Understanding Arabic-Speaking Skill Learning Strategies Among Selected Malay Learners: A Case-Study At The International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)

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ABSTRACT

In Malaysia, studies have shown that most Malay learners learning Arabic Language exhibit weak Arabic speaking skill despite spending years of learning the language. However, given the same learning environment and experience, some of them could be considered as good Arabic speakers as revealed by the results of Arabic Placement Test conducted by the Center of Languages and pre-Academic Development (CELPAD) of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). These learners have successfully scored band 7 and above in Arabic speaking skill test. The researchers believe that being aware of certain learning strategies in enhancing their speaking skills would help these learners to become good Arabic speakers. This assumption is based on several theories in language learning strategies which postulate that learners' success in language learning or lack of it is attributable to the various strategies which different learners bring to tasks and not solely relying on environment per say. Therefore this study attempts to understand the assumption by investigating the Arabic speaking skill learning strategies of selected Malay good Arabic speakers and Malay poor Arabic speakers at the (IIUM) within and outside the parameters of the educational settings. In addition, the research also seeks to explore the students' perception on Arabic speaking skill in terms of the importance of Arabic speaking skill for the Malay learners, the required level of Arabic speaking skill for the Malay learners and the prerequisites to become good Arabic speakers.

Keywords: speaking skill, second language acquisition and language learning strategies.

INTRODUCTION

*T*he learning of a FL/L2 requires the learners to go the extra miles supplementing their class lessons especially when the language is learned in the absence of its native environment, for example learning Arabic Language in Malaysia. In this case Arabic Language is learned formally in educational setting instead of being acquired naturally. According to Ellis, (1994:228) "in most cases classroom learners often fail to develop much functional language ability." Lightbown and Spada (2002:91) explain that in natural context "learner is exposed to the language at work" or "in social interaction or where the instruction is directed toward native speakers rather than toward learners of the language." Therefore the emphasis is more on social significance rather than mastery of the subject matters. In contrast, "formal learning takes place through conscious attention to rules and principles and greater emphasis is placed on mastery of subject matter treated as a decontextualized body of knowledge" (Ellis, 1994:214). The idea is also supported by Lightbown and Spada (2002:92) that the "teacher's

goal is to see to it that students learn the vocabulary and grammatical rules of the target language" and "the goal of learners in such courses is often to pass an examination rather than to use the language for daily communicative interaction." Zawawi et.al, (2005) have termed the process as being more 'mechanical' rather than natural. The distinction between these two types of learning underlies Krashen's five hypotheses for second language acquisition. The hypotheses say that language learning occurs consciously in academic setting as a result of attention to language in an effort to understand and memorize the rules. In contrast, language acquisition occurs subconsciously and naturally when learners are using language for communication (Ellis, 1994).

By relying on the natural setting for language acquisition believes to leave little room for conscious learning strategy to play a role in the process of language development. This is surely contradicting to several theories in language learning strategies which argue that different success in language learning is attributable to the various strategies which different learners bring to tasks and not solely relying on environment. (NCLRC) admits that learners' difference in ability, motivation or effort cause different success rate in language learning. However the major concern deals on "a major difference lies in their knowledge about and skill in using "how to learn" techniques, that is, learning strategies" (NCLRC). Oxford (1990:8) refers the learning strategy as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations." These strategies are the components to "enhance language learning and help develop language competence, as reflected in the learner's skills in listening, speaking, reading, or writing the L2 or FL" (NCLRC). The importance of the learning strategies is without doubt indisputable. According to (NCLRC) language learners have two kinds of knowledge working for them namely their knowledge of their first language and their awareness of learning strategies. Being aware of various learning strategies would give the learners choices to adopt the best strategy to perform a specific language learning tasks. As the results they would become more confidence, highly motivated, expect to succeed and are able to fulfill their expectations. Based on the pre and post tests, Anida (2003) has successfully proven that strategies improved students' performance, self confidence, interests, and attitudes towards the Arabic Language. In addition to that, (NCLRC) asserts that learner's success in the language learning or lack of it "is due to the way they go about learning rather than to forces beyond their control. Most students can learn how to use strategies more effectively; when they do so, they become more self reliant and better able to learn independently." They begin to take more responsibility for their own learning, and their motivation increases because they have managed to elevate their confidence in their learning ability and specific techniques for successful language learning. According to (Oxford, 1990:10) "self direction is particularly important for language learners, because they will not always have teachers around to guide as they use the language outside the classroom."

