]. This viewpoint was corroborated by several other respondents who saw the capacity to participate in international marketplaces as a significant benefit of Arabic language fluency. The data indicates that students perceive proficiency in Arabic as a pathway to expanded market opportunities, especially in the Middle Eastern and North African countries.

Subsequent investigation indicated that participants esteemed Arabic language proficiency for its capacity to cultivate genuine business ties. Numerous participants highlighted that direct communication in Arabic facilitated the establishment of trust and credibility with prospective business partners. Respondent 156 from USIM remarked, "*boleh memahami kehendak pelanggan Arab secara langsung*" [can comprehend Arab customer wants directly], emphasising that linguistic proficiency facilitates a more profound comprehension of customer requirements and market demands.

The findings suggested that respondents saw Arabic language ability as more than merely a communication tool; it was perceived as a strategic asset for entrepreneurial success. This was apparent in comments that connected language proficiency to market insight, cultural comprehension, and the discovery of commercial opportunities. Proficiency in conducting commercial discussions in Arabic was often linked to enhanced capacity to recognise and exploit business possibilities in Arabic-speaking markets. This discovery has substantial consequences for comprehending the significance of language proficiency in entrepreneurial advancement, especially within the realm of international commerce. The significant proportion of responders highlighting this element indicates that fluency in the Arabic language is regarded as an essential facilitator of entrepreneurial endeavours, rather than only an ancillary ability.

Market understanding emerged as a critical component in the relationship between Arabic language proficiency and entrepreneurial success. The analysis revealed that participants consistently emphasized how language skills enable deeper market

comprehension and more effective business operations in Arabic-speaking markets. This understanding manifests in multiple dimensions of business operations and market engagement. The ability to understand customer needs accurately was highlighted as a crucial advantage of Arabic language proficiency. As articulated by Respondent 132 from UniSZA, "*memahami kehendak pelanggan dengan lebih tepat*" [understanding customer needs more accurately], suggesting that language proficiency enables entrepreneurs to grasp nuanced customer requirements and preferences. This direct understanding eliminates potential misinterpretations that might occur through translated or intermediary communications, thereby enhancing the quality of customer service and product development.

Direct communication with Arabic traders was another significant aspect emphasized in the responses. Respondent 156 from USIM noted "*boleh berkomunikasi dengan peniaga Arab secara terus*" [can communicate directly with Arab traders], highlighting the importance of unmediated business interactions. This direct communication capability was further emphasized by other respondents who described how it facilitates faster decision-making and more efficient business negotiations. For instance, Respondent 178 from UMK mentioned "*dapat mengenal pasti peluang perniagaan dengan lebih cepat*" [able to identify business opportunities more quickly], demonstrating how language proficiency accelerates market opportunity recognition.

The data also revealed that market understanding through language proficiency extends beyond mere transactional capabilities. Respondents emphasized how Arabic language skills enable them to comprehend market trends, consumer behavior patterns, and cultural nuances that influence buying decisions. This deeper level of understanding was reflected in responses such as that of Respondent 195 from UniSZA, who stated "*memahami budaya perniagaan Arab secara mendalam*" [understanding Arab business culture deeply], indicating that language proficiency facilitates cultural competence in business settings. Furthermore, participants highlighted how language proficiency enables them to conduct market research more effectively. The ability to read Arabic market reports, understand customer feedback, and analyze competitor strategies in their original language provides entrepreneurs with valuable insights that might be lost in translation. This aspect of market understanding was particularly emphasized by respondents who aimed to establish long-term business presence in Arabic-speaking markets.

The significance of market understanding through language proficiency was also evident in responses regarding product adaptation and market positioning. Entrepreneurs with Arabic language skills reported feeling more confident in adapting their products and services to meet local market preferences, as they could better understand customer feedback and market demands directly from the source.

Building Professional Confidence

The analysis of responses revealed significant insights into how Arabic language proficiency influences professional development and the challenges faced by aspiring entrepreneurs. A notable 63% of respondents (185 participants) reported a strong correlation between Arabic language skills and enhanced professional confidence, manifesting in both self-efficacy development and professional identity formation.

