

Higher Education Students' Engagement and Factors That Constrain Students' Activeness in Learning Arabic Language

Nur Afiqah Athirah Mohd Rushdi & Lily Hanefarezan Asbullah

Research Centre for Arabic Language and Islamic Civilization, Faculty of Islamic Studies,
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi, Malaysia.

Email: p116037@siswa.ukm.edu.my, lilyhane@ukm.edu.my

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v12-i2/17265>

DOI:10.6007/IJARPED/v12-i2/17265

Published Online: 23 June 2023

Abstract

Engagement is one of the keys to improve language acquisition. This study is conducted to measure the level of students' engagement in the Arabic language. This study focuses on engagement which refers to the activity of students in engaging with the Arabic language inside and outside classroom in the context of activities and social. This study also aims to identify the factors that influence students' activity in engaging with the Arabic language. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods through questionnaires and interviews is employed in this research. For quantitative data, questionnaires were distributed to 30 final year students majoring in Islamic studies at a public university while to obtain qualitative data, a total of five graduates of the Bachelor's Degree in Arabic were selected for the interview. IBM SPSS software version 27.0 was used to analyze the questionnaires and Atlas.ti software version 9.1.3 was used to analyze the interview transcripts. The findings of the study showed that the level of engagement of students towards the Arabic language is at a low level for the productive aspect compared to the receptive. The results of the interviews also showed that the majority of respondents admitted that it is difficult to engage in Arabic in productive aspects especially speaking skills. The two main factors that constrain students' engagement in Arabic are internal factors as well as environmental factors. This study proves that there is a critical need for certain parties to overcome the problems faced by students in their engagement in Arabic language.

Keywords: Engagement, Arabic, Inside Classroom, Outside Classroom, Constraint Factor

Introduction

Engagement is one of the main keys for teaching staff in various fields. The word engagement in learning is often confused with other words such as motivation and participation, which are often evaluated based on student actions that can be seen while engagement considers factors in learning that can be hidden from a teacher's view. For aspects of language acquisition, students should be given tasks that can increase their engagement (Stroud, 2014). This shows that the learning environment by certain parties will have an impact on the

engagement of students in learning something while being inside or outside their place of study.

The environment is an important element that contributes to the improvement of student learning development. Keefe (1991) stated that better learning development can be stimulated through a good language environment. Ismail (2001) also mentioned that the environment provides ample space and opportunities for Arabic language learners to use the language. According to that study, the language environment can be divided into several parts, namely social, and extracurricular activities in lectures and campuses. There are several activities that can enliven the environment or atmosphere of the Arabic language, i.e., lecturers use Arabic fully when learning, communicate and interact in Arabic with friends and lecturers, ask questions in Arabic, read reading materials and search for information on the internet in Arabic and also participate in association activities and competitions in Arabic.

However, the environment alone is not enough for a person to be able to learn Arabic well, rather it requires some other elements such as the individual's own seriousness and interest to do something (Philp & Duchesne, 2016). In order to achieve the acquisition of a language, it is not only focused on the amount of environment provided, but also takes into account the extent of the quality of a person's engagement with the language in their daily life (Ellis, 2005; Fernández & Schmitt, 2015). Therefore, it is important for us to study the level of students' engagement in learning Arabic and identify the factors that constrain students' engagement so that it can be improved because it affects students' knowledge and mastery of the Arabic language.

Literature Review

Engagement refers to the extent to which students engage with the Arabic language in daily affairs (Ismail, 2001; Asbulah et al., 2020). Kuh (2009) defined engagement as the quality of students' engagement and effort in the learning process. Therefore, to describe the activity of students engaged in Arabic language in daily situations, engagement is a very accurate word. This engagement includes several learning situations such as when inside or outside classroom, regardless of formal or informal, and planned or otherwise (Brown, 1994).

The lecture room or hall in the university is also said to be an artificial environment for carrying out the learning process while outside the lecture room covers the campus environment that has oral or written information. An activity is an action that is planned and implemented as part of the task by the responsible party and has been given a mandate from the administrator or the student (Asbulah et al., 2020). Among the activities of students' engagement inside classroom are attendance, and positive interaction. Students' interest in their academic assignments refers to the actual behavior of a student that shows their engagement in the lecture and also their desire to do something challenging (Nguyen, 2017). Philp and Duchesne (2016) also stated that engagement activities are also linked to students' emotions.