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Arabic Language was introduced in Malaysia in the 14th century with the coming of Islam. Being the language of the Holy Book; Quran makes it necessary for the Muslim to learn Arabic Language, "to be able to read the Quran, and *Ḥadith* themselves or to listen to or read the works of the ʿ*ulama'* (learned Muslim) who would explain the religion in their own language" (Rosnani, 2004:22). To ensure good comprehension of the newly embraced religion, Reading, Grammar-translation approaches and memorization in the Arabic Language teaching and learning were preferably practiced. Such approaches have caused some of the language skills that it carries to be neglected. Receptive skills like reading and comprehension were prioritized, while productive skills like writing and speaking skills received lesser attention. The following excerpt by Versteegh (2006: 5) lends evidence to the above:

In many parts of the world, from Southeast Asia to West Africa, Arabic was introduced [sic] the language of Islam by missionaries who sometimes were not even native speakers of Arabic but had been trained in the Islamic sciences in Arabic. In the system of education they introduced, which is still current throughout the Islamic world, young children learn Arabic along with the principles of reading and writing by going to a traditional teacher and learning to recite religious texts, chiefly the Quran. Later they go to the majlis of a teacher where they start studying texts. Most of the teachers have been educated in the same system and become experts in a language they can read and write, but do not speak.

Such practices and problems pervade the present time as proven by some studies (Tarmizi, 1997; Ismail, 1999; Anida, 2003; Amilrudin, 2003; Khalid, 2004; Zawawi, Mohd. Sukki, Alif Redzuan and Sanimah, 2005; Siti

Ikbal, 2006; Mat Taib, 2006). These studies have portrayed that most Malay learners of different level of study exhibit weak Arabic speaking skill despite spending years of learning the language. However, given the same learning environment and experience, some Malay learners could be considered as good Arabic speakers as revealed by the results of Arabic Placement Test organized by the Center for Language and Pre-academic Development (CELPAD) of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). Some of these learners have successfully scored band 7 above in Arabic speaking skill test. The researcher believes that being aware of certain speaking skill learning strategies have helped these learners to become good Arabic speakers. This assumption is based on several theories in language learning strategies which postulate that different success in language learning is attributable to the various strategies which different learners bring to task and not solely relying on the environment.

Studies on the Arabic speaking skill in Malaysia were more targeted on studying the level of mastery of Arabic speaking skill among students, the problems and the contributing factors to such problems and the teaching methodology of Arabic Language in schools and higher institutions. The methodologies applied in the quest of finding the data were survey and observation. In a different light, there were also studies pertaining to the Arabic Language learning strategies. However, they referred to language learning strategies in general without specifying to the Arabic speaking skill. In contrast, studies on the speaking skill in other L2/FL, for example Chou, 2004; Cohen, Weaver and Li, 1996; Bueno, 2006; Huang, 2006 and so forth showed greater attempts in understanding the issues at hand thoroughly. Researchers extended their interest to study the effect of learner awareness campaign on speaking skill development, strategies based instruction and so forth. In the usual practice, they applied several methodologies involving elaborate procedures for the research. However, it is disappointing to say that the primary issue of speaking skill learning strategies as the present researcher does is not at the expected level.

The scarcity of information on Arabic speaking skill learning strategies especially those of good Arabic speakers is discouraging since the effective strategies remain hidden to the Arabic Language learners. With that in mind, this research attempts to contribute to the knowledge by investigating the Arabic speaking skill learning strategies of selected good Malay Arabic speakers and poor Malay Arabic speakers at the (IIUM) inside as well as the ones beyond the educational settings. This study also tries to examine the students' perception on Arabic speaking skill in terms of the importance of Arabic speaking skill for the Malay learners, the required level of Arabic speaking skill for the Malay learners and the pre-requisites to become good speakers of the Arabic language.

METHOD

The researcher has designed the present study to be a case study employing individual interview and focus group interview as methods to elicit the data.

