Language Learning Strategies of Non-Muslim Students Applied to Arabic Language Course Inside and Outside the Classroom

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Abstract
Students of foreign language require prior exposure to language learning strategy so that each of them positively perceives the target language. Thus, this research is conducted to identify the Arabic language learning strategy used by non-Muslim students in and outside the classroom. Research respondents comprise 37 non-Muslim students of the Law Faculty of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). Arabic language course SKVA2552 Preparatory Arabic Course for the Law Faculty is compulsory for all non-Muslim students in the first semester of the Bachelor of Law program at the Law Faculty in UKM. This research uses a questionnaire instrument based on the model theory of language learning strategy by Embi (2000). Research shows that all non-Muslim students who take the course do not know the basics of Arabic language and comprise of diverse races and ethnicity. Non-Muslim students prefer to use the learning strategy while in the classroom learning process rather than outside the classroom, with the highest mean value and standard deviation (mean=3.24; p=0.863) for item B7 'I request my friends to re-explain if I don't understand the teacher's explanation on the Arabic language'. Therefore, this research basically evaluates the teaching and learning process (T&L) of Arabic language among non-Muslim students to make it more approachable. The research implies that the basic Arabic language module can be purified to be simpler based on the target scope of non-Muslim students to improve Arabic language achievement for adjusting the course to be compulsory at the level of the entire university.
Keywords: Language Learning Strategy; Arabic Language Learning; Non-Muslim Students; Learning In The Classroom; Learning Outside The Classroom

INTRODUCTION
Learning the Arabic language as a foreign language is not easy for most individual students. As with other languages, it requires its own techniques to facilitate student comprehension besides maximizing language skills learned. However, certain learning approaches and strategies enable anyone of race and society to learn it. Strategy is a planned effort so that each transaction may be independently and more effectively applied. Likewise, with language learning, specifically, if given early exposure to some basic strategies which are simple in approach, it is not impossible, especially for non-Muslim students, to be interested in the target language, in particular, Arabic language.

Realizing the significant role of Arabic language, teaching and learning of Arabic language in schools is very much required beginning from primary school to higher levels. It is made an elective course in university besides being a compulsory course in some faculties (Mustapa & Arifin, 2012). Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) was the earliest university to stimulate the teaching of Arabic language at the public university level with the establishment of the Department of Arabic Studies and Islamic Civilization at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, UKM (Samah, 2009). However, learning of Arabic language only involves Muslim students while non-Muslims are exempted.

Learning of Arabic language requires neatly arranged learning strategies so that the target language may be independently interpreted by each individual. In a study by Ooi (1989) in a research by Mahamod and Mustapha (2007), it was stated that not all student failure in examination is due to laziness, and that in fact, some of them are more diligent in studying compared to students who get good results, but unfortunately, some fail due to not knowing effective learning strategies. Therefore, the issue is still on debate. Hence, studies relating to the excellence of contemporary issues in Arabic language learning are also assayed by local and international scholars, covering various issues such as the features of quality for Arabic teachers agreed by students and teachers (Mustapa et al., 2020), the effect of motivation on Arabic collocation knowledge through the mediating role of collocation learning strategies (Asbulah et al., 2020), translating acoustic prepositional deletion (APD) in the Quran with a critical analytical construction grammar approach (Mbaideen et al., 2020), criticism and new offers of methodology diversification in approaches of Arabic education research (Maimun, 2020), Arabic language-learning strategy preferences among undergraduate students (Brosh, 2019), analysis of m-Learning requirements in Arabic language learning (Yahaya et al., 2019), Arabic teaching model in multireligious classroom at the Buru regency (Amri et al., 2019), learning Arabic writing skill based on digital products (Mufidah et al., 2019), Arabic camps as an enhancement medium in Arabic language skill (Zailani et al., 2018), discussion of the usability of SEEQ in quality evaluation of Arabic secondary education in Malaysia (Mustapa & Arifin, 2015), negative transfer in Arabic language interference to learning English (Sabbah, 2015), the prospects of narrow reading in Arabic language for religious students (Islamic studies) (Mustapa, 2015), the measurement dimensions for Arabic language teachers in Malaysia (Mustapa & Zamri, 2014), as well as the attitudes of distance learning students at UKM's Faculty of Islamic Studies towards learning of Arabic language skill courses (Arifin et al. 2014).

