

Correlation Between Level of Grammar Proficiency and Arabic Speaking Skills of Diploma Students At UiTM

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Abstract

Grammar proficiency is one of the important aspects of speaking skills. The disadvantage of mastering grammar is a phenomenon that often occurs in learning Arabic as a third language. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify there is a significant relationship between the level of Arabic grammar proficiency and the mastery of language language skills of diploma-level students who are taking Arabic courses as a third language at MARA University of Technology (UiTM). This study is a quantitative survey and the data is analyzed in inference. The sample of the studies involved in this study was 350 people out of a total population of 1973 students. The findings of the study obtained through the Pearson r correlation test against both variables found that there was a high correlation relationship ($r = 0.508$). It meant that when the mastery of the students' Arabic grammar increased, the mastery of the students' speaking skills increased at the same time. The results of this study are important in explaining the relationship between the phenomena that occur in the problem of learning Arabic grammar and Arabic language skills. Therefore, further studies are suggested that the study on Arabic grammar be expanded and expanded by studying the relationship of Arabic grammar mastery on other aspects such as reading skills, writing skills or listening skills.

Keywords: Arabic Language, Third Language, Arabic Grammar, Arabic Speaking Skills, UiTM

Introduction

In mastering the Arabic language well, there are several important aspects that need to be understood and mastered, including aspects of the qawaid (grammar), vocabulary, speech, and so on. There is no denying that Arabic grammar plays an important role in the formation of sentence structure and in determining the meaning of an Arabic phrase. Typo and the line of words will result in a change of meaning. Thus, determining the letters and lines in an Arabic word is highly dependent on the knowledge of Arabic grammar. Aspects of Arabic grammar are important for the purpose of understanding the content of the Holy Quran, as well as understanding and interpreting an Arabic text. A more serious emphasis on grammatical aspects can help students get more accurate and correct explanations in

knowing the use of Arabic grammatical aspects. The mistakes that occur in the teaching and learning process need to be studied and evaluated in order to obtain a specific solution to the issue of Arabic grammar.

Speaking skills are one of the basic skills in language learning apart from reading, writing and listening skills. Speaking is the ability to pronounce sounds or words to express, express and convey thoughts, perceptions and ideas (Tarigan, 1981). While Isa (2015) defines speaking skills as meaning a person's high ability in conveying messages, ideas, or information according to the correct language, appropriate word selection and perfect grammar. The mastery of these speaking skills develops according to the development of age or learning period. The most appropriate language learning is at an early age because the factors of age, gender, environment and physical condition affect a person's language acquisition (Nahar & Rahman, 2018). Mastery of good speaking skills is said to have been achieved when the speaker is able to pronounce the correct sound and meaning and is able to convey thoughts or ideas that suit the listener's needs based on the context (Lim, 2011).

Speaking skills in language learning are oral skills that need to be mastered by a person in order to improve mastery of an optimal target language. Achieving the ability to speak Arabic effectively requires a good mastery of Arabic grammar. The main role of the emergence of grammar is to correct the language. Therefore, one of the purposes of learning Arabic is to correct the tongue to avoid mistakes in the aspects of speaking, reading and writing (Jaafar et al., 2019). Grammatical mistakes are mistakes made when building words and forming the correct sentence structure in a language. Similarly, in speaking Arabic, the weakness of building language structure or the use of grammar is a factor that makes it difficult for students to master speaking skills (Misnan & Ghazali, 2019).

Problem Statement

There are many grammatical mistakes that students often make either consciously or unconsciously, especially in the construction of Arabic sentences, especially when speaking Arabic. When speaking in Arabic, students are often influenced by the native language system and confused in choosing words and forming correct and appropriate sentences based on the Arabic language system. Mokhtar et al (2020) in their study found the effect of weak mastery of Arabic grammar will affect the construction of words and the formation of structure in sentences. Most students are weak in mastering speaking skills from various aspects, whether weaknesses stem from errors in syntax, morphology, phonology, semantics and lack of vocabulary (Fuadiya & Taufiq, 2020; Rosli et al., 2021; Ngalawi & Zainal, 2020). Weakness in mastering aspects of Arabic grammar causes students to be unable to speak Arabic fluently. For this reason, a deep understanding and mastery of Arabic grammar can help proficient students speak Arabic well and effectively.