PROCEDURES

Selection of participants

To guide in the identification of information rich cases, the researcher began by listing all essential criteria for the participants before locating a unit matching the list. The first step was to clarify the meaning of 'Malay'. In the present research Malay learners refer to Malaysian only and who have never been abroad. Malay learners of Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, South Thailand and so forth were not included in the group. The purpose of specifying the Malay learners to Malaysians only is to have standard Arabic Language learning background, environment and experience. Malay learners of other countries might receive Arabic Language education differently from their counterparts in Malaysia. The distinctive learning experience that was obtained might resulted in different performance in the Arabic speaking skill. Furthermore, those who obtained their formal study abroad from the Middle Eastern countries might have better Arabic speaking skill as the result of being exposed to the native speakers' environment first hand.

Secondly the Malay learners should be the current students of (IIUM) only ranging from year one to year four. Malay learners from other universities and school children were excluded from the list. Thirdly the participants for good Arabic speaker group disregard any specialization since the number was very little as compared with the moderate or poor ones. However, priority was given to those of Arabic Language-based specialization such as

Arabic Language and Literature, Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Teaching Arabic for the non Native Speakers. As for poor Arabic speaker group, the research catered for the participants with the Arabic Language-based specialization.

Fourthly the researcher applied the Arabic Placement Test (APT) results announced by (CELPAD) of (IIUM) to select the Malay good Arabic speakers and the Malay poor Arabic speakers. Good Arabic speakers are those who score band 7 and above. According to the scheme issued by (CELPAD) they are described as demonstrating high proficiency and fluency while speaking. They are also able to express their thoughts very clearly and orderly, commit no or at least little mistakes in pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. As for the poor Arabic speakers community, they normally score band 4.5 and below. They are characterized as being unable to express or convey their thoughts clearly, commit so many mistakes in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. In general the interaction is commonly very difficult. Their lack of proficiency was also established by being totally clueless and not able to communicate in Arabic Language at all. However, exception was given to students who were awarded best or second best speaker/orator/debater at any competition level preferably over the national level. Such exception was accepted to see how these students who used to be poor Arabic speakers managed to become good Arabic speakers. Academic awards such as best student, dean's list or rector's list awards can be accepted as a booster for the participants' motivation as well as strengthening their qualifications.

Data collection and analysis

The researcher has conducted six individual interviews; three for the Malay good Arabic speakers and another three for the Malay poor Arabic speakers and two focus group interviews consisting of four participants in each group. The interviews conducted were semi-structured in nature. The individual interviews were audio recorded using Sony I.C Recorder. As for the focus group interviews, besides being audio recorded using the same device, they were video recorded using the JVC Hard Disc Camcorder. The data collected were then transcribed verbatim into texts and coded manually to arrive at the main ideas and themes.

Validation strategies

After the data analysis, the researcher proceeded with the member checking procedure, where she took the tentative results back to the participants asking for their reviews to check if the main ideas and themes emerged corresponded to what they have said during the interviews. The researcher was able to meet five participants face to face and four participants preferred the discussion to be via email. Necessary correction was made after the exercise. The research was continued with peer examination procedure where she sought help from two colleagues who are well experienced in teaching the Arabic Language including the language skills to recheck and provide comments on the main ideas and themes that emerged. Both participants agreed with all the main ideas and themes except for the second participant who suggested for several new themes that would replace the existing ones and advised the researcher to elaborate in detail of the meaning of each theme in the report.

RESULTS

The perceptions of Malay good Arabic speakers and Malay poor Arabic speakers on the Arabic speaking skill