Interaction, on the other hand, is a social aspect that involves joint production (co-production), which is the action of all participants. Interaction inside classroom refers to communication or conversation between lecturers and students so that they can switch roles as listeners and speakers (Allwright, 1984). For language learning, lecturers can create a social environment inside classroom by using the target language completely inside classroom without making a translation (Littlewood, 1981).

Interaction does not only involve speaking skills, but also involves listening skills. This listening skill is classified by Rost (2001) into three categories namely intensive, selective, and

interactive. Intensive listening skills are listening skills that focus on a specific sound that is commonly used in dictation teaching methods such as words and phrases. Next, selective listening skills are the skills of obtaining information from audio language, while interactive listening skills are associated with conversations and interactions that focus on the acquisition of meaning to understand a conversation. For the social aspect in the lecture or outside the lecture, it is customary to use interactive listening skills.

Outside classroom, the social aspect between lecturers and students is not only focused on face-to-face interactions or conversations, but also interactions using media such as smartphones. Likewise with the aspect of activities, many activities can be carried out through smart phones such as browsing the internet and sharing information (Al-Barashdi et al., 2015). Among the popular applications that students often use to communicate nowadays are Whatsapp, Telegram, and Wechat while Facebook is a fairly well-known network for sharing information (Khalid et al., 2016).

At the university, students are encouraged to increase their engagement in Arabic whether inside or outside classroom. Nevertheless, there are still a few students who think that there are some internal factors that constrain them to get engaged in the Arabic language, among which are feelings of shyness, low self-esteem, and fear of making mistakes. Such negative attitudes will in turn lead to lack of confidence to practice productive skills such as speaking skills. There is also a feeling where students often compare their Arabic language proficiency level which is relatively weak compared to other friends who are more intelligent (Yusri et al., 2010).

In addition, lecturers also play an important role in students' mastery of knowledge. According to Ahmad (2004), one of the factors that increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning process is a lecturer who understands students' emotions and uses an appropriate tone of voice during the teaching session. This is because, students' emotion is an important element to ensure that students are always committed or in the opposite situation, i.e., ignoring the lecturer's teaching session. For example, lecturers can try to understand the student's background, family economic status, and health aspects. While from the aspect of tone of voice in teaching, lecturers need to adapt in using a tone of voice that matches the meaning and intention when interacting with students (Jama'in et al., 2017). Therefore, a community that behaves positively can produce members of the community that behave in this way. The same goes for the lecturer's attitude which will influence the positive or negative attitude of students towards a subject.

The learning environment also plays an important role in students' mastery of the Arabic language. Previous studies have found that there is a strong relationship between students' environment and learning outcomes (Mohamad Ziyad Mukhtar et al., 2017). However, the Arabic environment inside classroom is still not used as much as possible in some educational institutions such as universities and schools. Outside classroom, Arabic is not the main language of instruction in Malaysia. However, Arabic can be found and used in knowledge gatherings in mosques, suraus or educational institutions such as schools and universities.

Therefore, this study focuses on examining aspects of engagement that refer to the activeness of students in involving themselves in the Arabic language inside classroom and outside classroom in the context of activities and social. Next, this study will explore the factors that constrain students' engagement with the Arabic language at university. Specifically, this study measures the quality of students' engagement in using Arabic in their lives (Fernández & Schmitt, 2015; Ismail, 2001).

Research Questions

- What is the level of students' engagement in Arabic at the university level?
- What are the factors that constrain students' engagement with Arabic at the university level?

Research Objective

- To identify the level of students' engagement in Arabic at the university level.
- To identify the factors that constrain students' engagement with Arabic at the university level.

Research Methodology**Research Design and Sample**

This study is a quantitative study based on survey methods (cross-sectional) and also a qualitative one that uses semi-structured interviews. A simple random sampling method was used for the study sample which consists of 30 final year students and also five graduates from one of the local universities in Malaysia who majored in Islamic studies. The researcher keeps the name of the educational institution confidential for reasons of maintaining and following research ethics.

