



THE USAGE OF SONGS IN THE ARABIC TEXTBOOK
AND ITS EFFECT ON VOCABULARY RECALL; A
CASE STUDY AT SEKOLAH KEBANGSAAN BATU
MUDA

BY

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ABSTRACT

In Malaysia, the Arabic language has been taught at primary and secondary schools. However, the majority of students lack interest in Arabic subjects due to factors such as the teaching method and the material. Consequently the Ministry of Education, Malaysia has included songs in the Arabic textbooks in order to enhance the students' interest. This study aimed to investigate the effect of songs in Arabic textbooks on students' vocabulary recall as well as their perception regarding the use of songs in learning Arabic. The study was carried at Sekolah Kebangsaan Batu Muda, Malaysia. A total of 45 students from year three at primary level participated in this study. They were split into an experimental and a control group. A quasi-experimental design was applied in this quantitative study, which consisted of a survey, and a pre-test and post-test protocol. The obtained data were analyzed quantitatively using simple descriptive statistical analysis consisting of frequencies and percentages and an Independent Sample t-Test. The findings from the survey demonstrated that students have a positive perception on the use of songs in learning Arabic. In addition, the findings from the pre-test and post-test showed a significant difference in the means gain score between the control and the experimental groups. The findings revealed that those who learn the text with songs are better in recalling the vocabulary than those who learn the same text without songs. The study, through its findings, intends to add to the growing body of knowledge regarding the use of songs in the Arabic classroom.

ملخص البحث

سعى تعتبر اللغة العربية مادة إلزامية على جميع طلبة المرحلة الابتدائية والثانوية المسلمين. ومع ذلك فإن أغلبية الطلاب لا يهتمون كثيرا باللغة العربية لأسباب عديدة، منها طريقة التدريس والوسائل التعليمية. وقد أضافت وزارة التربية والتعليم الأناشيد ضمن محتوى كتب اللغة العربية المقررة من أجل تحسين رغبة الطلاب في تعلّم اللغة العربية. لذا تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن فاعلية الأناشيد في كتاب اللغة العربية للسنة الثالثة الابتدائية في تكرار المفردات، وكذلك كشف تصور الطلاب عن استخدام الأناشيد في تعلّم اللغة العربية. وتمت هذه الدراسة في المدرسة الوطنية، باتو مودا-ماليزيا. وشارك في هذه الدراسة خمسة وأربعون طالبا من السنة الثالثة الابتدائية. وقد قسّم الطلاب إلى مجموعتين: مجموعة ضابطة ومجموعة تجريبية. وتبنت الدراسة المنهج الكمي مع تطبيق شبه تجريبي، يتألف من إستبيان، واختبار قبلي وبعدي. وقد تم تحليل البيانات كميًا باستخدام التحليل الإحصائي الوصفي البسيط واختبار ت (t-Test). وأشارت الدراسة إلى أن الطلاب لديهم وجهات نظر إيجابية تجاه استخدام الأناشيد في تعلم اللغة العربية. إضافة إلى ذلك، كشفت النتائج أن هناك فروقا ذات دلالة إحصائية بين المجموعتين، المجموعة التي استخدمت الأناشيد تفوقت على المجموعة التي لم تستخدم الأناشيد في تكرار المفردات. وأسهمت هذه الدراسة من خلال النتائج التي توصلت إليها في إضافة نسبة من المعرفة في البحوث المتعلقة باستخدام الأناشيد في تعلم اللغة العربية.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Education (Teaching of Arabic to Non-Arabic Speakers).

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Nurhalimah Siregar

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Most people listen to music in their daily lives. They like music and it can be heard and played everywhere and every time in many activities for many different reasons. For instance, in America, people use music as a “sonic background” in their activities like driving, jogging and studying (Hoffer, 2009). On the other hand, in Africa, traditional music is widely played, which is related to religious and political systems (Onwuekwe, 2009). However, people use and listen to the music for many different purposes, but most of them listen to music simply for enjoyment.

In Islam, music has been the subject of confusion and controversy about its perceived dangers, and they began to differentiate between admissible and inadmissible music. However, Shaked (2011) confirmed that the spiritual perspective of Islam has influenced the status of music and musicians. Hence, music became an important aspect in Muslim life, such as folk songs, which is a popular form of music among Palestinian Muslims. In addition, nowadays, there are many Muslim singers spreading the message of faith in Allah and the wisdom and teachings of the prophet Muhammad. (For example, Maher Zein uses songs to praise Islam and advocates for political change in the Middle East through his popular song “Palestine will be free” and “freedom”).

