Misconceptions on *Ism Al-ʿAdad Wa Al-Maʾdud* Among Students of Arabic Language in Malaysia

By Nurul Hudaa Hassan, Nik Mohd Rahimi Nik Yusof & Ashraf Ismail

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I. INTRODUCTION

The teaching and learning of Arabic grammar knowledge is highly distinctive compared to other subjects. The obvious difference is that it involves an extensive array of grammatical methods and comprehensive skills. The comprehensiveness of skills in Arabic grammar knowledge comprises eloquent mastery of Arabic Language, profound understanding, strength of memory as well as high creativity. Arabic grammar knowledge also requires vast and deep understanding of a concept in an accurate and holistic manner. All Arabic language teachers must be responsible in maintaining competency in the implementation of the Arabic grammar knowledge teaching and learning process by taking into account the requirements and level of attainment of the students. As such, any grammar knowledge learning problems raised by students should be accepted and handled positively to preserve the beauty and fluency of the Arabic language. Arabic language is the most beautiful and noble language created by Allah Subhanahu Wataa’la for mankind. The Quran, which was revealed by Allah Subhanahu Wataa’la through Jibril ‘Alaihi al-Salam to Prophet Muhammad Sallallahu ‘Alaihi Wasallam, contains a diversity of knowledge involving all aspects of living, including grammar knowledge. It discusses the numerous methods available to be cognizant of the laws that have to be established at the end of every Arabic word, in terms of order which comprise *irab* and *bina‘*. The scope of discussion regarding grammar knowledge is related to the phrases or words in Arabic language in order to avoid errors in speech and writing (Mustafa 2005). However, grammatical errors in speech and writing tasks are common among students who are nonnative speakers of the language. Many studies have revealed that grammatical errors are made by students of all levels in Malaysia.

II. STUDIES ON GRAMMATICAL ERRORS AMONG ARABIC LANGUAGE NONNATIVE SPEAKING STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA

According to Jassem Ali (2000), Malay students learning Arabic Language as a Foreign Language or Second Language face difficulties when learning the four essential skills (*maharat al-arba‘a*), namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Among the four skills, writing is alleged to be the most difficult and most susceptible to grammatical errors. Errors in grammar usage largely occur among students. This is based on studies involving grammar application error analyses from various aspects carried out in secondary schools and institutions of higher learning (Muhammad Bakhit 1998; Jassem Ali 2000; Hanizam 2005; Norasmazura 2005). The most frequently made grammatical errors are those referring to gender and quantity, whether pertaining to the *Frab* marks for gender and quantity, or the formation of phrases and sentences related to the similarities or differences in gender and quantity (Sohair 1990; Bakhit 1998; Jassem 2000). A study carried out by Ashinida (1998) on grammatical errors committed in religious secondary schools found that students usually make mistakes in constructing sentences, especially those involving *al-idafat* and *al-na‘at*. Mohd Bakhit (1998), in his analysis on grammatical errors in examinations among Malay students in local institutions

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of higher learning found that the mistake often repeated in examinations involving essay writing is *ism al-`adad wa al-ma`dud* besides other grammatical errors.

The grammar topic which Arabic language teachers find the hardest to impart to their students is *ism al-`adad wa al-ma`dud*, that is numeral (*adad*) and its subject (*ma`dud*). This is because the method to determine the gender of معدود, that is very dependent on the gender of العدد, is unique. Sometimes the genders are the same and sometimes they oppose each other (Noorhayati 2009). As such, Arabic grammar teachers are unable to make accurate comparisons between numeral classifiers in Malay language grammar and *al-`adad wa al-ma`dud* in Arabic grammar as there is no similarity between them. A teacher teaching this topic has to master and understand it well because many students find the معادود and مئوناث or otherwise known as the masculine and feminine aspects confusing and cannot be likened to numeral classifiers in Malay language (Zabiyyah 2002).

According to Baharuddin Abdullah (2003), the Arabic grammar syntax system is very complex due to changes at the end of a word involving changes to the end vowel or additions. Besides that, there are words which are positioned earlier and later in Quranic verses and reasons for the repetition of certain words. Changes which take place at the end of a word in Arabic language is known as *i`rab* or case. There are various cases, in the form of nominative (*marfu`*), accusative (*mansub*) or genitive (*majruh*). This also applies to *ism al-`adad wa al-ma`dud* which involves various cases, depending on the position of *ism al-`adad wa al-ma`dud* in a sentence.