The impact of Arabic grammar mistakes that occur in speech will result in the incorrect use of words and correct Arabic sentence structure (Senawi, 2020). In addition, the problem will result in the loss of meaning or meaning that is intended to be conveyed in speech (Baharin et al., 2021). Grammatical errors are mistakes that occur in sentence structure. A correct and perfect sentence is a sentence without grammatical errors. Therefore, research on the problem of mastery of speaking skills from the aspect of Arabic grammar needs to be taken seriously. The weakness of mastering Arabic speaking skills from the aspect of Arabic grammar does not only occur in Malaysia but also occurs in the Arabic language education sector of students at an international level such as in Indonesia (Salshabila et al., 2020) and in the Middle East (Ma'ārif, 2019).

Research Objective and Question

This study aims to answer the following question:

Is there a significant relationship between the mastery of Arabic grammar and the level of mastery of Arabic speaking skills?

Hypothesis

H₀ 1: There is no significant relationship between the level of students' mastery of Arabic grammar and students' mastery of Arabic speaking skills.

H_A1: There is a significant relationship between students' level of mastery of Arabic grammar and mastery of students' Arabic speaking skills.

Literature Research

a. Students' Mastery of Arabic Grammar

Grammar is one of the important branches of knowledge in learning Arabic. The main role of the emergence of Arabic grammar is to correct the language. According to Jaafar et al., (2019) one of the purposes of learning Arabic is to correct the tongue to avoid mistakes in the aspects of speaking, reading and writing.

Based on research on past studies related to Arabic grammar in Malaysia, it was found that students are weak in mastering Arabic grammar from different angles according to certain topics contained in the Arabic grammar syllabus. Among them, students are often confused about using the personal pronoun aspect (al-damir) correctly, causing mistakes in the construction of Arabic sentences. The mistake occurred as a result of the weakness in the mastery of grammar as well as the difficulty of Arabic as the target language and also as a result of the influence of the mother tongue (Ismail, 2019). This finding is supported by a study conducted by Alizuddin and Arif (2021) who found that students often make personal pronoun mistakes due to the influence of their mother tongue. These weaknesses make it difficult for students to master language skills well.

In addition, Jaffar (2019) in his study found that the level of student's mastery of the use of tadhkir and ta'nith is at a moderate level where the error in the use of verbs occurring, the verb has occurred and the error in the use of verb sentence structure is the biggest error that done by the respondent. While according to the author, Mother Tongue Disorder (Interlingual Transfer) is the main factor in the occurrence of the error apart from the Over-generalization factor, Ignorance of Rule Restrictions which is the cause of the error.

This study clearly proves that the neglect of grammatical elements in the formation of Arabic sentences will result in language errors. This finding is supported by the study of Ismail et al., (2021) which found that students often make mistakes in the present, past and future verbs. In addition, in building sentence structures, students often make mistakes in the use of active sentences (total fi'liyyah) by not complying with the gender law of the verb (fi'l) and the doer (fā'il). This error occurs as a result of the influence of the mother tongue where in the Malay language there are no verbs that specifically refer to tenses such as present, past and future. While in Malay there is no system of compatibility between the verb and the gender of the verb (fi'l) and the subject (fā'il).

In addition, in the study of Misnan and Ghazali (2019), it was found that students often make gender mistakes muzakkar wa muannath followed by mistakes in conjunctions (hūrūf jar) and mistakes in the use of predicate subjects (mubtada' khabar) in the construction of simple

sentences. This finding is also supported by the study of (Alizuddin and Arif, 2021; Ismail and Hamzah, 2018). However, in contrast to the findings of Azman and Rusli's study (2020), it was found that the level of mastery of the use of noun conjunctions was at a satisfactory level, although there are still students who are confused about the function and task of conjunctions in sentence construction.

Through the highlights of previous studies in this section, it is clear that there are still students who cannot master aspects of Arabic grammar well due to a number of things, including the difference between the Arabic language system and the student's mother tongue and students' confusion in using important elements which are contained in learning Arabic grammar correctly so as to cause errors in the construction of Arabic sentences.

b. Mastery of Student Speaking Skills

According to the studies on the problem of Arabic speaking skills in Malaysia, many studies touch on the weakness of mastery of Arabic speaking skills among students from the aspects of vocabulary, grammar, and language style (*uslub*). Most students are weak in mastering speaking and writing and lack the confidence to speak in Arabic (Arshad & Bakar, 2012). In addition, there are also other studies that highlight the weaknesses of non-native language students who have long been exposed to learning Arabic in mastering Arabic speaking skills (Jamali et al., 2018; Mukhtar & Muhammed, 2019; Fauzi et al., 2020; Yusri et al., 2010).