The selection of this sample was made taking into account the experience of the students in learning Arabic from primary school to university level. In addition, the students who were interviewed are also graduates of the Bachelor's Degree in Arabic who have had experience learning Arabic for 10 years and above. The background of the interviewed respondents is as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Graduate Background

Graduate	Arabic Learning Experience
Graduate 1 (G1)	10 years
Graduate 2 (G2)	16 years
Graduate 3 (G3)	14 years
Graduate 4 (G4)	15 years
Graduate 5 (G5)	16 years

Research Instrument**Questionnaire**

For quantitative data, the level of students' engagement in Arabic was measured using an instrument adapted from (Asbulah et al., 2020). A total of 14 items consisting of two sub-constructs which are student engagement inside classroom and also outside classroom have been adapted from the instrument. A 5-point Likert scale was used to describe the frequency of students engaging in Arabic, 1=very infrequently (never does) as the lowest degree in the variable, 2=infrequently (only does it once or twice), 3=somewhat often (does sometimes), 4=frequently (does continuously and leaves once or twice), and 5=very often (always does consistently) which is the highest degree in the variable.

Interview

This study uses a semi-structured interview protocol to obtain qualitative data. This interview is used to obtain information verbally from the respondent face-to-face. This interview

focuses on the purpose of this study, which is to identify the factors that influence the level of students' engagement with the Arabic language. In addition, interviews with graduates were also conducted to identify items that are difficult for graduates to do throughout their studies and their suggestions and recommendations to increase the level of students' engagement with the Arabic language.

Data Collection Process

The data collection process was completely conducted online. Interviews were conducted individually to five selected graduates through the Google Meet application while questionnaires were distributed to 30 students using Google Form. The time allocated for the interview session was approximately 30 minutes while for answering the questionnaire, the time allocated was only 20 minutes. Once the data were collected, the analysis process was carried out. Atlas.ti software version 9.1.3 was used to analyze interview transcriptions, create themes, and sub-themes in this study. The data for the questionnaire were analyzed descriptively using IBM SPSS software version 27.0 or also referred to as descriptive statistics to describe the characteristics of a variable by using indicators of frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and then inferences were made based on numerical data (Darusalam & Hussin, 2016).

Results

The results of the survey found that the overall mean for the 14 engagement items was 2.14 and the standard deviation was 0.85, which is with a low level of interpretation. These data showed that students' engagement with Arabic is still low even though the students are in their final year of university studies. This finding also shows that no item is at a high interpretation level, only 3 items (21%) are at a medium interpretation level, while 11 items (79%) are at a low level. The mean range for all items is between 1.40 and 3.20. The data for this engagement were analyzed based on two sub-constructs, namely students' engagement inside classroom and also outside classroom.

Table 2 shows the mean, standard deviation, and interpretation of students' engagement with Arabic for the sub-constructs inside classroom based on descending order. The results showed that as many as 3 items (50%) for students' engagement with Arabic inside classroom are at a moderate level of interpretation, while another 3 items (50%) are at a low level of interpretation. Findings showed that students tend to rely on the role of the lecturer and the material given by the lecturer inside the classroom only. Students apply the receptive aspect of listening and reading more than the productive aspect of speaking. This shows that the engagement of students inside classroom requires a high degree of concentration and focus.

Table 2

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Interpretation of Student Engagement inside Classroom

Type of Engagement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I hear my lecturer speaking fully in Arabic.	3.20	0.81	Moderate
I read the Arabic presentation slide shown by my lecturer.	3.20	1.13	Moderate
I search for information in Arabic in the internet.	2.73	1.14	Moderate
I present fully in Arabic in front of the class.	2.00	0.98	Low
I ask question in Arabic to my lecturer.	1.87	0.78	Low
I have group discussion in Arabic.	1.73	0.74	Low

Table 3 shows the mean, standard deviation, and interpretation for sub constructs outside classroom based on descending order. The results showed that all the engagement items outside classroom are at a low level of interpretation. Findings showed that students are less engaged in the Arabic language outside classroom. The two items with the lowest mean are items that involve speaking skills, which are interactions with lecturers or friends. Based on this finding, it can be said that students lack confidence to speak in Arabic.

