
Linguistics Behind the Readability of Arabic Texts in the Teaching and Learning Process

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Abstract

Efforts to empower Arabic language subjects can further strengthen Malaysia's teaching and learning process. Along with the development of the language, Arabic has become the second most important language after English. Meanwhile, mastery of the Arabic language subject can be measured based on the readability of the student's text. Readability measures the difficulty level of a reading material, such as a school textbook. This concept paper discusses the linguistics behind the readability of Arabic texts through the teaching and learning process at school. In Malaysia, the study of the readability of the Arabic language is still in its early stages, and researchers still need to do more research on this. Therefore, the purpose of writing this concept paper revolves around the definition of linguistics in Arabic language learning, the readability of Arabic texts, and past studies related to linguistics in readability. These issues arise regarding the readability of Arabic reading materials and suggestions for further studies regarding the readability of Arabic texts.

Keywords : *Arabic texts; Linguistics; Readability; Teaching and Learning Process*

I. INTRODUCTION

Arabic is one of the most essential languages in the world. It is proven that the Arabic language is the national language of hundreds of millions of Arabs and is used by 20 countries for speech. Arabic is also not a foreign language for the Muslim community in Malaysia because most of the Malaysian community is Muslim. However, the use of Arabic among the Malaysian community is more focused on reading activities, i.e., readers learn to understand the order of sentences and the meaning of each word found in the reading text to understand Islamic sciences. This is because the Muslim community in Malaysia uses Arabic for worship and religious knowledge. This is different from speech and communication.

Arabic reading texts are a teaching and learning medium for deepening religious knowledge. Textbooks for learning Arabic are an essential aspect and element in the teaching and learning process at school because they contain facts, information, and various titles that describe and detail the curriculum subjects. The use of textbooks in the national education system in Malaysia is still ongoing. The selection of textbooks and reading materials that suit the target reader needs to be taken seriously to ensure the survival of Islamic civilization through reading culture. Interest and awareness of the importance of gaining knowledge

through reading materials in Arabic should always be instilled by choosing textbooks and reading materials suitable for the student's level of language proficiency [1], mainly non-native readers.

This is important because the students in this country are non-native speakers from non-Arab countries. Their skills in speaking Arabic are also different from those of Arab students or students studying in Arab countries. Therefore, this level of language proficiency requires an emphasis on selecting appropriate texts to help their understanding of the language. Readability can be related to the study to determine the subject and the text's difficulty for students. Therefore, the selection and writing of reading texts that are appropriate for the reader should be given priority so that the reader can stimulate and relate the information in the text to existing knowledge during reading and after reading. It is proven that the appropriateness of the reader's level of language mastery and the linguistic characteristics of the reading material need to be studied because difficulty in reading skills can interfere with the learning process.

This is to ensure that the teaching and learning process of the Arabic language does not end in the classroom or lecture room only but continues outside the classroom and wherever they are. Therefore, the readability level of the textbook

should be appropriate to the student's reading ability, and the content presentation should be good to attract the interest and motivation of the students involved [2].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The readability of texts plays a crucial role in the teaching and learning process, particularly in Arabic, a language known for its rich linguistic complexity. Understanding the factors contributing to the readability of Arabic texts is vital for ensuring effective communication and comprehension between educators and learners. One of the critical linguistic aspects that influence the readability of Arabic texts is the morphological structure of the language. Arabic is a highly inflected language, with words undergoing various morphological changes to convey grammatical information such as gender, number, case, and tense. This intricate system of inflexions can challenge learners, particularly those from non-Arabic backgrounds [3]. Researchers have explored the impact of morphological complexity on text readability, suggesting that texts with higher morphological density tend to be more difficult to comprehend [4].

One of the concepts of readability is the level ease or difficulty of reading material to read and understand. Researcher Klare [5] explained in his study that the term readability is essential in showing its three uses, namely:

1. To show the readability of a written text.
2. To show the ease of reading caused by the interest value of the reading material.
3. To show the ease of understanding caused by the writing style of the reading material.