The importance of the Arabic speaking skill for the Malay learners

The findings have revealed that all participants of both groups of speakers perceived Arabic speaking skill as important for the Malay Arabic Language learners except for MGAS 1. By being flawless and proficient in conversing in the Arabic language would contribute to a more positive outcome out of the Arabic Language learning. This reason was shared by 3 MGAS and 6 MPAS. MGAS 1 however presented a totally different perception from the rest as he said that Arabic speaking skill is not important for the Malay learners except as a basic skill. What he meant by 'basic' is the ability to listen, understand and the ability to reply in any conversation. The Malay Arabic Language learners should not be expected to achieve the standard of a debater or a native speaker level of language competency. He further explained that speaking skill should not be viewed as the ultimate measurement of success in language learning. Sometimes a language learner is excellent in writing but very poor in

speaking. Therefore, it is not fair to base the evaluation solely on his or her speaking skill. The notion was further emphasized on the ideal level of Arabic speaking skill for the Malay learners that should take into account the standard level of all Malay learners in Malaysia. If the majority is able to speak basic Arabic then that should be the ideal level for all. Besides being an outcome of learning, respectively 3 MGAS and MPAS said that Arabic speaking skill is important for career. According to MGAS 6 fluent Arabic speakers are more successful during interview and easier to get employed than those who are not. Simultaneously Arabic speaking skill is an essential medium of learning as emphasized by respectively 1 MGAS and MPAS. According to MGAS 4 learning would be more effective and meaningful if learners are able to speak Arabic well. It is because Arabic Language is highly involved in the learning process especially during group discussion, class presentation and participation. Its significance was further highlighted by MGAS 1 who stated that understanding Islam is possible through reading and learning however to reach higher level of understanding requires good Arabic speaking skill to criticize, debate and discuss critically with the experts.

The required level of Arabic speaking skill for the Malay learners

Pertaining to the required level of Arabic speaking skill for the Malay learners, respectively 5 MGAS and MPAS perceived that Malay learners should be able to achieve advanced level of Arabic speaking skill at the end of their study especially for those specializing in Arabic Language. Advanced level refers to the ability to speak as good as natives or as first language, spontaneous, grammatically correct or no simple grammatical mistake and able to speak about academic and non academic matters. This perception is based on the assumption that the Malay learners have spent long years learning and being exposed to Arabic Language therefore they should have acquired good Arabic speaking skill. On the other hand respectively 2 MGAS and MPAS perceived standard level of Arabic speaking skill as sufficient for the Malay learners. Standard level could be described as the ability to listen to, understand and reply to the conversation. This perception considers the level of Arabic speaking skill of the majority and the necessity of Arabic speaking skill as a medium of communication in Malaysia.

The pre-requisites to become good Arabic speakers

The findings have revealed 2 types of pre-requisites namely internal and external pre-requisites. Internal pre-requisite refers to the essential conditions that an Arabic Language learner must have, prepare or perform in order to become good Arabic speakers such as self pre-requisites like constant practice, strong interest to become good speakers, high self confidence, courage, mental readiness, discipline and language pre-requisites such as good collection of vocabulary, extensive readings, good command of grammar and sufficient content of speaking. In a different light, the external pre-requisite refers to conditions that support the development of Arabic speaking skill from outside the learners such as supportive environment and ample opportunity to practice speaking in Arabic. The findings have revealed that MGAS and MPAS viewed internal pre-requisites such as language and self pre-requisites as more important to develop Arabic speaking skill than the external pre-requisites such as the chances to do so as well as the suitable environment. However, the difference between them was given the priority on the elements of the internal pre-requisites. MGAS seemed to prioritize language pre-requisites over self pre-requisites, while MPAS emphasized on self pre-requisites over language pre-requisites. In term of language, MGAS perceived vocabulary as the most important pre-requisite followed by grammar and extensive reading. As for self, confidence was considered the most important pre-requisite followed by discipline, interest and practice. Other than that, opportunity as an element of external pre-requisite was the least important pre-requisite for MGAS. As for MPAS courage was the most predominant pre-requisite followed by practice and confidence. The less important pre-requisites were motivation, discipline and active learning. As for language, the vocabulary was considered the most important pre-requisite followed by grammar and content of speaking. Similar to MGAS, the opportunity to speak Arabic was the least important pre-requisite for MPAS.