Table 3

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Interpretation of Student Engagement Outside Classroom.

Type of Engagement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I attend activities organized by Arabic association	2.27	0.98	Low
I watch Arabic videos.	2.17	0.75	Low
I participate in Arabic competitions.	2.03	0.89	Low
I read Arabic books.	2.03	0.89	Low
I read Arabic journal article.	1.83	0.79	Low
I read Arabic advertisement.	1.83	0.83	Low
I speak Arabic with lecturers.	1.63	0.61	Low
I speak Arabic with my friends.	1.40	0.56	Low

Referring to the questionnaire data, interview sessions were conducted on five graduates at one of the selected local universities to explore the factors that constrain the level of student engagement with the Arabic language in depth. After the interview processes were conducted, the process of analyzing the interview transcripts was carried out by comparing the responses of all the participants of this study. The results found that four graduates are less engaged in the productive aspect of speaking in Arabic with the lecturer while one graduate felt heavy to engage in the receptive aspect of listening to conversations in Arabic and also reading advertisements in Arabic. Findings from the analysis process showed that the factors constraining students' engagement are divided into two main themes, namely internal factors and environmental factors as shown in Figure 1.

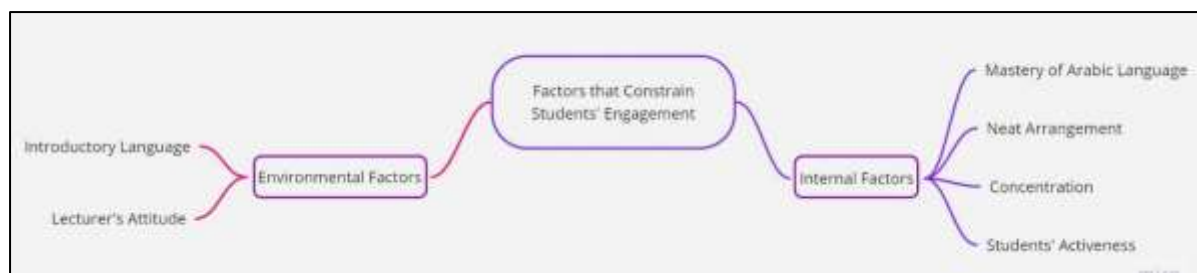


Figure 1

*Factors that Constrain Students' Engagement***Theme I: Internal Factors**

The internal factor of the student is the first main theme which consists of the mastery of the Arabic language, careful preparation, concentration, and student activity. The findings of the interview analysis of the factors that constrain students to engage in Arabic language activities can be a benchmark to identify the problems faced by students with the Arabic language.

Mastery of Arabic Language

The first sub-theme under the theme of internal factors that constrain students' engagement with the Arabic language is the unsatisfactory mastery of the Arabic language in terms of grammar and vocabulary. Almost all study participants were found to express negative feelings when it comes to the productive aspect of speaking in Arabic. For example, Graduate 1 stated that it was difficult for him to speak with the lecturer in Arabic due to the fear of making grammatical mistakes, *"So, as students, we feel a little afraid to talk to the lecturer because we are afraid of making mistakes in terms of grammar in Arabic."* (G1). Likewise with Graduate 3 who stated that he was not confident and embarrassed if he put the wrong sentence together when asking questions to the lecturer, *"later I'm afraid the grammar is wrong like... I want to put the sentence together wrong. Maybe later I'll feel embarrassed around everyone, right? It means that I still don't have high confidence."* (G3).

However, the feeling of fear can be overcome and students will become more confident if they engage in an activity as a group with friends. Graduate 3 explained, *"For example, acting with friends... I feel like I have confidence because I have friends next to me, right? I can't do it to anyone, I feel like I'm afraid"* (G3). This is in line with the explanation of Graduate 4, *"if I join with my friends, okay its fine, he is like an amplifier. But if I enter an individual competition, for example a debate that requires me to speak like that or... that requires me to stand by myself. Yes, that is beyond my ability."* (G4).