Research by Damit and Seman (2011) and also Aladdin and Musa (2014) regarding the learning process of non-Muslims found that non-Muslim students face all sorts of difficulties and problems in learning Arabic language, in terms of writing, pronunciation and reading, because they do not know basics of Arabic language, do not even recognize Arabic letters, not to mention reading and writing it. They form the minority in learning Arabic language due to the majority of

students being Muslim students who already have some basic knowledge in Arabic such as being able to read al-Qur'an. The difference is that in the Law Faculty of UKM, all non-Muslim students are required to take Arabic language as a preparatory course in the first semester. This Arabic language is not directly used in learning law but they will be later exposed to Arabic terms and references in the Islamic law course (Aladdin & Musa, 2014).

There are some problems faced by non-Muslim students at the Law Faculty, among which is insufficient time to learn Arabic language. They need more time to familiarize themselves with it. Another problem is that they perceive learning Arabic language as a burden. Research by Aladdin (2012) explained that this is based on the fact that students are not given a clear explanation of the objective of learning Arabic language at the Law Faculty of UKM.

Thus, this research seeks to identify the learning strategies of Arabic language used by non-Muslim students in and outside the classroom as it is a basic requirement to know the Arabic language. In addition, learning Arabic language can help them to understand learning Islamic law and text as well as references in Arabic language for the following semester. Islamic laws for law students form almost 30% of the scope of the whole syllabus (Aladdin & Musa, 2014). Even though this percentage of the syllabus (course) is quite high, the circumstance which makes Arabic language compulsory at the Law Faculty is seen as appropriately emphasizing learning it in the initial semester.

Among the compulsory courses in Islamic law at the Law Faculty for non-Muslim students in the duration of their study are: Arabic Language I and II for Law Faculty (SKVA2562 and SKVA2572); Introduction to Islamic Law (UUUK1113); Islamic Criminal Law (UUUK2113); Islamic Family Law (UUUK2133); Muamalah (Economic Transactions) (UUUK2153); Islamic Banking and Takaful (Cooperative or Mutual Insurance Laws) (UUUK3153); Islamic Jurisprudence (UUUK3163); Shariah Evidence Law and Shariah Court Procedure I and II (UUUK4133 and UUUK4143). Therefore, to overcome the problem of comprehending learning materials of Islamic laws in Arabic, the Arabic language preparatory course is appropriately offered to non-Muslim students at the Law Faculty in the first semester to learn the basics of Arabic language. Learning this Arabic language emphasizes more on the aspects of writing and simple methods of using Arabic language. This is so that they can read materials such as Islamic law in Arabic and connect in comprehending what is learned. This skill of strategized learning enables attracting student interest in the target language to be more focused and proactive in their learning process. Besides, this strategy also helps to avoid a decline in learning Arabic language in the future as it is a compulsory course that requires a high commitment to continue studying.

Since its inception in the year 1984, the UKM Law Faculty achieved many successes in producing excellent students to build a great scholarship among its academicians. The Faculty's academic programs are a combination of Civil, Shariah and Customary laws. However, more courses are offered in Civil Law

compared to Shariah and Customary Laws. The approach taken is in line with the characteristics of Malaysian laws, which are pluralist in theory and practice. Even though the Malay language is the main medium of instruction at the bachelor degree level, English language is widely used in this Faculty as might be expected of the legal environment based on English Common Law. The goal of the Law Faculty is to provide for all students a thorough and quality as well as an enjoyable educational experience. The Law Faculty also aims, among other goals, to produce trained and capable graduates in various fields and practices including Shariah Law.

The Arabic language course offered in the Law Faculty differs from that offered in other public universities, as in the latter, it is offered as a foreign language, specifically Arabic language as an elective course to students. A research conducted in Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) explained that Arabic language at the basic level course is offered as an elective to students (Damit & Seman, 2010). Likewise, in the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM), due to the fact that almost all degree students are Malay Muslims and know the basics of Arabic language, even though some among them are of different races and ethnicity. Hence, it is a privilege for students of the UKM Law Faculty to take the available opportunity of studying Arabic language as the majority of them are non-Muslims.

This research focuses on the first semester course of non-Muslim students, that is, Preparatory Arabic Language (SKVA2552) outlined by the Law Faculty. Four learning outcomes for this course are: able to recognize the alphabet, ready to join the letters, able to write Arabic words and sentences well, and able to read Arabic writing. The textbook, *al-Asas fi Ta'lim al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah* (Ridzwan, 2013) serves as a guide and exercise book for non-Muslim students in the first semester. The syllabus for this course (SKVA2552) was prepared by its teachers who also act as course coordinators. Five important aspects emphasized in the first semester in learning the basics of Arabic language for non-Muslims at the Law Faculty include:

1. Letters of the Arabic alphabet such as (أ – ب – ت – ث - ج).
2. Transliteration such as (*alif*, *ba'*, *jamal*, *kitab*).
3. Shapes of letters such as (م - ﻤ - ﻢ : م).
4. Vowel marks such as (ٓ - - ُ).
5. General information such as (*maktabah* - مكتبة).