Strategies practiced inside the classroom

The research has revealed that the participants of both groups of speakers did perform some strategies to develop Arabic speaking skill in the classroom. Normally the strategies performed were preparatory in nature. This can best be described as the strategies performed are more to learning, preparing or equipping self with essential knowledge and skills to speak. For example, during lessons, the common strategies participants performed were

collecting new vocabulary or expression, spotting the grammatical mistakes found in the lecturer's speech, imitating the pronunciation of Arabic words or expressions, and comparing different expressions uttered by different lecturers; Arabs, Malays and those who were born in the Middle Eastern countries. All these strategies are best described as the efforts to accommodate themselves with elements necessary for good Arabic speaking for instance the Arabic vocabulary, native like pronunciation and expressions. With regards to class participation, the commonly preferred approach by the participants performed was relatively simple forms such as reading passages, asking and answering questions, making heard of the poetry memorized and so on. Even though these kinds of participations require oral contribution, they are not as effective as elaborations by the participations. Simple participation demands short and simple contribution and sometimes the participants can extract them from their textbooks while elaborative participation includes putting forward views and opinion or responding to the lectures by doing discussions, giving comments, explanation, elaboration and description on the lesson being discussed and to the questions being asked. Normally it requires students to produce original and elaborate statements. Learners cannot vary the strategies inside the classroom because of time constraint and the focuses were mainly for the lesson. The above strategies are identical in both groups of speakers.

Strategies practiced outside the classroom

The present research has revealed that most participants of both groups of speakers were more active and creative in seeking out opportunities to practice speaking Arabic beyond the classroom parameters than inside the classroom especially MGAS. They have shown more types, quality and quantity of strategies as compared to the MPAS.

The use of media

There was no much difference between MGAS and MPAS in term of the use of the media. Both seemed to be aware of the potential media and possible activities that can be performed while using the media to develop their Arabic speaking skills. However, the researcher believes that the awareness contributed from the different media on different aspects of speaking skill, the extent of application of what gained from the media and the frequency of using them have influenced the results of the development of their speaking skills. These three qualities represent quality use of the media. MGAS appeared to be more creative with the matching relevant media with their needs in speaking skills. It was evidenced in the case of MGAS 3 who preferred to watch Arabic classic movies for example the stories of the prophets and Arab poets to develop his formal Arabic speaking skill. His daily conversation was very much influenced by watching Arabic video clips that are widely available online. These video clips allow him to learn how to express himself spontaneously using the non-formal Arabic Language. Simultaneously MGAS appeared to be excited to apply what has been obtained from the media in their speaking. MGAS 3 was always eager to apply the new vocabulary or expressions heard from the media immediately. In a similar effect, MGAS 6 even extended its use in the Malay speaking situation just to make him familiar with the new vocabulary or expressions learnt from the media. Such attitudes unfortunately were not discovered among MPAS as most of them used the media just for the mere purpose of having fun. Some of them were reported to make no follow up activities such as looking for the meaning of new vocabulary or expressions heard from the media and so on. Concurrently MGAS appeared to be diligent and committed to become good Arabic speakers as some of them make the use of media as part of their daily routines. MGAS 3 said that he always use the internet at home during the semester break to stay connected to the Arabic Language. At the hostel, MGAS 2 listened to children songs everyday to create the Arabic environment. In contrast MPAS rarely used the media except for MPAS 2. She used the media approximately 3 times a week especially during her free time or in the evenings. The remaining others made use of the facilities once a week or at the beginning of the semester only.

The participation in co-curricular activity

The findings also have shown that there was no much difference between MGAS and MPAS in term of participation in co-curricular activities. Both appeared to favor activities that involve speaking and both participate in debate the most. However the difference was identified in term of the effects of participation in those co-curricular activities on their Arabic speaking skill. Similar to media, co-curricular activities also could be a useful means to develop Arabic speaking skill especially those that involve speaking. However learners should be

committed to participate in the activities. Learners should be well prepared physically and mentally to face all challenges demanded by the societies. If they wish to fulfill half of the demands for example participating in debate just to be exposed to Arabic speaking and refuse to be a debater as did MPAS, the activity will not be helpful. It is because learners will not be willing to be trained thus leaving their language and speaking skill not corrected and not improved. So participation in the activity is just a waste of time. This is the strategy observed from MGAS. It could be seen in several cases for instance MGAS 2 narrated that she was also reluctant to be a debater and her participation in the debate society was just to expose herself to Arabic speaking. However after a try her view towards the debate changed and she no longer has problem with open comments and correction and her self confidence increases gradually so as her speaking skill. MPAS on the other hand put too much filters on themselves. For example some MPAS viewed Arabic debate club only as a place to learn the speaking skill and to get some exposure for Arabic speaking practice. They disliked the nature of debate as they claimed as mouth fighting and were not willing to participate in any competition. The unwillingness was also caused by lacking of fluency. As the results they inconsistently attended the trainings. There were also MPAS who attended the debate training for the sake of obtaining more carry marks and attended any programme organized by the society only if invited.