Music also has a traditionally religious character. Krone (2011), studied the role of pop songs in contemporary religious music in the United States. He found that there is a strong connection between music and the Christian religion. The song might

raise the level of faith and increase the worship experience, and even spread a positive message for the followers. In addition, Parrott, (2009) studied the importance of music in some different religions, he stated that religious music when played and sung sensitively can create the atmosphere of worship and increase the faith. He also mentioned that some religious music serve the purpose of blessing, greeting and celebrating some religious rituals.

Furthermore, Masko (2013) confirmed that music also serves as a therapeutic medium. He stated that The American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) recorded that there was a significant increase in the number of people using music for therapy in hospice care in the United States, from 14.68% in 2003 up to 18.4% in 2011. In a similar vein, Pellitteri (2000) proved that music therapy is an efficient way of meditation where the therapist uses music to help clients attain health and achieve psychological well-being.

Many studies have investigated the importance of music and song in the educational field. Since music was introduced into the curriculum in 1838 by Lowell Mason at the Haws Grammer School in Boston, Massachusetts, music has become an essential part of education (Deere, 2010). Researchers found that song as a part of music, could transform the classroom into a positive learning environment where children develop socially, mentally, emotionally and academically (Gambler, 2003).

The song is a part of music that consists of lyrics with a unique symbol system and literature. Moreover, songs are presented in unique forms, giving a unique twist to all subjects in the classroom. According to Scripp & Dewey (2000), there are many reasons why music plays a vital role in teaching and learning, because the song is universal for human beings. There are many studies on the relationship between music and the brain (Patel, 2012).

In relation to the teaching and learning of foreign languages, songs play a significant role in enhancing students academically and emotionally. Murphy (1992) stated that every student has musical tastes, and songs are relaxing. Songs are used in the classroom as enhancers, reinforces, and can stimulate positive associations in order to learn foreign languages. He said that songs provide two main advantages: firstly, songs are easily memorized; this is because songs stick to the mind. Secondly, songs are highly motivating. This is universal for people of all ages and songs offer a positive energy. David (1991) added that the song creates a happy and relaxed environment. When students sing, they automatically master the prosodic features of the language. Once the song has been learned, it will be stuck in their mind for the rest of their lives, with all the rhythms, grammatical niceties and vocabulary.

Songs have many advantages in teaching foreign languages. They are a good motivational tool, fun and relaxing; they add variety to the class and a break from textbook study (Millington, 2011; Kara & Aksel, 2013). In addition, songs are a language resource, which help learners to improve their language skills, such as listening (Arevalo, 2010; Espradina, 2011; Oanh, 2011; Sevik, 2012a; Sevik, 2012b; Perez, 2013), speaking (Duarte Romero, Tinjaca Bernal, & Carrero Olivares, 2012; Rokhim, 2013; Ashtiani, & Zafarghandi, 2015), reading (Lessard & Bolduc, 2011), and writing skills (Nurcahyasari, 2012). Moreover, some studies show that songs are a valuable instrument for the foreign language students to improve their vocabularies (Priester, 2011; Alla, 2012; Dewi, 2013; Kayyis, 2015). Songs also help to expand cultural knowledge, which help them to be aware of the culture of the language that they learn (Keskin, 2011).

Although numerous research studies have been conducted on the usage of songs in the teaching of foreign languages within the past decades, most of these

studies have been done in the teaching of English (Engh, 2013; Kara & Aksel, 2013; Hassani, Rahmani, & Fard, 2014; Arevalo, 2010; Espradina, 2011; Oanh, 2011; Sevik, 2011; Sevik, 2014; Munoz Perez, 2013; Gea, 2013; Segal, 2014), Turkish (Keskin, 2011), French (Corbeil, 2007), Spanish (Salcedo, 2010) and Arabic (Mas'ud, 2011). Most of the studies that have been conducted on the effectiveness of using songs are only for teaching the English Language.

In line with the realization that the usage of songs in teaching Arabic is still noticeably under-researched, particularly on its impact on recall ability, the research in this field is vital. Mas'ud (2011) has conducted the study on the effectiveness of using songs in the secondary school on reading skill, but not recall ability. Thus, this calls for the need to address this phenomenon in investigating the effect of using songs in the Arabic textbook on vocabulary recall.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Today, in Malaysia, since Arabic is considered as the language of the Al-Qur'an and daily worship, many schools offer Arabic language as a compulsory subject for all Muslim students at all levels of education, particularly private schools or Madrasahs where students are required to take this subject (Meyad, Roslan, Chong, & Haji, 2014; Suhid, Mutalib, & Ahmad, 2012). However, due to many factors, students perceive that the Arabic language is not easy to learn. They have a view that the Arabic language is difficult (Al Aeraini, 2004; Yaakub, 2007; Seraj, 2010; Hamidin, 2014).