In order to ensure that non-Muslim students master the basics of Arabic language well, learning the skill of writing and recognizing Arabic letters is the initial step for beginners. This is so that they learn the way and method of writing Arabic properly as this language is uniquely written from right to left. Students will be able to write well if they are able to recognize the letters, write them, join them in writing, and write words and short sentences (Samah, 2009).

Some of the difficulties faced by non-Muslim students, based on direct observation at the beginners' level of learning Arabic language are:

1. Awkwardness to write Arabic from right to left which is different from most languages which are written from left to right.
2. Differentiating the written forms of an Arabic letter based on its position at the beginning, middle or end of a word, such as the letters (ع : ء - ـه - ـع).
3. Confusion in ascertaining the dots on Arabic letters such as (ج ح ب خ ت ث).
4. Difficulty in pronouncing Arabic words without transliteration.

The process of gaining skill and confidence in writing Arabic words takes some time for students (Samah, 2009). In order to overcome the non-Muslim student's weakness in the process of learning to write Arabic at the Law Faculty, the syllabus provides ready space in the textbook for repeated exercises of writing letters and words to familiarize students until they can recognize and remember the basics of Arabic language.

METHOD
This study selects a quantitative method in the form of a questionnaire. Descriptive analysis is used to set a more comprehensive framework. This questionnaire instrument was adapted based on several questions related to language learning strategy (LLS) by theorist Embi (2000). The theorist suggested further research to be conducted in different contexts, education levels, and conditions based on language learning process in Malaysia, a multicultural country consisting of three major ethnic groups namely Malay, Chinese and Indian. As a result, a set of questions was constructed in accordance with the respondents. The questionnaire was tested through a pilot study involving 30 students. It aims to identify the reliability of the questionnaire as a research instrument. The data obtained were analyzed using SPSS software. Next, the questionnaire was distributed in 2015 to 37 first year non-Muslim students in the Faculty of Law at UKM.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Based on a demographic analysis of students conducted, research finds that non-Muslim respondents' interest in Arabic language is due to some reasons, among which are: (i) They get to learn and understand a foreign language because it is interesting and enjoyable; (ii) They wish to gain more knowledge by learning a new language because of their interest in the field of languages; and (iii) They feel that Arabic language is unique due to its different and interesting pronunciation. Research results also find that the reasons for non-Muslim respondents' disinterest in Arabic language are the feeling that it is difficult to understand as they are not fluent in speaking it, leading to stress, and that they have no prior exposure to Arabic language and so they assume that it is not useful for them and their future.

This finding is similarly mentioned by Pintrinch and Schunk (1996) in a research by Yusri et al. (2010) that students who have no foundation in Arabic language view learning it as difficult. This is because they have no prior exposure to the Arabic language system. The assumption that the course is difficult will reduce their belief in achieving success in the course, depending on the level of assumption. According to the concept of expectation in the theory of expected value, most individuals will not continue to do a task which they expect to fail. They might be interested in a course and value it highly, but if they repeatedly meet with failure, they will not engage themselves in the course anymore.

In this research, 14 items are used to analyse Arabic language learning strategy adopted by non-Muslims in the classroom, using descriptive method of percentage, mean score and standard deviation to clearly elaborate the entire items for the research questionnaire. Research findings show that the learning strategy of non-Muslim students in the classroom is at an average level (mean=2.62, s.p=0.897). This shows that non-Muslim students at the beginner's level in learning Arabic as a compulsory course of the Law Faculty are still seeking for an appropriate way to recognize Arabic letters and learn the language by themselves. Learning a foreign language such as Arabic is something new for them as they have never been exposed to it.

Based on research results, the item at the highest level is the student requesting friends to re-explain if he did not understand the teacher's explanation on Arabic language. This sharing of information and repeating pronunciation of Arabic words facilitates them in the language skills acquisition process. However dependence on the teacher and friends is not encouraged in the long term as learning a language requires strategy and self-reliance as stated in a study by Domakani et al. (2012) that language learning strategy is the responsibility of the student to comprehend the language directly in order to be more independent.