In addition, the limited mastery of Arabic vocabulary also constrains student engagement. This was acknowledged by Graduate 2 who stated that he also found it difficult to speak with the lecturer in Arabic due to his lack of vocabulary, *"I think it's very difficult because yes, I admit that even though I have Arabic vocabulary, there are still many more that I have not yet fully mastered."* (G2). Lack of vocabulary mastery will interfere with the process of productive aspects of a person, *"When we lack vocabulary, it is difficult to construct sentences. Okay, when we have a hard time constructing a sentence, our sentence is sloppy"* (G4).

Meanwhile, Graduate 5 experienced difficulty in the receptive aspect of listening to the lecturer speak in Arabic also due to limited vocabulary mastery. Graduate 5 explained, *"We are still learning Arabic. There are many more words that we do not know. But when what we have to hear, indirectly, it's actually quite difficult... because we won't understand. Yes, maybe"*

you will understand one or two words. At the same time, that thing is on the spot, we cannot make references from any source.” (G5).

Neat Arrangement

The second sub-theme of the internal factor is thorough preparation especially when it comes to speaking skills. Study participants felt a burden if forced to engage in speaking activities in Arabic. This is because they need careful preparation and guidance from other parties. For example, Graduate 4 stated, *“if forced to enter a lecture competition? Err... if I'm forced, I can but I need careful preparation. Means if we want to construct our own sentences, I really don't know. But if given a script and taught, maybe it's possible.” (G4).* Likewise with Graduate 2, he thinks that the meticulous preparation restricts his engagement to present in front of the class in Arabic because he is worried if the listeners do not understand what is being said, *“I think it's difficult because when we want to present, we need what people call preparation... neat preparation, quite solid preparation, right? Because we want others to understand what we want to say, again in Arabic entirely.” (G2).*

In contrast to the opinion of Graduate 5 who thinks that careful preparation is an advantage for him in speaking skills, *“if it's like a question to ask the lecturer, we can look for the sentence first, arrange the sentence correctly first, look for the reference first, be ready before we listen. Hearing things that are on the spot, we cannot make references.” (G5).*

Concentration

Research participants think that a conversation in Arabic requires more focus for the conversation to be considered successful. Internal conflict occurs when students worry if the other party does not understand what they are saying or worry if they themselves cannot understand what the other party is talking about. This will cause students to choose not to converse in Arabic. Regarding this matter, Graduate 2 explained, *“I think that when we talk, we have to know the topic or the matter that we want to discuss with the other party. So, when we have to chat with someone who is fluent in Arabic, we need to be more sensitive to each topic discussed so that we can better understand and communicate with them. It's normal when they're fluent, they'll talk fast, we have to catch them quickly, then people say the communication becomes more interesting.” (G2).*

Regarding the receptive aspect, Graduate 5 stated that he needs more concentration when reading advertisements in Arabic due to the use of language and sentences that are different from conversation, *“if the advertisement, maybe from the Arabs themselves, maybe he will use their standard languages. Some people don't understand all that, so they need more focus and a lot of references to really understand.” (G5).*

Students' Activeness

Student engagement is said to depend on how many programs are organized, *“in my opinion... the more programs are organized, the higher the engagement of the students” (G1).* However, the organized program is not a constraint on student engagement because many Arabic language programs have been organized by the department and also the faculty to encourage students' engagement as explained by Graduate 1, *“This faculty organizes a lot of programs related to the Arabic language and the engagement is high because the lecturers and the students have to move together.” (G1).*

The study participants think that the student's activity itself is the barrier to their engagement in the Arabic language as explained by Graduate 3, *“if there is any program, right,*

not everyone is involved, do you understand? If there is an Arabic language program, I don't see many people joining" (G3). Likewise with Graduate 4 who told about student activity in class, "there are not many people in the class, there are 15 people like that. In 15 people, not everyone is active, not everyone gets involved in the two-way discussion that happens in class. Okay, like me, I can say I'm quite an active person as well. Okay, but what about inactive people. Sometimes people who are not active, maybe they know, and there are also those who don't know but choose to remain silent." (G4).