In fact, Malay language is different morphologically, syntactically and semantically from Arabic, Consequently, their motivation and performance in the Arabic language are considered poor. Particularly, when comes to its vocabulary,

Arabic language has a huge vocabulary of items that make it even more challenging to be taught and to be learned (Meyad et al., 2014; Yaakub, 2007).

Music is universal as well as language. Both music and language have the same characteristics in humans, like pitch, volume, stress, tone and melody, which are complementary in expressing a message. In addition, music and song are an essential part of human life and they use it daily. Since most people like to sing and when it is linked together with language and communication, songs can be a great asset in teaching language (Mora, Fuentes, & Wermke, 2011; Shabani & Torkeh, 2014; Yilmaz, & Sihhiye, 2011; Salcedo, 2010; Vinyets, 2013; Ashtiani, & Zafarghandi, 2015).

Teachers believe that a song can be a valuable pedagogical tool in teaching language. This is because students like to sing and songs can be a nice break from the routine in learning language. In this direction, they listen, sing and learn the lyric in a subconscious manner and they get involved actively in the game called communication (Murphey, 1992).

Songs have many advantages to enhance students' motivation in learning language and to develop students' language skills, which makes them feel joyful and enthusiastic in learning the language (Millington, 2011; Sevik, 2011; Sevik, 2014; Lin, 2013; Salcedo, 2010). According to Murphy (1992), this is because the song is highly motivational and highly memorable. In a similar vein, the usage of song in the classroom can provide a positive learning environment that leads learners to feel relaxed and become involved actively in a game called communication.

Furthermore, one of the advantages of using songs is that they can be a memory aid in learning a language. Many researches have shown a positive association between songs and memory. According to Sevik (2011) & Sevik (2014)

songs provide an excellent opportunity for repetition and practice. In a similar vein, Alipour et al., (2014) stated that a popular song can help students to retain vocabularies and keep them in long term memory. Here, Murphey (1992) believes that songs help students to recall the vocabularies, which is sometimes referred to as “the song stuck in my head phenomenon”.

Therefore, teachers believe that songs should be integrated into the curriculum of language teaching. As a result, several pedagogical techniques and recommendations have already been advanced which encourage the incorporation of songs into the foreign language curriculum (Sevik, 2011; Sevik, 2014; Case, 2015).

Song usage in foreign language instruction has long been valued, especially in teaching English. However, research on the use of songs in the Arabic language-learning classroom has been rare. A survey of the last decade of articles in journals on teaching Arabic shows that the quantity is sparse compared to multitudinous articles on other foreign languages.

Having said this, the researcher strongly feels the need to address the issue of the effect of the use of songs in the Arabic textbook on vocabulary recall among the students. Failure to address this phenomenon would result in the continuing poor attitude towards learning Arabic and reducing students’ motivation to learn the language. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate the use of songs in the Arabic textbook and its effect on students’ vocabulary recall. As far as the researcher is aware, this study fills the gap in research and contributes to new knowledge as it investigates the effect of using songs in Arabic textbooks on students’ ability to recall the vocabulary.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To investigate students' perceptions on the use of songs in learning Arabic.
2. To examine the difference in vocabulary recall between students who learn the text with songs compared to those who learn without songs.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are students' perceptions on the use of songs in learning Arabic?

RQ2: Is there any difference in vocabulary recall between students who learn the text with songs compared to those who learn without songs?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

To the extent of the researcher's knowledge, the research that addresses this phenomenon in the context of students' vocabulary recall has been rare. Thus, the significance of this study is to expand on the research regarding the use of songs in Arabic textbooks in relation to memory recall-the repetition of words and phrases in melody might enhance the language acquisition process.

The goal of this study is to show the Arabic teachers that songs can be a useful tool in teaching the Arabic language. Also, to show the students that learning Arabic through songs is fun. The use of songs in the Arabic textbook provides excellent opportunities for students to improve the language skill and especially memory. In addition, it is hoped that the Malaysian government, particularly the Ministry of

Education would focus on the communicative use of the Arabic language, combining the oral and the aural in the Arabic textbook by including songs in the curriculum.