The previous studies also found that the factors that contribute to the weakness of speaking Arabic are lack of practice in speaking Arabic, lack of vocabulary, weakness in applying Arabic grammar, lack of friends who can create an active speaking atmosphere, lack of a conducive environment to practice speaking Arabic language and feelings of inferiority and shame for making mistakes when speaking Arabic.

In addition, according to Mohamad (2009), feelings of insecurity, fear of being laughed at and ridiculed by friends, and lack of motivation are also factors that prevent students from speaking in Arabic. Rahman and Ahmad (2020) also found that one of the contributors to this problem is the lack of awareness of language learning strategies (SPB) for speaking skills. In addition, the teaching factor of Arabic is also a factor in the weakness of students in mastering Arabic speaking skills. The effort to equip students with skills and competence in speaking Arabic is a challenge for educators. Therefore, speaking teaching should not only show and emphasize the process of good oral speech but is a process that requires a standard structure that can help and guide students to speak in an orderly and concise manner (Jamil, 2019).

In the meantime, in order to master Arabic speaking skills well, there are several important aspects that need to be understood and mastered, including aspects of grammar, vocabulary, rhetoric, and so on. There is no denying that Arabic grammar plays an important role in the formation of sentence structure and in determining the meaning of an Arabic phrase. Mistakes in letters and lines of words will result in changes in meaning. Thus, in determining the letters and lines in an Arabic word, it is highly dependent on the knowledge of Arabic grammar (Sya'ban, 2011).

Similarly, in the process of speaking a language, mistakes in the aspect of grammar will result in mistakes in the formation of the structure of the sentence, which will then disrupt the message that is to be conveyed (Senawi, 2020; Daud & Pisal, 2014) Misuse of Arabic grammar is one of the factors that make students difficult speaking in Arabic (Fauzi et al., 2020). A deep understanding of the science of grammar can disrupt the continuity of learning a second language (Madkūr, 2002). Hence, mastery of grammar is important in improving language skills (Zayd, 2000).

Methodology

This study is a quantitative survey study and the data is analyzed inferentially. A sample of 350 diploma students who took an Arabic language course as a third language at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). The student population for the thirteen branches of UiTM is a total of 1973 people. The selection of the sample in this study is based on probability sampling which is stratified random sampling and the sampling calculation method was taken based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling table. This stratified sampling technique was found to be suitable for obtaining data samples from a large and wide population (Babbie, 2014). The set of test questions was implemented after going through the validation process from two experts in the field of Arabic language and reliability through a pilot study that was conducted on 40 diploma students who took Arabic as a third language course at UiTM Melaka state branch.

The research instrument used in this study is a mastery test. This mastery test is divided into two parts, the Arabic grammar mastery test and the Arabic speaking skill mastery test. The Arabic grammar proficiency test consists of three parts. The first part has 30 objective-type questions. The second part contains 10 structural-type questions and the third part contains 5 subjective-type questions. Meanwhile, the Arabic language proficiency test is an oral test where respondents are required to introduce themselves in Arabic between 10-15 minutes. The selection of parametric tests using the Pearson correlation test was found to be suitable for identifying the relationship between two variables set by the researcher. In order to see the validity and reliability of the correlation test of this study, the researcher has conducted a pilot study on respondents who are homogeneous with the population for this study. The correlation value or 'r' value in this study refers to the strength scale proposed by Davies (1971) as shown in the following table:

Table 1

Davies scale (1971) strength of correlation between variables

Coefficient Value	Descriptive Interpretation
0.70 – 1.00	Very High
0.50 – 0.69	Height
0.30 – 0.49	Medium high
0.10 – 0.29	Low
0.01 – 0.09	Ignored

The results of a pilot study conducted on 40 UiTM diploma students found that there is a significant relationship between the two variables with a high correlation coefficient value, with an 'r' value of 0.504 and a significant value of <0.001. The correlation coefficient value of 0.504 shows that the level of correlation between the two variables as a whole is high (Davies, 1971). The variance of $r^2 = 0.254$ shows that 25.4% of the mastery of students' speaking skills is due to their mastery of Arabic grammar. While the rest of the other changes in the dependent variable may be due to other factors. So the results of this correlation test have succeeded in rejecting the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between the level of mastery of Arabic grammar and students' Arabic speaking skills. This means that the higher the mastery of Arabic grammar, the higher the mastery of Arabic speaking skills.