Theme II: Environmental Factors

The second main theme is the students' environmental factors that are a barrier to engage in Arabic at the university either inside or outside classroom, which is the language of instruction used at the university and also the attitude of the lecturers.

Introductory Language

The first sub-theme for the environmental factor is that the medium of instruction at the university is Malay, which in turn causes students to be more comfortable using their respective state accents to speak outside classroom. Teaching and learning inside classroom also mostly use Malay instead of Arabic. This shows that there is no environment that encourages students to use Arabic in their daily lives. This is acknowledged by Graduate 2, *"because these students are more exposed to the Malay language throughout their studies. The students will usually use the national language which is the Malay language to speak, will use their respective accents to speak" (G2).*

Lecturers' Attitude

The second sub-theme under the environmental factor that constrains students' engagement with the Arabic language is the lecturer's attitude. When the lecturer places a high impression on the students, the students will feel burdened if they do not achieve what the lecturer expects, which will further weaken their enthusiasm to continue engaging with the Arabic language. Graduate 4 explained, *"We study, suddenly not achieving what the lecturers want according to our abilities, or where we are now, at the university. But not according to their standards" (G4).* Such things will cause students to be afraid to get engaged inside classroom because they think that their lecturers are fierce as stated by Graduate 3, *"The first reason is when the lecturer who teaches Arabic is a fierce lecturer." (G3).*

Discussion

Overall, the findings of the questionnaire found that the average student has a low level of engagement in Arabic. Like the activities in the lecture, the students are seen actively using only listening and reading skills such as listening to the lecturer's speech and reading the slides displayed by the lecturer only. The findings of the analysis from the questionnaire are in line with the findings of the interview which found that the level of engagement of students towards the Arabic language in the productive aspect is lower compared to the receptive aspect. The same is the case with the interview results which found that the majority of respondents believe that engaging in the Arabic language in the productive aspect, especially speaking skills, is more difficult than the receptive aspect. This finding is in line with the findings from the study of Mohamad (2009), that is, the level of Arabic language use for Bachelor of Islamic Studies students or specifically Arabic in speaking skills is very low due to the students not practicing the use of Arabic among themselves. The productive aspect is a

language process that requires a person to produce an idea either in oral or written form, which involves speaking and writing skills. While the receptive aspect is a process of acceptance from spoken or written words delivered by others, which involves listening and reading skills.

This study found that the constraints faced by students to engage in the Arabic language are divided into two main factors, which are internal factors and environmental factors. Internal factors are factors that originate from the students themselves that prevent their engagement with the Arabic language. Meanwhile, the environmental factor is the external factor of the student, which is something that is around him. Both of these factors play an equally important role because factors within the student combine with environmental factors to encourage students to engage with the Arabic language.

For internal factors, the mastery of the Arabic language has dominated. All interview respondents admitted that their limited knowledge of the Arabic language, especially from the aspect of vocabulary and grammar, has limited their engagement with the Arabic language. The mastery of the Arabic language affects the engagement of students for all skills from a receptive and also productive aspect. Students need to master the Arabic language in order to be able to understand what is heard and read as well as to speak and write correctly. A study by Mustafa and Mohamad (2014) found that students who can master grammar, successfully master reading and writing skills which include both receptive and productive aspects. For the aspect of vocabulary, the study of Daud and Abdul Pisal (2014) has proven that the lack of vocabulary is the main constraint for students to master Arabic speaking skills well. The problem of lack of vocabulary is the main problem that often happens to students learning foreign languages. In the study of Jamil et al (2020), the selection of foreign language vocabulary, especially Arabic in the communication activities carried out, could not be mastered by most of the students. They stated that communication activities will stop due to limited vocabulary problems.

Students' engagement in speaking skills is at a low level both in and outside classroom. Asbulah et al (2020) stated in her study that students refused to get involved in activity and social engagement, namely interaction in the Arabic language, which has shown negative attitudes that exist in IPT students such as shyness, fear of making mistakes, and low self-esteem. This kind of attitude will in turn cause insecurity in students to speak and eventually cause them to compare themselves with their friends (Yusri et al., 2010). However, this study found that this negative feeling arises due to students' lack of mastery of the Arabic language which makes students always feel anxious when engaging in the Arabic language. Students will be more confident to present themselves in an activity if they have enough knowledge in Arabic.