The readability of Arabic texts is also influenced by the level of coherence and cohesion present in the discourse. Arabic employs various cohesive devices, such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunctions, to establish logical connections between ideas [6]. Texts that lack sufficient cohesive ties can hinder comprehension, as students may struggle to follow the flow of information and grasp the relationships between concepts.

Furthermore, the readability of Arabic texts can be impacted by the presence of rhetorical devices and figurative language, which are prevalent in Arabic literature and discourse [7]. Metaphors, similes, and other rhetorical figures can add an additional layer of complexity, requiring students to interpret the intended meaning beyond the literal sense. Appropriate instructional support and scaffolding

may be necessary to facilitate the comprehension of such linguistic elements.

It is also worth noting that individual differences among students, such as prior knowledge, language proficiency, and cognitive abilities, can influence their perception of text readability [8]. Texts that may be deemed readable for one student may pose challenges for another, highlighting the importance of considering student characteristics and tailoring instructional materials accordingly.

Researchers in Malaysia have also explored the use of technology to assess and enhance the readability of Arabic texts. For instance, Abdul Karim Al Tamimi et al. [9] developed an automatic readability index (AARI) specifically for Arabic texts, which considers factors such as word length, sentence length, and grammatical complexity. Such computational tools can assist educators and material developers in evaluating the readability of texts and making informed decisions about their suitability for different learner groups.

Crossley, Greenfield, and McNamara [10] stated that understanding the text becomes more accessible for readers at a low level if there are no relatedness signals between ideas because the reader has limited prior knowledge. The complex sentence structure is revealed at the initial stage for students to combine ideas in memory and facilitate the comprehension session of the language text. In addition, studies by Kamarulzaman [11] and Zulazhan [12], and Abdul Karim Al Tamimi et al. [13] showed that texts for students at higher levels are longer because of increased learning levels.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Issues with the readability of Arabic texts still need to be explored. This is proven by Kamarulzaman Abdul Ghani et al. [14], who explained that from the perspective of Arabic language studies in Malaysia, studies on the readability of textbooks are not much researched and very rare, unlike the measurement of English language readability, which has been explored for a long time and continues to develop until now [15]. This is a weakness because studying the readability of Arabic texts can be beneficial and help students master the Arabic language effectively. Among the challenges that can be discussed are: i) a lack of effort to measure the level of readability of reading materials, ii) students need help understanding the Arabic text, iii) a lack of effort to assess the appropriateness of the text.

A. Lack of effort to measure the readability level of reading materials

The issue in the readability of Arabic texts that was detected was that there needed to be more effort to measure the level of readability of reading materials used as subject texts. Therefore, the linguistic features used in the reading text need to be considered by the language level of the target reader to aid understanding [16]. The appropriateness of the text's language and the reader's language level are essential to ensure that the reader understands what is being read which is stated by Badgett [17]. This is because, according to Rumelhart [18], reading involves a process of interaction between the reader and the text that involves cognitive activities, namely recognizing words and automatically understanding the meaning of words, analyzing the grammatical structure and position of words by translating the meaning of words in sentences, connecting the meaning between sentences and sentences, connecting between paragraphs and the entire text and relating it to existing knowledge in the process of understanding the text. The reader's existing knowledge also interacts with linguistic features in the text to construct meaning.

B. Students need help understanding Arabic texts

In the context of Malaysian students who learn Arabic as a second language or a foreign language, they try to gain knowledge of religious knowledge from Arabic texts, face difficulties when they do not understand the text, and subsequently, this will remove interest in studying it. This happens because there is too little effort to measure the difficulty and ease of difficulty levels used as subject texts, which students initially compiled and then used by Malaysian students [19]. This leads to the significant role of teachers in choosing the right and good books to achieve the learning process goals in the classroom [20].