The speaking practice with partners

The results have shown that the type of approach and frequency of approach to initiate the speaking practice with the partners performed by MPAS were very much lacking compared to those of MGAS. MGAS have performed more elaborate approaches than simple approach while MPAS prefers an elaborate approach to initiate the speaking practice with partners be it native or the non native speakers. Elaborate approach demands greater contribution from the participants in terms of language, skill and effort to begin the speaking practice because the situation in which they participate is more challenging as they are mostly participated by native speakers and Arabic Language is fully used as medium of interaction. A clear example would be the participation in intellectual discussion or commonly known as study circle at the IIUM, informal educational or religious debate that requires arguments, giving information about something and long daily conversation including phone calls. Apart from that, simple approach on the other hand involves easy ways to start the speaking practice for example by asking simple questions about the lesson that is not understood or common daily expression like "how are you?", "what are you doing?", where are you going?", jokes and knowledge challenge. Sometimes participants mixed Arabic terminologies with Malay Language to ensure the speaking practice going. These kinds of question or conversation are uncomplicated at all and almost effortless to produce because they are very familiar to the participants and used very minimal Arabic Language to initiate the speaking practice with the partners. In the researcher's point of view, the lacking was due to the less command of Arabic Language especially the vocabulary and grammar. The low mastery of speaking skill include the problem of spontaneity, the lack of self confidence, courage and so on to initiate the speaking practice and to keep it flowing continuously as well as low discipline to practice it regularly. MPAS 3 is always reluctant to look for partners to practice speaking Arabic with because she is extremely shy and unfriendly. She needs other people to start the conversation and she is only willing to talk to her closest friends and family members only. Most of the time, her conversation with them does not last long as they do not have good Arabic speaking skill. Arabic Language is mainly used as daily phrases such as "how are you?", "where are you going?" and so on. Similar to the above, MPAS 5 manages to strike a conversation with his roommates for not more than a minute. He always feels uncomfortable to engage in a conversation with his native friends when he meets them accidentally at the canteen or hostel lobby and so on. His problem is being too cautious with the correct grammar or right vocabulary to be used. As a result, he hardly speaks Arabic with anyone except by copying others' expressions. These 2 examples illustrate how good command of language especially vocabulary and grammar and good mastery of speaking skill are crucial for speaking in Arabic. The weaknesses in these 2 pre-requisites become barriers to the learners and which later resulted to being unconfident, shy, nervous, lack of courage to initiate speaking, be corrected and accept comments from the partners. These feelings cause them to become unmotivated and at the same time reducing their creativity level in searching for the opportunities to practice speaking with anyone. They later became ineffective in their speaking practice.

DISCUSSION

The present research has shown that most participants of both groups of speakers shared similar perceptions on the importance of Arabic speaking skill for the Malay learners as well as the required level of Arabic speaking

skill. They also shared most of the strategies inside as well as outside the classroom. However the difference between them was identified in term of perception of the pre-requisites to become good Arabic speakers. MGAS viewed internal pre-requisites such as language and self pre-requisites as more important to develop Arabic speaking skill than the external pre-requisites such as the opportunities gained or the environment. In the actual setting, MPAS also exhibited the same view as of MGAS's but they differ in terms of the priority on the elements of the internal pre-requisites. MGAS seemed to prioritize language pre-requisites over self pre-requisites, while MPAS emphasized self pre-requisites over language pre-requisites. The researcher believes that language becomes the main priority for MGAS because it is highly required to achieve the advanced level of Arabic speaking skill as aspired by most of them. Having good command of Arabic Language for example sufficient collection of Arabic vocabulary, good command of grammar such as Arabic Syntax and Arabic Morphology contribute highly to the beauty of the language thus enable them to gain courage and confidence to speak up. With these attitudes they will use various strategies to utilize whatever facilities and opportunities available around them to create the environment in order to speak Arabic accordingly. In other words they become motivated and interested to practice what they have learnt orally. When they realize that they are able to speak, they will be more enthusiastic with their new speaking ability thus elevating their positive attitudes towards speaking Arabic by being more discipline, motivated, determined, diligent, creative and so on. That is why external obstacle such as opportunity and environment do not matter much for the MGAS as they can create them by themselves. It made speaking Arabic enjoyable for MGAS. They have demonstrated various positive attitudes and meaningful strategies for the speaking skill. Some of those strategies are uniquely theirs. According to Ellis (1994:555) "successful learners appear to use learning strategies more frequently and in qualitatively different ways than learners who are less successful."