Data Analysis

The data analysis of this section will be described inferentially. The correlation test carried out in this study is to see the relationship (relationships) between the independent variable, which is mastery of Arabic grammar, and the dependent variable, which is Arabic speaking skills. Data collection is carried out to answer the hypothesis of this study. The data analysis of this section can be carried out after getting the scores of the Arabic grammar proficiency test and the students' Arabic speaking skills proficiency test. A total of 17 respondents obtained the highest score on the Arabic grammar proficiency test which is 79%, while a total of 9 respondents obtained the lowest score which is 30% in this test. Meanwhile, a total of 9 students obtained the highest score for the Arabic language proficiency test with a score of 83%, while a total of 27 respondents obtained the lowest score of 10% on this test.

Through the scores of the two variables, the data obtained will be entered into SPSS and then the 'Pearson r' correlation test will be conducted because it was found that the data distribution of all variables is normal. The 'Pearson r' Correlation Test is an appropriate analysis to answer the third objective of this study based on several prerequisite assumptions of the parallel test. Among the prerequisites stated by Pallant (2001), Coakes (2005), Brynman & Cramer (2005) as follows

1. Related pairs: collection data that explains the Arabic grammar mastery score (UTB) and the Arabic speaking skill mastery score must come from the same student.
2. Measurement scale: the measurement scale for Arabic grammar mastery scores and Arabic speaking skills is an interval scale.
3. Normality of distribution: scores for each variable tested should be normally distributed.
4. Linearity: the relationship between the two variables tested should be linear.
5. Equality of variance or homoscedasticity: there is a fairly good equality of variance between the two variables.

The first and second conditions were completed during the initial construction of this study. The third condition has been fulfilled by performing a normality test. There are various methods to test the normality of data distribution. Among the methods of testing the normality of the data for the variables of mastery of Arabic grammar and mastery of Arabic speaking skills involved in this study is to look at the results of graphical methods and statistical tests that have been done. Among the graphic methods used are histogram illustration results, stem-and-leaf plot, Boxplot, normality probability plot and detrended normal plot. While the statistical test used to determine the normality of the data is by looking at the value of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk coefficients. All the results of the normality test show that the data is normally distributed and meets the normality assumption.

In addition, the fourth and fifth conditions to test the linearity and ambiguity of variance or homoscedasticity for both variables can be tested by looking at the results of the scatterplot in the scatterplot graph. The following graph shows the linear relationship between the scores of both dependent and independent variables:

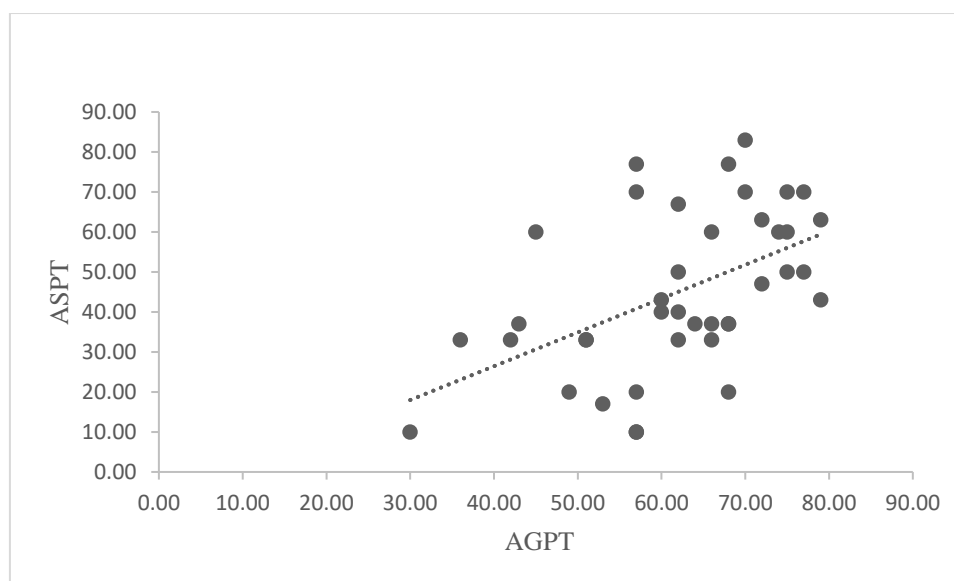


Diagram 1 : Linear relationship between AGPT and ASPT scores

The diagram above shows that there is a fairly good linear relationship between the Arabic grammar proficiency test score (AGPT) and the Arabic speaking skill proficiency test score (ASPT). Next, through the graph it can also be seen that the points increase positively but there are points that are spread rather less regularly on the regression line. So it can be concluded that the model in this research meets the conditions to be a good model because there is homoscedasticity or having the same variance of the value between the two variables. Thus, the conditions of linearity and homoscedasticity have been met.