The researcher believes that mastery of the Arabic language is closely related to the following factors, which are careful preparation, concentration, and student activity. Findings show that students feel burdened to engage themselves in Arabic especially in speaking and listening skills because it requires careful preparation and more focus in order to understand what is being said and make a conversation successful. The student activity factor itself is also found to constrain students' engagement inside and outside classroom. The researcher is of the opinion that students choose not to be active because they are not confident in the knowledge of the Arabic language that they have mastered throughout their studies. This matter can be overcome if students master the Arabic language and can apply it in their daily lives without feeling burdened.

In addition to internal factors, environmental factors also play an important role in encouraging students' engagement with the Arabic language. This study found that the medium of instruction used in universities is one of the environmental factors that influence students' engagement outside classroom. Students' engagement with Arabic outside classroom is the least, which is the most difficult to do when it comes to productive aspects, especially speaking skills, interaction, conversation, and communication. Study by Ab. Halim Mohamad (2009) also found that IPT students are still less likely to use Arabic outside of lecture hours. His study found that HEI students do not practice the Arabic language in their speech regardless of whether it is inside or outside the lecture. This shows that students are reluctant to engage in social engagement. For the researcher, when the language of instruction used at the university is the student's own mother tongue, then there is no environment that forces students to speak in Arabic when on campus. This will keep students in a comfortable state to speak in Malay with friends and lecturers.

In classrooms, the students prefer to engage in listening skills such as listening to the lecturer speak Arabic and also reading skills which is reading the slides displayed by the lecturer. This is in line with the findings of Asbulah et al (2020) who also found that public university students tend to use listening and reading skills in lectures. This shows that students only depend on the role of the teacher and the materials or assignments given during the lecture. According to Samah (2011), students in higher education institutions are still influenced by lecturer-centered learning. Indeed, teachers are said to be the main source of input for the learning process inside classroom (Brown, 1994), but issues will arise if students only depend on the teacher throughout the learning period (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This causes students to not be able to master language acquisition well if learning is only centered on one party only, that is the teacher with less interaction than the second party, that is the student.

The findings of the study showed the lecturer's attitude as an environmental factor that plays a role in increasing students' confidence to speak in Arabic. The researcher is of the view that students prefer to just listen to what is delivered and read what is displayed by the lecturer during the lecture session rather than doing something that can make them stand out for fear of not achieving the lecturer's impression of them. Students will start to lose enthusiasm when lecturers look down on their ability level and at the same time reduce students' interest in Arabic. A lack of deep interest in learning Arabic has limited students' engagement in Arabic in life. This is supported by Nguyen (2017), who stated that a student's interest will refer to their actual behavior that shows their active engagement and also their desire to do something. According to Wentzel (2009), a teacher who underestimates the student's ability can be described by the teacher's negative expectations while positive changes will occur to the student's achievement when the teacher explains his high expectations to the student. Thus, it is clear that teachers play an important role and teachers should function to develop, strengthen, and build students' skills (Noor et al., 2016).

Conclusion

Overall, students use Arabic in real life, but their engagement is still at a low level. This study also identified several factors that constrain students' engagement in the Arabic language. Therefore, this study suggests that the authorities can take appropriate initiatives to improve this situation to support autonomous language learning among students by holding more hands-on activities such as online quizzes, games, debates, competitions, and activities that can improve students' mastery of the Arabic language as well as creating a positive

environment in order to encourage students' engagement in the Arabic language and further increase the students' confidence in speaking in the Arabic language.

Accordingly, students should take advantage of all the facilities and opportunities available by maximizing engagement inside and outside classroom at the university level. In accordance with the recommendations of Kuh (2009), the maximum engagement of students inside and outside classroom at the university by focusing on social aspects and activities can indirectly contribute to high target language achievement. Finally, this will contribute to high achievement in Arabic as well as produce competent Arabic graduates.

Acknowledgement

This study is supported by Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (GGPM-2021-016: Model Penguasaan Kosa Kata Bahasa Arab di Peringkat Universiti Awam Malaysia).