C. Lack of effort to evaluate text appropriateness

The incompatibility between the linguistic features in the text and the language level of the reader can affect their motivation to read and deepen the Arabic text even though they have a high awareness of the importance of reading Arabic reading materials, as stated by Grabe and Stoller [21], that motivation is an essential factor in reading development. The effort to evaluate the suitability of the text with the level of the reader's ability to understand the reading material is still decreasing and marginalizing the importance of individual diversity [22] especially in evaluating the reading text in Arabic.

Textbook writers must prepare appropriate texts or rewrite textbooks or reference books in a simple version, especially for non-Arabic speaking students.

IV. IMPLICATION

The teaching and learning process in education depends on several factors, such as the selection of teaching materials. The selection of books or reading materials that suit the student's level of understanding will allow students to master the information they want to convey well. The implications of readability on the teaching and learning process are far-reaching and extend beyond the classroom setting. Providing students with texts that are comprehensible and tailored to their proficiency levels can foster a positive attitude towards language learning and increase their motivation to engage with the material [23]. Conversely, texts that are overly complex or beyond the students' current abilities may lead to frustration, disengagement, and a reluctance to continue studying the language [24].

Teachers should be exposed to face problems in selecting and preparing reading materials for students. According to Khadijah Rohani [25], the time has come for teachers, parents, and book writers to focus on the problem of adapting reading materials to students' reading abilities. Therefore, it is necessary to produce suitable reading materials so students can go through the learning process more effectively and smoothly. This can be linked to the role of textbooks as the central aspect directly involved in student learning. Thus, textbooks can determine student achievement in the subject, and they are the only reference recognized by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (KPM) and owned by all students.

Furthermore, the readability of instructional materials has implications for inclusive education and addressing the diverse needs of students. Students with special needs, such as those with learning disabilities or limited language proficiency, may face additional challenges in comprehending texts that are not carefully designed with their needs in mind [26]. Ensuring that materials are accessible and appropriately leveled can help create an equitable learning environment and support the academic success of all students. In the context of Arabic language education, the readability of texts can also have cultural and social implications. Arabic is not only a language but also a carrier of cultural and religious values [27]. Texts that are overly complex or inaccessible may hinder students' ability to engage with and appreciate the rich cultural heritage embedded within the language,

potentially leading to a disconnect from their cultural roots or a lack of understanding of important societal and religious concepts [28].

V. FUTURE WORKS

This proposal for further research on the readability of Arabic texts hopes that more and more researchers will research this topic. Among them are a study on the construction of Arabic text readability formulas for non-native speakers in Malaysia, a study on the construction of an index of word and sentence patterns according to students' learning levels as a basis for writing school textbooks, and a study of linguistic characteristics involving all levels of learning, i.e. primary, secondary, and higher education alike there are primary or secondary textbooks. Studies like this are needed so that they can help improve the quality of writing and publishing Arabic textbooks as learning materials and subsequently improve the level of Arabic literacy among students in Malaysia. From another point of view, the potential of this readability study has been widely applied worldwide in various comprehensive field scopes. Studying in the field of readability is a significant field that is very wide and of great importance in education. The role of this study is crucial for a group of parties who care about the success of aspects of the world of education, even though studies related to the readability of Arabic language reading materials in Malaysia are still in a new stage and are rarely studied by researchers.

VI. CONCLUSION

The effectiveness of reading interaction between the target reader and the reading material influences the effectiveness of reading materials through the linguistic characteristics used to convey content. It needs to be compatible with the reader's competence, which involves the target reader's existing knowledge, maturity, and language skills. Linguistic features in the text must be paid attention to match the student's language proficiency development. A study of linguistic features that contribute to the readability of texts for non-native Arabic students, especially students who are in non-Arab countries, needs to be conducted. This is because readers of a second or foreign language need texts whose content, vocabulary and topics reflect their reality, everyday experience and language style that matches their language type. Therefore, suitable materials should be given attention to encourage the Malaysian community to a culture of reading, especially reading materials in Arabic based on Islamic knowledge. This is to help improve reading skills, make reading materials in Arabic familiar among the Muslim community, and

become the primary source of knowledge for building a civilized society.

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