Therefore, it is expected that the finding of this study will help improve the effectiveness of learning and teaching the Arabic language in Malaysia. Furthermore, this study is proposed to increase awareness and concern of the importance of using songs in learning Arabic as a guide and technique to help the students learn Arabic better and fun, especially the students of Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan Batu Muda.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There is some delimitation to this research study. The study is limited in its findings in the following ways:

1. Participation in this study only student at Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan Batu Muda (primary school) year three, those who use an Arabic textbook for primary level in learning Arabic, published by the government of Malaysia. Therefore, it does not reflect similar stakeholders from other sectors, such as Arabic teachers and learners from other schools in Malaysia.
2. Secondly, this study will examine the effect of songs in the Arabic textbook on vocabulary recall for students in Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan Batu Muda. The findings could not be generalized to another level or other languages. Although in the Malaysian education context, the Arabic language is offered at all education levels, the settings could be very different compared to the primary settings.

1.7 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Song: according to Nurhayati, (2012, p. 2), the song is “a short piece of music with words to be sung”. In this study, song is referring to the songs provided in the Arabic textbook year three, which are popular songs in Malaysia, with the same melody, pitch and tone, but have different lyrics or context.

Vocabulary recall: The ability of students to remember words that have been introduced during instruction (Priester, 2011). In this study, vocabulary recall refers to the students’ abilities to recall the words in the lyrics of songs.

KSSR: KSSR is the standard curriculum for primary schools. In Malaysia, KSSR has been introduced by the Malaysia Ministry of Education since 2011 and will be fully implemented in 2016 (Othman, Salleh, & Norani, 2013). It has been implemented for year one up to year six. KSSR was introduced as an effort to restructure and improve the current curriculum to ensure that students have the relevant knowledge, skills and values to face the challenges of the 21st century (Lian, Yew, & Meng, 2014).

Year Three: In Malaysia, year three is the intermediate level of formal school for primary level which is compulsory in Malaysia. In Malaysia, year three aged from nine to ten.

Textbook: According to Hasnam & Rahimi (2010), the textbook is structured and systematic texts as the basic source for teachers and students in the classroom, which is contained explicitly in the syllabus of knowledge for primary and secondary schools in Malaysia. In this study, Arabic textbook is referring to Arabic textbook year three

based on standard curriculum for primary schools (KSSR) published by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia.

Sekolah Kebangsaan: Sekolah Kebangsaan refers to the government school with the Malay language, which is the national language, as the medium of instruction. It ranges from year one to year six, also known as Standard one to six. In this study, Sekolah Kebangsaan refers to Sekolah Kebangsaan Batu Muda for primary level where Arabic language is taught as a compulsory subject for all Muslim students, and they use an Arabic textbook based on the Standard Curriculum for Primary School (KSSR) published by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia and located in Kuala Lumpur.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The research presented in this chapter is divided into six sections. The first section outlines some general information on Arabic language teaching. The second section reviews the use of songs as a pedagogical tool in teaching and learning. Included in this section are reviews of some studies done on the usage of songs in the education field. The third section discusses the use of songs in language teaching in general. The fourth section focuses on the use of songs in second language acquisition. In addition, this section also discusses some studies on the effects of songs in teaching foreign languages. The fifth section provides information on songs as a memory aid in learning languages, also some studies done on the use of songs on the improvement of the memory. Section six, the final section presents the summary of findings.

2.2 ARABIC LANGUAGE TEACHING

The Arabic language is widely known throughout the world as that of the Middle East and of Muslims worldwide in their reading of the holy Qur'an, as it is the revealed book for Muslims (Areef, 1986; Suhid et al., 2012; Haron, Ahmad, Mamat, & Mohamed, 2010; Meyad, Roslan, Chong, & Haji, 2014). In addition, Arabic is also used in the Muslim's daily religious rituals (Areef, 1986; Al Aeraini, 2004; Seraj, 2010; Meyad et al., 2014). As a result, knowing Arabic is important in order to recite the Qur'anic text and performing Ibadah.