As for MPAS the researcher believes that they are missing one important element to become good Arabic speakers that is knowledge about the language. It seems like they have mistakenly prioritize the wrong pre-requisites for the speaking skill. As emphasized earlier, having good command of the Arabic Language is crucial to become good speakers. Knowledge of vocabulary and grammar seem to be inseparable and indispensable to speak an L2/FL. It is because in order to say something learners must have the knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical structure to form sentences correctly while conversing in the second language mentioned. Without it learners cannot acquire good speaking skills. Once they have realized that they are weak in the speaking, their courage and confidence to speak will deteriorate. Those feelings will kill their enthusiasm and without it they will only establish negative attitudes towards the Arabic speaking skill that will later lead to discouragement portrayed in their quality and quantity of strategies that they perform.

This finding corresponds to the study of Abraham and Vann (1987) who suggested that "learners have at some level of consciousness a philosophy of how language is learned" (p:96) The learning philosophy "guides the approach the learners take in language learning situations which in turn manifested in observable (and unobservable) strategies used in learning and communication" (p:96). However, the environment of the second language learning experience including the formal or informal instruction and practice may modify the language learning philosophy and give indirect effect on the language learning outcomes. Another similarity found with this study is in term of the efforts to achieve grammatical correctness and flexibility in using strategies between successful and unsuccessful language learners. Gerardo, the successful learner displayed higher concern on grammatical rules and correctness to improve his speaking and writing than Pedro, the unsuccessful learner. In term of language learning philosophy, Gerardo's appeared to prefer the broader view that believes language learning requires giving focus on both function and form including vocabulary, morphology and grammar. Pedro's limited view accepts language primarily as a set of words that could be string together to communicate.

The relationship between the perceptions and strategies could be illustrated as the followings:

MGAS:

Good Arabic speaking skill (fluency, proficiency, spontaneity and so on)

Requires

Language (vocabulary, grammar and skill of speaking)

Elevates

Self (courage, confidence and so on)

Causes

Interest to practice speaking

Develops

Various strategies (relevant, quality and quantity)

Causes

Ability to speak

Causes

Excitement

Establishes more

Positive attitudes (practice, discipline, determination, motivation, creativity, diligence and so on)

Results in

Good Arabic speaking skill

MPAS:

Good Arabic speaking skill (fluency, proficiency, spontaneity and so on)

Requires

Self (courage, confidence and so on)

Unable to build

Language (vocabulary, grammar and skill of speaking)

Cause

Inability to speak

Kills

Enthusiasm

Kills

Positive characteristics (practice, discipline, determination, motivation, creativity, diligence and so on)

Causes

Ignorance and unawareness of strategies and potential means, environment and opportunity to practice speaking Arabic

Results in

Weak Arabic speaking skill

CONCLUSION

The results of this study suggest that success in Arabic speaking skill is attributed to the various strategies which different learners bring into focus and not solely relying on environment. But on the one hand, the effectiveness of the strategies is influenced by the learners' perception on how Arabic speaking skill is studied. Learners should be aware that as any other language, Arabic Language also consists of forms and functions. Therefore, the learners should attend both of them in correct methods to become good Arabic speakers. Learners who focus on forms only might not be able to become good Arabic speakers due to less functional practice. Similarly, learners who focus on function alone might not become good Arabic speaker due to the limited knowledge of the language.

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