

Opportunities and Challenges of Acquiring Arabic as a Second Language (Psycholinguistic Studies in Arabic Language Learning)

Majda Qudsiyatul Malikh

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia
majdaqudsiatul@gmail.com

Ihsan Muhammad Saefullah

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia
ihsanmcu1@gmail.com

ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل فرص وتحديات اكتساب اللغة العربية كلغة ثانية لدى طلاب برنامج دراسة تعليم اللغة العربية في جامعة عمان مولانا مالك إبراهيم ملانج. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تعكس هذه الدراسة أيضا المبادرات التي اتخذها الطلاب للتغلب على محدودية معرفتهم ومهاراتهم في اللغة العربية. باستخدام المنهج النوعي الوصفي وباستخدام نوع من البحث الميداني، تم جمع البيانات من خلال الملاحظة والمقابلات. تتضمن مصادر البيانات الأولية مشاركة الطلاب وقادة برنامج دراسة تعليم اللغة العربية كأطراف لها دور في السياسة، بينما يتم الحصول على البيانات الثانوية من الوثائق والمجلات ذات الصلة. أظهرت النتائج أن هناك ثلاث فرص يمكن أن يستغلها الطلاب في عملية اكتساب اللغة العربية كلغة ثانية، وهي: (١) إثراء مواد المناهج الدراسية، (٢) الاستفادة من بيئة التعلم، (٣) الدعم الأكاديمي. من ناحية أخرى، تشمل التحديات التي يواجهها الطلاب: (١) التدخل اللغوي، (٢) الاختلافات الكبيرة بين اللغة الأولى واللغة الثانية، و (٣) تنوع الخلفيات التعليمية للطلاب. تصف هذه الدراسة أيضا ثلاث خطوات اتخذها الطلاب للتغلب على التأخر في المعرفة والمهارات العربية، وهي: (١) المشاركة بنشاط في أنشطة التعلم الجماعي باللغة العربية، (٢) المشاركة في أنشطة اللغة شبه المنظمة (BSO) في الحرم الجامعي، و (٣) طلب دعم إضافي من خلال دروس اللغة العربية الخاصة خارج بيئة الحرم الجامعي.

الكلمات الرئيسية: الأخطاء اللغوية، الفرص والتحديات، اكتساب اللغة العربية

Abstract

A This study aims to analyze the opportunities and challenges of acquiring Arabic as a Second Language in students of the Arabic Language Education Study Program at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. In addition, this study also reflects the initiatives taken by students to overcome the limitations of their knowledge and skills of Arabic. With a qualitative approach descriptive method and using a type of field research, data were collected through observation and interviews. Primary data sources involve the participation of students and leaders of the Arabic Language Education Study Program as parties who have a role in policy, while secondary data are obtained from related documentation and journals. The results showed that there are three opportunities that can be utilized by students in the process of acquiring Arabic as a second language, namely: (1) Enrichment of curriculum materials, (2) Utilization of learning environment, and (3) Academic support. On the other hand, the challenges faced by students involve: (1) Language interference, (2) Significant differences between First Language and Second Language, and (3) Diversity of students' educational backgrounds. This study also describes three steps taken by students to overcome the lag in Arabic knowledge and skills, namely: (1) Actively participate in Arabic group learning activities, (2) Participate in language Semi-Organization (BSO) activities on campus, and (3) Seek additional support through private Arabic lessons outside the campus environment.

Keywords: Language Errors, Opportunities and Challenges, Arabic Language Acquisition

Introduction

The phenomenon of human culture that continues to evolve over time is known as Language. It is said that language is an inexhaustible subject to learn, both from the point of view of the concept of language and the use of language in everyday life (Pallawagau & Rasna, 2022). In the study of language, there is a universal grammar concept that states that all languages have similarities in their grammatical structure. This means that there are similar patterns or structures in different languages that make it easier for a person to understand and master more than one language (Hidayah, 2019). That is, an understanding of grammar in one language can help in understanding grammar in another language (Mardiana et al., 2021). The question is whether these two elements, language acquisition and learning, can be done simultaneously or whether they should be seen as separate systems (Pallawagau & Rasna, 2022).