This finding also explains that in learning Arabic, non-Muslim students do not like to or seldom do exercises in their workbook beforehand. They also do not like to read their Arabic workbook before class starts. Hence, self-learning is seldom applied by non-Muslim students at the Law Faculty, causing the majority of them to take a long time to recognize Arabic letters when spontaneously questioned by their teacher or remain quiet in class. This, therefore, shows a lack of practicing language learning strategy in the class by non-Muslim students.

Based on research results, some language learning strategies are suggested to be practised in class by non-Muslim students as a first step to familiarizing with Arabic language, as follows: (i) Constantly read and do revision in the workbook early before class starts; (ii) Sit in the front row in class to facilitate the language skills acquisition process in class, in order to understand pronunciation of letters and words more accurately; (iii) Focus when the teacher is teaching and give full attention to the rules of writing Arabic letters; and (iv) Be active in class by asking teacher directly to obtain explanation and voluntarily answer questions on Arabic language.

Next, analysis of Arabic language learning strategy outside the classroom among non-Muslim students involves 18 items which display percentage distribution, results of mean value and standard deviation. Research findings show that the overall strategy item of non-Muslim students in learning Arabic outside the classroom is at a low level (mean=2.13, s.p=0.891). This is due to a lack of self-involvement among students outside the classroom based on the items used. In the classroom, they learn formally and are able to directly ask the teacher and friends questions for explanation, whereas outside the classroom, they are not excited to learn language and as if at a dead end when revising alone. Findings also show, among other things, that only a minority of non-Muslim students use strategy outside the classroom, by recording new words learned as an early step to recognize, understand and remember Arabic language. However, the level of practising strategy outside the classroom for non-Muslim students is recorded here as still low.

Additionally, using or referring to a dictionary is the most disliked strategy by the non-Muslim students, they are more comfortable asking the teacher directly concerning any words not understood. Based on research results, there are some language learning strategies outside the classroom which are easy to practise as a first step in learning Arabic language as follows: (i) Constantly pronounce Arabic words learned for the day; (ii) Use electronic media as facilitator or temporary 'teacher'; (iii) Make notes and do exercises on Arabic given by the teacher; and (iv) Frequently revise Arabic language such as repeating pronunciations to familiarize with pronunciating letters and words. Generally, a study by Rubin (1975) on strategy believed to be successfully used by language students in the process of language learning, listed down seven characteristics of successful language students, as follows:

1.   A good language student is constantly ready and an accurate predictor who is able to efficiently collect and store information and pointers.
2.   He is strongly motivated to learn, communicate and ready to get the message.
3.   He is open to making mistakes in learning and communicating.
4.   He is focused on linguistic patterns.
5.   He seizes all opportunities for training.
6.   He monitors his and others' speech and actively takes part even though he is not called to participate.
7.   He prioritizes meaning, not only structure or grammar.

As for strategy in the classroom, non-Muslim students can practice some simple strategies in the beginning to build interest in Arabic language, such as:

1.   Constantly pronounce and do revise workbook exercises earlier before class begins.
2.   Be seated in the front row of class to facilitate the language skills acquisition process in order to more accurately understand pronunciation of letters and words.

3. Focus on the teacher who is teaching such as giving full attention to the rules of writing Arabic letters.
4. Be active in class by asking teacher directly to obtain explanations and voluntarily answer questions on Arabic language.

This research also finds some strategies which can be used by non-Muslim students outside the classroom throughout the process of learning Arabic, as follows:
1. Constantly pronounce Arabic letters learnt for the day.
2. Use electronic media as a facilitator or temporary 'teacher'.
3. Make notes and do Arabic exercises given by teacher.
4. Frequently revise Arabic language such as practising pronunciation to make it easier to pronounce the letters and words.

CONCLUSION
Generally, there is little research on learning Arabic language by non-Muslim students. It is undeniable that many institutions in Malaysia, particularly Public Universities have taken proactive measures in offering Arabic language to students to fulfill the requirement for a compulsory or elective course. Generally, in learning a foreign language other than one's own mother tongue, it is very important to emphasize language learning strategy. Therefore, various strategies among non-Muslims need to be studied in order to better categorise them based on acceptance of Arabic language by non-Muslim students. This is so as to achieve the the objective of assisting non-Muslims to learn Arabic in an easier and practical manner. In addition, students who wish to learn another foreign language may also be assisted by the basic exposure to some simple strategies for them to approach the target language. It is hoped that this research will facilitate non-Muslim students with some language learning strategies as attraction to learning foreign languages, particularly Arabic language.

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