References

- Mohamad, A. H. (2009). Tahap Komunikasi dalam Bahasa Arab dalam Kalangan Pelajar Sarjana Muda Bahasa Arab di IPTA Malaysia. *Journal of Islamic and Arabic Education*, 1(1), 1–14.
- Mustafa, A. F. F., & Mohamad, A. H. (2014). Tahap Penguasaan Bahasa Arab: Kajian Melalui Ujian Penempatan Bahasa Arab (APT). *WCIT 2014 2nd World Conference on Islamic Thought & Civilization*, 854–863.
- Noor, A. F. M., Jasmi, K. A., & Shukor, K. A. (2016). Pembinaan Hubungan di antara Guru dengan Pelajar. *Technical and Social Science Journal (TSSJ)*, 5(1), 138–148.
- Al-Barashdi, H., Bouazza, A., & Jabur, N. (2015). Smartphone Addiction among University Undergraduates: A Literature Review. *Journal of Scientific Research and Reports*, 4(3), 210–225. <https://doi.org/10.9734/JSRR/2015/12245>
- Allwright, R. L. (1984). The Importance of Interaction in Classroom Language Learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 5(2), 156–171.
- Brown, H. D. (1994). Principles of language learning and teaching. *The Modern Language Journal*, 72(1), 69.
- Ellis, N. C. (2005). At The Interface: Dynamic Interaction of Explicit and Implicit Language Knowledge. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 27(02). <https://doi.org/10.1017/S027226310505014X>
- Khalid, F., Daud, M. Y., & Nasir, M. K. M. (2016). Perbandingan penggunaan telefon pintar untuk tujuan umum dan pembelajaran dalam kalangan pelajar universiti. *International Conference on Education and Regional Development 2016 (ICERD 2016)*.
- Darusalam, G., & Hussin, S. (2016). *Metodologi penyelidikan dalam pendidikan*. Penerbit Universiti Malaya.
- Yusri, G., Rahimi, N. M., & Parilah, M. S. (2010). Sikap pelajar terhadap pembelajaran kemahiran lisan Bahasa Arab di Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, 10(3), 15–33.
- Fernandez, G. B., & Schmitt, N. (2015). How much collocation knowledge do L2 learners have? *ITL - International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 166(1), 94–126. <https://doi.org/10.1075/itl.166.1.03fer>
- Keefe, J. W. (1991). Learning style: Cognitive and thinking skills. *National Association of Secondary School Principals*.
- Kuh, G. D. (2009). The national survey of student engagement: Conceptual and empirical foundations. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2009(141), 5–20. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.283>

- Littlewood, W. (1981). *Communicative language teaching: An introduction*. Cambridge Language Teaching Library.
- Daud, N., & Abdul Pisal, N. (2014). Permasalahan Pertuturan Dalam Bahasa Arab Sebagai Bahasa Kedua. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, 14(1), 117–133.
- Nguyen, V. A. (2017). The Impact of Online Learning Activities on Student Learning Outcome in Blended Learning Course. *Journal of Information & Knowledge Management*, 16(4). <https://doi.org/10.1142/S021964921750040X>
- Philp, J., & Duchesne, S. (2016). Exploring Engagement in Tasks in the Language Classroom. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 36, 50–72. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190515000094>
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667305>
- Samah, R. (2011). Isu pembelajaran Bahasa Arab. *Persidangan Kebangsaan Pengajaran Dan Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab 2012 (PKEBAR'12)*.
- Rost, M. (2001). Teaching and researching listening. In *The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages* (pp. 7–13). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667206.002>
- Stroud, R. (2014). Student engagement in learning vocabulary with CALL. 340–344. <https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2014.000242>
- Wentzel, K. R. (2009). Student's Relationship With Teachers As Motivational Contextin . In K. R. Wentzel & A. Wigfield (Eds.), *Handbook of Motivation* (pp. 301–322). Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Ismail, Z. (2001). Hubungan antara persekitaran bahasa Arab dengan kemahiran bertutur dalam bahasa Arab di kalangan pelajar universiti di Malaysia.