Most research supports the idea that the two are interrelated and can interact. For example, when a person learns a new language through the learning process, the



understanding of grammar and vocabulary that has been acquired in the process of acquiring his first language can provide a solid foundation. On the other hand, the experience of learning a new language can also affect how a person communicates in his first language. So, although the processes of language acquisition and learning differ in how and when they occur, they are not completely separate systems. Both can harmonize each other and have an impact on the development of one's language skills. It shows the flexibility and complexity in the acquisition of human language as well as its relevance in the context of learning and communicating in language.

Research on Arabic acquisition has been explored with various focuses. Some of the previous research that can be explained involves the following considerations: Communication skills through language system conformity are considered a difficult challenge to develop. Findings from Huda's research on the acquisition model of Arabic as a second language show that in general, Arabic is often considered a foreign language, not as a second language. In short, there is a postulate that proportional use of Arabic as a second language can be difficult (Huda, 2017).

However, research conducted by Faiqoh on phonological acquisition shows that the process of acquiring Arabic often occurs in language classes, not only in social interactions in the environment around which learners communicate. (Faiqoh, 2014) Anshari also emphasized that the success of grammar acquisition and the ability to feel the language can be measured by the learner's ability to communicate fluently with native speakers who use the language (Anshari, 2018).

This shows the importance of language practice in real situations with native speakers. In interactions with native speakers, learners have the opportunity to test their understanding of grammar and language meaning in real situations. Thus helping them develop language intuition and improve the ability to communicate well in the language learned. In other words, interaction with native speakers is an important step in the process of effective language acquisition.

Based on the above information, the researcher details the following questions: 1) What are the opportunities and challenges in acquiring Arabic faced by UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang students 2) What are the steps taken by students who do not have experience learning Arabic to catch up with their peers. Therefore, this study aims to identify the opportunities and challenges faced by students in acquiring Arabic as a second language in the university environment. In addition, this study will discuss the initiatives taken by students to overcome the limitations of their knowledge and skills of Arabic.

Method

This research is a qualitative field research, where researchers are directly involved in small-scale research and make observations and participation in local culture. The approach used is a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, because the purpose of this study is to describe the opportunities and challenges of acquiring Arabic as a second language, as well as to reveal how the policy of the Arabic learning program at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang overcomes these challenges.



Data collection techniques involve observation, interview, and documentation methods.

Data sources in this study are divided into two categories: primary and secondary. Primary data were obtained through observations and interviews with Arabic Language Education students in the third semester of the 2023/2024 Academic Year and study program leaders, namely the Chairman and Secretary of the Arabic Language Education Study Program FITK UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. The secondary data is in the form of documentation, books, and journals relevant to this study. Data analysis techniques follow the model of Miles and Huberman, carried out in three stages, namely: (1) data collection; (2) data reduction; (3) presentation of data, and drawing conclusions.

Results and Discussion

1. Language Acquisition

Language acquisition is a natural process by which individuals, especially in childhood, unconsciously develop the ability to understand and use their mother tongue (Aljumah, 2020). This process takes place without the need for formal lessons or conscious effort. During language acquisition, individuals intuitively understand grammar, vocabulary, phonology, and other aspects of their language, and they can communicate fluently in their native language without difficulty. Meanwhile, a second language is a language learned after individuals acquire their mother tongue (Sun, 2019). This can happen in a variety of contexts, such as learning a foreign language at school, when someone moves to a country with a different language, or when interacting in a work environment with a different language. Second language acquisition often requires conscious effort, including learning grammar, vocabulary, as well as speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in a second language.

It is important to understand the difference between language acquisition and language learning, where the former takes place without conscious effort, while the latter involves formal effort and explanation. Both of these processes have an important role in the development of an individual's language skills, and understanding them will provide better insight into how humans learn and use language. The difference between language acquisition and second language acquisition is fundamental and affects the way individuals learn and master language. Language acquisition refers to the natural process by which individuals, especially in childhood, intuitively and subconsciously develop the ability to understand and use their mother tongue (Merita & Syahroni, 2019). This process takes place in the absence of formal lessons or instructions. During language acquisition, individuals automatically understand grammar, vocabulary, phonology, and other aspects of language, so that they can communicate in their mother tongue smoothly (Budiharso, 2019).