1. Self-Efficacy Development

The development of self-efficacy through Arabic language proficiency emerged as a crucial finding. As succinctly expressed by Respondent 23 from UM, "Jadi lebih yakin" [Become more confident], indicating how language mastery directly contributes to personal confidence. This sentiment was elaborated by Respondent 178 from UMK, who noted "*keyakinan meningkat apabila boleh berbual dalam bahasa Arab*" [confidence increases when able to converse in Arabic]. These responses suggest that the ability to communicate in Arabic serves as a catalyst for building self-assurance in professional settings.

2. Professional Identity Formation

The data revealed that Arabic language proficiency significantly contributes to professional identity development. Respondent 92 from UIAM emphasized this by stating "*dapat membezakan diri dalam pasaran*" [can differentiate oneself in the market], highlighting how language skills provide a competitive advantage. This perspective was reinforced by Respondent 215 from UniSZA, who observed that being "*lebih profesional dalam konteks perniagaan antarabangsa*" [more professional in international business context] demonstrates how Arabic language skills enhance professional credibility in international business settings.

Challenges and Development Needs

Despite the positive impact on professional confidence, the study identified significant challenges, with 78% of respondents (229 participants) highlighting specific areas requiring improvement. These challenges primarily centered around technical vocabulary acquisition and practical application needs. In the realm of technical vocabulary acquisition, respondents highlighted two major obstacles. Respondent 67 from USIM pointed out the challenge of "*perkataan yang jarang dijumpai dan digunakan*" [words that are rarely encountered and used], indicating a gap between academic language learning and practical business vocabulary. This was complemented by Respondent 143 from UM's observation about "*cabaran memahami dialek orang arab*" [challenge of understanding Arab dialects], highlighting the complexity of dealing with regional language variations in business contexts.

The need for practical application opportunities emerged as a crucial development area. Respondent 189 from UMK suggested "*sentiasa mengadakan satu program hari keusahawanan untuk pelajar belajar dan mencuba menjual beli dalam bahasa arab*" [always organizing an entrepreneurship day program for students to learn and try buying and selling in Arabic], emphasizing the importance of experiential learning. This was further supported by Respondent 234 from UIAM's recommendation for "*kursus international iaitu campuran dari pelbagai negara arab untuk berkomunikasi dengan baik*" [international courses mixing people from various Arab countries for good communication], highlighting the value of diverse, practical learning environments.

These findings suggest a complex interplay between language proficiency, professional development, and practical challenges. While Arabic language skills significantly boost professional confidence and identity formation, the path to effective business communication in Arabic requires addressing specific challenges through targeted practical training and vocabulary development programs.

Cross-Theme Analysis

The interconnection between themes revealed that respondents who reported higher confidence in Arabic language skills (Theme 2) were more likely to actively engage in business communication (Theme 1). This relationship was particularly evident

in responses such as: "*Apabila dapat berkomunikasi dengan baik, keyakinan untuk berniaga meningkat*" [When able to communicate well, confidence in doing business increases] (Respondent 267, UniSZA).

The analysis of 293 respondents indicates a complex relationship between Arabic language proficiency and entrepreneurial development among Malaysian university students. The results indicate three key dimensions: improved business communication skills (85% of participants), heightened professional confidence (63% of participants), and identified developmental challenges (78% of participants). The data indicates that proficiency in the Arabic language is not merely a communication tool; it acts as a strategic asset in entrepreneurial development, facilitating direct market engagement, cultural comprehension, and the formation of professional identity. The identified challenges, especially in technical vocabulary acquisition and practical application, highlight the necessity for more focused educational interventions. The research underscores the significance of combining practical business experiences with language acquisition, as indicated by participants' focus on experiential learning opportunities and global exposure. The findings provide important insights for the development of Arabic language curricula, indicating a necessity to connect academic language acquisition with practical business applications. The correlation between language proficiency and entrepreneurial self-efficacy highlights the significance of Arabic language skills in cultivating confident and competent entrepreneurs who can effectively engage in Arabic-speaking markets. This research establishes a basis for comprehending the role of language proficiency in entrepreneurial development and proposes methods for improving Arabic language education within entrepreneurial frameworks.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was funded by the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) under the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (MoHE) *FRGS/1/2023/SSI07/UMK/03/1* and Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK).

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