After the Pearson test prerequisites were successfully met, the researcher conducted a correlation test on the scores obtained through the findings of the study between the Arabic grammar proficiency test score (AGPT) and the Arabic speaking skill proficiency test score (ASPT) which was conducted on 350 respondents. The results of the hypothesis that has been done using the Arabic grammar proficiency test score and the Arabic speaking skill proficiency score show that there is a significant relationship between the two variables with a high correlation coefficient value which is with an 'r' value of 0.508 and a significant value of <math><0.001</math>. The correlation coefficient value of 0.508 shows that the level of correlation between the two variables as a whole is high (Davies, 1971). The variance of

Table 2

Correlation between mastery of Arabic grammar and mastery of Arabic speaking skills (N=350)

The relationship between variables	r	r^2	Sig.*
AGPT-ASPT	0.508	0.258	<math><0.001</math>

*Significant at the 0.05 level

Discussion and Summary

The results of this study show that there is a significant relationship between students' mastery of Arabic grammar and students' mastery of speaking skills. This finding supports the theory of functional grammar which states that the aspect of grammar in communication is one of the important elements that a person needs to master (Halliday, 1960). It also plays an important role in improving speaking skills (Zayd, 2000).

The level of correlation between mastery of Arabic grammar and overall speaking skills is strong ($r = 0.508$). This finding differs from the study by Kusumawardani & Mardiyani (2018) who found the correlation between the two variables to be weak ($r = 0.259$). Nevertheless, the results of this study are in line with some other studies. For example, Syarifudin's study (2019) reported a correlation coefficient value between the two variables of ($r = 0.644$). Fahrudin (2010) reported the value of the correlation coefficient (0.400), and Efitita (2019) reported the value of the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.874$) between the two variables.

The positive value of the correlation coefficient obtained in the results of this study shows that there is a positive relationship between mastery of Arabic grammar and Arabic speaking skills. Although the positive value does not imply a cause or effect relationship, the positive relationship can explain that the relationship between the two variables can improve students' Arabic speaking skills. This statement is supported by Jābir (2002) as his opinion is that a strong mastery of Arabic grammar can produce students who are highly skilled in all four language skills, whether reading, writing, listening and speaking skills.

In conclusion, the correlation between mastery of Arabic grammar and Arabic speaking skills among diploma students who take Arabic as a third language course at UiTM is significant. The relationship gives the conclusion that the mastery of Arabic grammar plays an important role in improving the mastery of Arabic speaking skills.

Implications

The positive correlation and linear relationship found between mastery of Arabic grammar and students' Arabic speaking skills in this study has strengthened the evidence on the role of Arabic grammar as one of the important aspects in improving Arabic speaking skills well. This finding has also strengthened the theory of functional grammar which emphasizes that language structure will not be understood well if grammar principles are ignored. Based on this theoretical concept, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics each have an important role in creating the success of an effective communication.

Based on that, the results of this study give some implications from the pedagogical aspect. Among them, language students need to be guided to realize that the importance of grammar is a pillar in the process of improving all four language skills, whether writing, reading, listening or speaking skills. In addition, students also need to realize that speaking skill is a very important language skill because a weakness in mastering it will affect one's language mastery. Mastery of good speaking skills will also affect the communication process in learning a target language. Knowledge of the language system alone is not capable of making an individual proficient in mastering speaking skills without being accompanied by the skills to use them. Therefore, lecturers or educators need to guide students in mastering speaking skills well without neglecting the importance of Arabic grammar in the Arabic language learning process.

Other than that, students also need to be guided on how to master Arabic grammar and apply it in speech. A good achievement in basic Arabic language skills is not only important for improving academic achievement and student competence, but also for it is important for

improving students' motivation and confidence holistically. With the mastery of speaking skills, students can improve their ability to pronounce sounds and words accurately based on correct grammar and a wide vocabulary. Aspect of grammar is very important as a tool in order to measure the extent to which a student's language skills and competence are mastered by them (Othman, 2009; Nasir, 2015). Thus, in the context of Arabic grammar learning students need to be exposed to the basic knowledge of Arabic grammar so that students are able to master and use it in writing and speaking (Nordin, 2011).

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