On the other hand, second language acquisition is the process of learning an additional language after individuals have acquired their mother tongue. Second language acquisition often occurs in formal contexts, such as school or language



courses, and involves conscious effort in understanding grammar, vocabulary, and speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in a second language (Abdullaev, 2021). This process is more focused on the technical aspects and rules of the language, and often involves structured learning. The main difference between the two is that language acquisition occurs without conscious effort and is more focused on intuitive understanding, while second language acquisition involves conscious effort in learning additional languages. During second language acquisition, individuals need to learn a second language with the help of formal instruction and instruction. Understanding these differences is important in the context of language education and second language learning, as it can influence the teaching methods and approaches used in the teaching-learning process.

2. Opportunities for Acquiring Arabic as a Second Language

Indonesia has not fully succeeded in making Arabic a second language. Nevertheless, efforts to develop Arabic continue in the country. Arabic language acquisition can occur if the learning process is able to optimize interaction in the student's daily environment. In this context, the language environment becomes very important (Rizqi, 2016). In an era of globalization and closer international relations, understanding Arabic has significant value. Therefore, efforts to facilitate more effective Arabic learning in order to learn Arabic require stronger integration between the language learning and the students' daily environment. This concept is known as a linguistic environment, where Arabic learning can take place in students' everyday contexts, allowing them to more easily understand and use Arabic as a language of everyday communication in addition to Indonesian.

The language environment is a multifunctional container that allows students to directly practice the language they have learned in class. A child who regularly interacts using Arabic in everyday life will be more likely to be able to remember and understand the meaning of the material that has been taught before (Yusuf, 2019). This, the language environment has a very important role in the process of language acquisition. This is because the language environment not only facilitates language learning, but also helps encourage stronger practical application of what has been learned, which in turn will help their language acquisition and improve their Arabic language competence.

Environments that support language acquisition can be grouped into two types, namely formal language environments and non-formal language environments (Afrianti et al., 2022). In a formal language environment, learners are consciously introduced to the nature and original form of words, as well as how they are used in everyday life. This provides a deeper understanding of the structure and systematic use of the language, which provides a solid foundation for understanding the rules and structures of the Arabic language. In addition to the formal environment, language learners also need to experience an informal environment (Ainin, 2011). In that environment, learners can use Arabic in totality with peers, and teachers who are there provide practical opportunities for learners to apply what they have learned in real-world situations. The combination of the



two allows learners to achieve higher levels of language proficiency and accelerates their language acquisition process.

With the Arabic environment in the second language classroom, second language learning can actually be a process of acquiring Arabic, just like the acquisition of the first language that has been mastered by previous learners. It is therefore important for educational institutions and individuals to ensure that both formal and informal types of language environments are available and well integrated in Arabic language learning. In addition to the language environment, reviewing the environment of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, especially in aspects of its academic culture, will reveal significant differences when compared to public campuses. This is due to the status of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang as an Islamic university that carries out religious principles and values in various aspects of campus life. In this context, there are very strong religious nuances in the learning process, which creates opportunities for the acquisition of a strong Arabic language. Some of the opportunities that can be identified in this context include:

a. Enrichment of Curriculum Materials

UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, with its superior vision and deeply held international reputation, has managed to become a distinctive feature among other state Islamic universities. One of the keys to its achievements is the excellent programs that characterize this campus. Two excellent programs that should be exemplified are Mahad and language development and international classes. The Mahad program has provided students with a strong foundation in Islamic religious understanding and Arabic language skills. Through the compulsory mahad program for one semester, students are given the opportunity to explore aspects of Islam and Arabic in more depth, creating a solid foundation in understanding Islamic teachings.

In addition, UIN Malang also offers a Special Program for Arabic Language Development (PKPBA), which gives students the opportunity to better understand and master Arabic. Interviews with five students showed that campus learning policies, including the PKPBA program, had helped them acquire Arabic language skills. This proves that the UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang campus is able to create an effective language environment that supports the acquisition of Arabic.

b. Learning Environment

Environment is a very important factor in the development of language skills (Afrianti et al., 2022). In the context of language learning, it shows that environmental factors in the form of teacher support and peer support, have a role in the success of language acquisition. From the results of interviews and observations that have been conducted, it is proven that a conducive language learning environment has a significant impact. When teachers provide the right support and facilities in class, students tend to feel more motivated and comfortable practicing the language they are learning. In addition, support from peers is also very valuable. When supportive peers can motivate each other to practice and speak Arabic more actively. This creates a language environment that facilitates the language acquisition process.



c. Academic Support

Success in the world of education cannot be separated from the supporting factors. One of the key factors that play a major role is the quality of educators. The success of Arabic language learning at UIN Malang is highly dependent on the competence and quality of existing educators. Educators who are competent in teaching Arabic have a significant impact on the acquisition of Arabic as a second language by students. They play a role in guiding, motivating, and inspiring students to develop their Arabic language skills. With the support and guidance of qualified educators, students' chances of obtaining Arabic as a second language will increase, and this is an important factor in achieving the desired educational goals at UIN Malang.