There are studies stating that *ism al-`adad wa al-ma`dud* is among the most difficult topics in Arabic grammar. Nevertheless, it is undeniably very important. Some researchers have expressed their amazement over the topic as it involves a law that contradicts the norm; feminine is coupled with masculine and vice versa (Mahmud Ramadhan 2007). In addition, there are also cases of feminine and masculine being coupled with their respective gender. As such, Arabic language teachers need to master and possess vast and profound knowledge regarding the concept and operations of *ism al-`adad wa al-ma`dud* to ensure it is effectively conveyed to the students.

### III. The Concept and Operations of *ism al-`Adad Wa Al-Ma`dud*

*Adad* is something that shows quantity, such as one, two, three and so forth. *Ma`dud*, on the other hand, is a countable item (Dayf 1986). Ahmad (2001) in "*al-Wajiz fi al-nahw wa al-sarf*" defines *-adad as something that shows the quantity of a countable item. In correlation with this, Dayf (1986) states that *adad* is any noun or adjective showing the quantity of an item or portraying a specific sequence. *Adad* consists of two sections, namely *adad asli*, that is، واحد الأثنان، and *adad tartbi* such as *adad al ra`ib al tumam*, that is، الثالث الربع الخمس، and so forth. *Adad* is also divided into several parts, namely *adad idafah*, *adad murokka`, *adad ataf* and *adad uqad* as follows:

1. In *mufrad* form with the position of *ma`dud mar`ut* and *ism* *adad* as اَنَاَث. This *ism adad* is for quantities 1 and 2 (`*adad al-mufrad*). For example:

   *ربه الطائرة أحد عشر سناء والثاني عشر سنة سابحة*

2. In the form of *idafah* arrangement with the position of *ma`dud* as *mudaf ilaih* and *ism adad* as its *ma`dud*. This *ism adad* is for quantities 3 until 10 (`*adad al-mufrad*). For example:

   قرات ثلاث قصص وأربعة كتب

3. In the form of *mudaf* and *mudaf ilaih* arrangement with the position of *ma`dud* as *tamyiz*. This *ism adad* is for quantities 11 until 19 (`*adad al-murakkab*).

   *قرأتان ثلاثة قصص وثلاثون كتابة*

4. In the form of *mualq sama* *muzakkar salim* with the position of *ma`dud* as *tamyiz*. This *ism adad* is for quantities 20 until 90 (`*adad al-luqud*).

   *وجاز وأربعون كتابة وثمانون كتابة*

5. In the form of *ataf* and *ma`tuf* arrangement with the position of *ma`dud* still as *tamyiz*. This *ism adad* is for quantities 21 until 99 (`*adad al-ma`tuf*). For example:

   *في الحقيقة واثنتا عشرة كتابة وثلاثون كتابة*

6. In *idafat* arrangement with the position of *ma`dud* as *mudaf ilaih* or possibly a combination of *mudaf* and *mudaf ilaih*. This *ism adad* is for quantities 100 and above such as:

   *ومنتان امرأة جاية منة رجل*

   *بهر بشورون وفي وحدانون وخمسان ألف امرأة*

In understanding *ism al-`adad wa al-ma`dud*, there are several concepts which students generally find confusing, especially those involving the functions of the various types of *-adad* and *ma`dud* (Muhammad Fahmi 2003). Not all quantities are determined by just one regulation, but in general it can be assumed as *tasrif* noun because its *harakat* or end vowel changes according to its *i`krab* (Abdullah `Abbas 1995) as shown in the following Table:
Based on the examples above, the numerals for one and two should be the same as the subject in terms of gender and quantity. If the `adad is muzakkar, then the ma'dud has to be muzakkar too. On the same note, if the `adad is muannath, then the ma'dud has to be muannath too (Hamdi, 1998). Fuad Ni'mah (1973), in his book *Al-Mulakhas fi Al-Qaw'id Al-Nahwiyah* also explained that the numerals for one and two should always be the same as the subject in terms of gender and quantity, whether both numerals are in the form of single words (mufrad), phrases (murakkab), or combined phrases (ma'tuf).

A vast content knowledge of the al-'adad wa al-ma'dud concept, combined with established paedagogical knowledge, enables an Arabic language educator to realise the Arabic language curriculum in order to successfully achieve the aims and objectives outlined. Arabic language educators who possess paedagogical content knowledge of the al-'adad wa al-ma'dud concept are capable of handling any misconceptions among students regarding ism `adad wa al-ma'dud.