Nonetheless, besides the language of the holy Qur'an and daily religious rituals, there are many factors that have made the Arabic language become important and encourage many people around the world to learn the Arabic language with its four levels: phonology, syntax, semantics and morphology. Abuhakema (2012) listed some motivations to learn Arabic language, primarily to understand more about Islamic knowledge, to develop a future career, to communicate and integrate with the Arab community, and most of them love the Arabic language, simply due to its uniqueness. On the other hand, Zubairi & Sarudin (2009) divided motivation to learn Arabic into intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. For example, studying Arabic in order to learn its culture and meet Arabian people as the intrinsic reason and to expand the scientific and technical terminology or concepts by translating it into the Arabic language as the extrinsic reason to learn Arabic language. However, these all lead to the growth in the number of students who learn Arabic as a second language.

According to Seraj (2010), in 1973 the United Nations issued a resolution that in various organizations, Arabic was acknowledged and used among the widely spoken languages like English, French, Spanish, Russian, and Chinese. Hence, the number of people who speak the Arabic Language is increasing significantly every year. Due to the number of its speakers and the extent of its influence, the Arabic language is considered the greatest Semitic language ever and, thus, should be viewed as one of the significant languages to learn (Areef, 1986).

According to Wahba, Taha, & England (2006), teaching Arabic as a foreign language is referring to the language, where the Arabic is not spoken by most of people like the United States, Europe and Asia. In a similar vein, Areef (1986) defined teaching Arabic is teaching the Arabic language to non-Arabic speakers with a formal setting in the educational system. In addition, Wahba et al., (2006), also stated that

teaching Arabic is teaching the learner to learn Arabic as a foreign language, outside of their mother tongue.

In fact, in western Asia, Arabic is the most widely taught language. It is considered as a religious language for about one billion Muslims (Areef, 1986). Particularly in Malaysia, since Islam came, Arabic is necessary in order to read the Qur'an properly and to understand its meaning; also in performing religious duties and knowing the basic rules of Islam. Consequently, most parents encouraged their children to learn Arabic, by sending them to religious schools or places called Madrasah (Yaakub, 2007; Haron et al., 2010; Meyad et al., 2014; Suhid et al., 2012). As a result, by January 1977, the Ministry of Education had officially introduced the Arabic Language as a subject in the national curriculum (Hamidin, 2014).

At the Madrasah or religious school, for all students, Arabic is a compulsory subject from Grade 1 to 9, and it is offered as a foreign language for those who are not native speakers. In the primary and the secondary government schools, the Arabic subject is offered for all Muslim students. According to Suhid et al., (2012), the Arabic subject takes about 40-minute and 50-minute periods of the school timetable. Students study the Arabic language for around 6,600 minutes per academic year (110 hours). This means that students who go through the school from Grade 1 to Grade 9 will have studied a total of 990 hours of Arabic.

However, Students believe that the Arabic language is not easy to learn, particularly for those whose native language is different morphologically, syntactically and semantically from Arabic, like the Indo-European languages (Al Aeraini, 2004; Meyad et al., 2014; Meyad et al., 2014). There are some different characteristic features in Arabic that present the learners with some challenges in learning. For example, there are 28 letters in the Arabic alphabet, as compared to 26

letters in the Malay alphabet. Arabic is also written from right to left rather than from left to right. Consequently they view that the Arabic language is difficult (Yaakub, 2007; Seraj, 2010; Hamidin, 2014).

Moreover, teachers believe that teaching a foreign language is not an easy task (Yaakub, 2007; Alesh, 2009; Hamidin, 2014; Meyad et al., 2014). Primarily when they realize that the focus of teaching a foreign language is on communication, which include listening and speaking, especially for the basic level of language learning (Haron et al., 2010; Case, 2014; Meyad et al., 2014; Sevik, 2011; Sevik, 2014).

Abdullah (1996) found that some difficulties in teaching the Arabic language include the incompetence of teachers as well as the facilities. Also, the inability to provide Arabic textbooks as reference, since the number of books available is very limited. Moreover, those books are not relevant to the level of the study. In addition, the non-availability of training programs to improve teacher's competence in the Arabic language such as a workshop in teaching method is another problem.

In Malaysia, some studies observed the challenges in learning Arabic. Yakuub (2007) identified that learning the vocabulary is the most obvious challenge faced by students in learning Arabic. He argued that some students seem to have difficulty to memorize a new word which they cannot find in their mother language. Hence, students perceive that Arabic subject is the most difficult subject, even though this perception may come from student's personal attitudes and the interests, or from the lack of teaching method.

According to Hamidin (2014), there are many reasons which lead the Arabic teacher to face the problems to motivate the students. These include textbooks, curriculum structure, teaching method, instructional aid and lack of proficiency in Arabic. Meyad et al., (2014) found in their study that language skills, such as