3. The Challenge of Acquiring Arabic as a Second Language

In second language acquisition, which cannot always be identified with first language acquisition, learners will experience a stage referred to as "intermediate language". This intermediate language refers to the second language used by learners, but has similarities to the first language system they have mastered before. This concept, as proposed by (Ainin, 2011) reflects a transitional stage in the process of learning a second language.

This intermediate language phenomenon often occurs because learners do not yet have a perfect understanding of the second language they are learning, so they combine elements of their first language with a second language. The reasons behind this can vary, including their limited knowledge of a second language, limited opportunities to use a second language in everyday communication, and a sense of comfort in using their first language. The challenges faced by a learner when in language class include:

a. Different Language Interference Processes

Language interference is the process by which second language learners tend to influence the target language they learn with elements of their first language. This can happen to varying degrees, and the intensity of language interference can differ depending on the learning environment. In formal language environments, such as classrooms with teachers who provide clear grammar guidance, language interference may be more controlled and less frequent. On the other hand, in non-formal language environments, such as everyday interactions with peers outside the classroom, language interference tends to be more dominant and may be more difficult to avoid. Thus, the degree of language interference can vary according to the learning context, and teachers need to understand these different roles in the second language acquisition process.

As a result of these symptoms, both in the context of formal and non-formal language environments, researchers managed to collect several phrases and sentences through observation. Then, those phrases and sentences are analyzed to identify language patterns that appear in the Arabic language process.



Table 1. Changes in words, phrases, and sentences in the language process

Types of Changes	Form of Change	Change
Word	Change of isim maf'ul to isim fa'il	هو ذلك غير مفهوم
Phrases	Noun phrases	أنا فقط
Sentence	Use of foreign elements	لا تكن مثل ذلك لاه!

Referring to Brown's error theory, one of the language errors in the context of learning is intralingual transfer. If you look at the patterns found, researchers can conclude that UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang students still use Arabic that is not right, so that in the language used there are still errors in the language process.

The first mistake is the error in excessive use of words, especially the repetition of Muftada and Khobar in one sentence. Supposedly, in one sentence there is only one Muftada and Khobar. In addition, there is a vagueness in the word "huwa," which should serve to refer to the previous word. By correcting the sentence, the correct sentence is simply "huwa ghoiru mafhum," which eliminates unnecessary repetition in the sentence.

In addition, the phrase "هو ذلك غير مفهوم" lies in the change of the form of isim maf'ul to isim fa'il. Isim maf'ul is a noun that gets action from a verb, while isim fa'il is a noun that performs an action or acts as a subject in a sentence. In the sentence, the word "مفهوم" is isim maf'ul from the verb "فهم" which means "understood." However, in the context of this sentence, isim fa'il should be used, which would make the sentence "هو ذلك غير مفهوم", where "هو" (he/it) is the subject who performs the action, and "مفهوم" is isim fa'il meaning "understood" or "understandable." So, the fault lies in changing isim maf'ul to isim fa'il in the sentence. A correct sentence should use isim fa'il, not isim maf'ul, to convey the correct meaning.

The second error in the sentence "Ana faqot" is its incompetence, where the word "faqot" should not be needed in the sentence. The correct and sufficient sentence is "Ana," without the need to pair it with the word "faqot." The third error in Arabic acquisition can be caused by various factors related to the Arabic learning process itself, including materials, methods, and other aspects related to learning. For example, in the phrase "la takun mitsla dzalik laah," there is the Arabic word "lah" which originally came from Indonesian. The word "lah" is often uttered by some Arabic teachers unintentionally, and this can result in the word being embedded in the learner's mind.