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IV. Analysis on the Misconceptions of Students Regarding Ism Al-'Adad Wa Al-Ma'dud

Wise Arabic language educators are able to identify several forms and causes for errors made by students in ism `adad wa al-ma'dud. A misconception that usually occurs in the learning of ism `adad wa al-ma'dud is the concept of `adad murakkab (Mahmud Ramadhan 2007). Students are often confused when `adad murakkab is involved in the process of constructing relevant jumlah or sentences. This is due to them not fully understanding or mastering the concept of `adad murakkab. In the teaching and learning process, students will be enlightened that `adad murakkab is `adad 1 to 9 which is incorporated with quantities of عشرة or عشرون to produce numbers in teens such as 11, 12, 13 until 19. `Adad murakkab also consists of two parts or الجزءان which are opposing in terms of muzakkar and muannath, except for 11 and 12 whereby both parts are the same from the aspects of muzakkar and muannath as given below:
Nevertheless, misconceptions are common among students, especially in the combination of the second part (in 'adad murakkab). For instance, students often place 'adad with 'adad and vice versa especially when constructing sentences. Errors involving ma'dud are also prevalent whereby the ma'dud is often wrongly combined with 'adad in terms of muzakkar and muannath such as رأيت ثلاث عشرة ولدا whereas it should be رأيت ثلاث عشيرة ولدا. Sometimes students are inclined to place the ma'dud as jama whereas if the quantity is 11 and above, then the ma'dud must be mufrad and the case should be mansub. The following is an example of ma'dud mufrad mansub present in Surah Yusuf, verse 4:

«إذا قال يوسف لأبيه يا أبي إني رأيت أربع十余كر وكبا والشم والرفرف»

Which means: (Remember the event) when Prophet Yusuf said to his father: "O father! I saw in my dream eleven stars as well as the sun and the moon; I saw them prostrating themselves before me".

'Adad present in the verse is أربع十余كر أربعة عشرة and the ma'dud is وكبا whereby the ma'dud is mufrad and mansub and the word وكبا is not turned into jama to although this occurs frequently due to the confusion with 'adad mufrad, that is quantities 3 until 10.

Besides misconceptions in understanding the concept of 'adad murakkab, students also tend to make errors in 'adad mufrad involving quantities 3 until 10. The misconception is when 'adad contravenes the ma'dud from the aspects of muzakkar and muannath (Nuha 2005). If the ma'dud is muzakkar then the 'adad must be muannath, for instance 3 boys and 3 girls ثلاثة أولاد وثلاث بنات. The word which, on the other hand, is a muannath singular noun. Meanwhile, the 'adad is in which it is a muannath incorporated with a muzakkar ma'dud, that is that is muzakkar muzakkar. 'Adad is mufrad muzakkar but it is incorporated with a muannath ma'dud, that is that is muzakkar muannath. The error frequently committed by students is that when they wish to construct a sentence in the context of 'adad mufrad, they will first look at the 'adad to see whether it is muzakkar or muannath. What they should do when constructing sentences in the form of tahwil is to observe the ma'dud and ascertain whether the ma'dud is muzakkar or muannath. If the ma'dud is muzakkar, the 'adad should be muannath and vice versa. Only then can the ma'dud be turned into jama'.

Various misconceptions arise among students when learning ism 'adad wa al-ma'dud. As such, Arabic language educators who are involved in the teaching and learning process of this topic should be more creative and innovative in dispelling misconceptions among students and coming up with practical strategies to overcome them (Nuha 2005). Many researches propose diverse teaching and learning strategies which may cultivate the interest among students to learn grammar knowledge and simultaneously trigger enjoyment in learning a difficult grammar topic (Jassem 'Ali, 2000). The following are several suggestions and recommendations from Arabic language researchers which can be adopted in the teaching of ism 'adad wa al-ma'dud.

i. Create simple analogies using elements from the students' environment and provide many examples other than those given in modules or textbooks, preferably using ICT (Abu Latifah 2005).

ii. Carry out appropriate demonstrations for students by utilising resources available in the classroom (Amir Fakhruddin 2000).

iii. Excerpt verses from the Quran and Hadith which contain ism 'adad wa al-ma'dud besides taking i'kitabar from the Quran and Hadith (Baseem Hawamedah 2009)

iv. Initiate conversations between Arabic language educators and students on the topic of al-‘adad wa al-ma’dud (Zabiyah 2002).

V. Summary

Arabic language educators imparting knowledge on ism 'adad wa al-ma’dud should possess vast content knowledge and topped with pedagogical knowledge. When combined, it is known as pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Arabic language educators who have profound pedagogical knowledge are capable of attracting the interest of students in learning ism 'adad wa al-ma’dud. Teaching strategies which combine various approaches, methods and techniques, together with creative analogies and adaptation of textbook content according to the environment of the students will pave the way towards the best and most effective teaching methodology.

References Références Referencias


Jami’ah Amman Al-Arabiyyah li Al-Dirasat Al-‘Ulya.
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