b. Significant Differences between First and Second Languages

The difference between the first language (Indonesian) and the second language (Arabic) is significant. Indonesian is an agglutinative language, which means that a word in Indonesian consists of a root and affix, and the relationship between the root and affix is clear and structured. In contrast, Arabic is a flexional language, in which one single word can have many different meanings, but cannot be used to distinguish parts from another. That is, in Arabic, changes

in words are often used to express meaning, whereas in Indonesian, word structure is more tied to roots and affixes. This difference creates its own challenges in understanding and mastering Arabic as a second language, because the structure and grammar of Arabic is different from Indonesian.

c. Diversity of Student Educational Backgrounds

Language acquisition problems can also arise due to differences in students' educational backgrounds, which is a common problem in every study group and needs to be solved immediately. Differences in educational background can cause various problems or learning difficulties in students. Because students have varying levels of understanding of the material, some find some material easy or ordinary, while others may find it difficult. This gap in understanding is one of the challenges in learning. In a situation like this, a teacher is expected to overcome differences in understanding so that the material taught can be well received by all students. The results of observations and interviews with Arabic Language Education students who have diverse backgrounds, such as alumni of vocational / high school or who have little knowledge and ability about Arabic, show that sometimes they have difficulty in following certain material, even if the material is considered easy by their peers. This emphasizes the importance of learning approaches that can adapt to the diverse levels of understanding among students.

4. Student Efforts in Pursuing Arabic Language Acquisition

Students who feel left behind in acquiring their Arabic language skills are very important to actively try to catch up. Otherwise, they will fall behind in the learning process compared to other friends. Indirectly, conditions like this encourage those who have limited knowledge and ability of Arabic to be more committed to learning. From the results of interviews that have been conducted by researchers, it can be concluded that there are several ways done by them to catch up. Some of the activities or activities they do include:

a. Join an Arabic Study Group

In an effort to catch up, students can plan joint activities that focus on understanding Arabic. This method can be realized through class coordination or the formation of study groups. Students who already have a better understanding of Arabic can help friends who feel left behind. However, the success of this activity largely depends on the mutual commitment of all group members. Activeness, cooperation, and high commitment are the keys to carrying out this group learning activity effectively.

b. Join Language Development Program on Campus (BSO Al Kindy)

In addition to studying in groups with classmates, to improve their knowledge and skills in Arabic, students can join the Semi-Autonomous Agency (BSO) for languages available on campus. For example, Al Kindy, one of the Semi-Autonomous Bodies (BSO) managed by the Student Association of the Arabic Language Education Study Program at UIN Malang, provides a platform for the development of the Arabic language. Joining BSO Al Kindy's activities has several advantages, including gaining new knowledge and expanding social networks.



This activity is usually guided by experienced colleagues and often involves a variety of interesting language events. However, one possible drawback is that the majority of participants who join this BSO already have a sufficient knowledge base of Arabic, so the focus is more on developing skills than beginners.

c. Taking Private Arabic Lessons Outside the Campus Environment

Private tutoring or taking an off-campus Arabic course is one of the popular options for those looking to improve their knowledge of Arabic. Arabic course institutes usually offer programs that focus on basic understanding of Arabic grammar and the use of simple conversation in everyday life. However, this tutoring program is generally general and not always specific related to the course material taught on campus. Therefore, students need to consider whether the course program suits their needs and learning goals.

Conclusion

The development of Arabic as a second language in Indonesia is still not fully realized, but efforts to develop Arabic remain relevant and relevant. In the midst of the era of globalization and increasingly close international relations, understanding Arabic has significant value. Therefore, a strong integration of Arabic learning with students' daily lives in the concept of a language environment is very important. The language environment plays a very crucial role in the process of language acquisition, especially if it can be realized in formal and non-formal environments. Formal environments provide an in-depth understanding of the structure and use of Arabic, whereas non-formal environments allow the practice of Arabic in real-world situations. The combination of these two environments can accelerate the acquisition of Arabic.

From the description above, it can be concluded that opportunities for acquiring Arabic in second language classes include: 1) Improvement of curriculum materials, 2) Learning Environment, and 3) Academic Support. Some of the challenges that may be faced by learners of Arabic as a second language include: 1) The existence of a language interference process, 2) Significant differences between First and Second Languages, and 3) Diversity of students' educational backgrounds. Meanwhile, some steps that students can take to catch up in Arabic knowledge and skills include: (1) Participation in Arabic group learning activities, (2) Joining the Semi-Autonomous Agency (BSO) on campus, and (3) Taking private Arabic lessons outside the campus environment.

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