

Unveiling Motivations: why Students Choose to Learn Arabic at a Public University

Anuar Sopian^{*}, Mohd Azlan Shah Sharifudin, Fazlinda Hamzah

Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Kampus Alor Gajah 7800 Melaka, Malaysia

^{*}Corresponding Author

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.8080211>

Received: 14 July 2024; Revised: 05 August 2024; Accepted: 10 August 2024; Published: 13 September 2024

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the motivation and interest of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) students in learning Arabic, given the diverse educational backgrounds of the students. Drawing on Causal Attributional Theory (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996), the research explores how prior educational experiences impact students' motivation and level of interest in Arabic. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 175 students from social sciences courses at UiTM Melaka. The survey covered demographic information, interest levels, motivational factors, and perceptions of the Arabic syllabus and teaching methods. Data analysis revealed that while the majority of students (96.2%) expressed a strong interest in learning Arabic, there were significant concerns about their proficiency, with 60% uncertain of their mastery. Key motivational factors included the desire to understand Quranic content (64%) and a supportive learning environment (10.3%). Most students (85.7%) found the syllabus appropriate, and 96.6% emphasised the importance of teaching techniques in language proficiency. The findings suggest that tailored teaching approaches, such as the Student-Centred Learning (SCL) method, and enhancements in co-curricular activities can significantly boost students' motivation and proficiency. Recommendations include ongoing syllabus updates and diverse teaching strategies to accommodate the varied backgrounds of students. This research underscores the need for a supportive and adaptable learning environment to enhance Arabic language acquisition at UiTM.

Keywords – tendencies, interest, mastery, learning, Arabic language

INTRODUCTION

To meet the demands and specific needs of various faculties and disciplines at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), language curriculum involving third language, apart from English, has been devised and taught to the students at the university as a means to give them a competitive edge in the job market. Amongst the third languages offered is Arabic (communication). Through this course, students are exposed to the essential skills of communicating in the language, namely, reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Students enrolled in Arabic courses at UiTM come from diverse educational backgrounds. Some students have completed Arabic studies at the college level, while others have studied the language at secondary and elementary school levels. Additionally, there are students who have no prior experience with Arabic. However, the teaching and learning system at the university does not distinguish between these groups of students in class and placement tests are not conducted before semesters begin. In other words, students' diversity is often overlooked in classroom settings, the result of which may affect their proficiency in the target language as suggested by Causal Attributional Theory (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). More importantly, educational experiences can significantly impact students' motivation to learn Arabic. For example, though a study by Mukmin (2019) proved a positive correlation between students' motivation to learn Arabic and their prior language proficiency and early exposure in Arabic, the opposite can be postulated to be true of those who have never learnt this particular language. Due to several concerns such as insufficient personnel and inflexible study plan, a number of academic programmes offered at UiTM Melaka branch have opted to make Arabic language as a compulsory subject to pass as part of their

graduation requirements. This inevitably leads to classroom settings wherein students who are of diverse backgrounds placed together to learn Arabic. Despite the fact that learning Arabic, like learning other languages, requires a distinctive environment and educators with outstanding skillsets to facilitate students' understanding while maximising the skills acquired, the limitations faced by the university might prove to be costly for the students. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to explore whether students of UiTM Melaka branch are well-driven to learn Arabic language amidst the aforementioned challenges that they face.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this paper are to attempt to understand UiTM students' level of interest in learning Arabic language, along with key motivational factors that drive students to learn the language. Recognising the factors that drive students to learn a third language is essential for effective teaching and enjoyable learning experiences for students. Additionally, factoring in students' motivation when developing third language courses will ensure a higher level of proficiency in the target language (Zhang et al., 2020). Given the circumstances, against the backdrop of UiTM students' highly distinctive educational experiences prior to enrolment in the Arabic language course offered by the university, there is a need to examine their readiness and motivation to strive for excellence. Specifically, the research questions of the study are as follows:

1. What is the level of interest in learning Arabic amongst the students?
2. What are the motivational factors that influence the students to learn Arabic?

Subsequently, the paper will suggest appropriate methods or approaches that may increase students' motivation to learn Arabic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The Relationship Between Educational Backgrounds and Motivation

Scholars are generally in consensus that motivation is highly crucial in ensuring that learners perform well in their language endeavours (Gardner, 1985; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Dörnyei, et al. 2006; Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998). Related past studies show that students' motivation is an important variable that can affect the level of students' achievements because motivation can influence what, where, and how learning is done. For example, a study by Nik Yusoff et al. (2008) concluded that high motivation in learning Arabic listening skills had a significant relationship with students' performance. Understanding the perspectives and factors to raise learners' motivation in learning a language is undoubtedly important to be considered when developing language learning programmes as it significantly impacts teaching effectiveness and student outcomes (Zhang et al., 2020). This literature review aims to explore learners' backgrounds, focusing on their diversity, by which learning motivation may be affected.

Several studies have investigated this topic and discovered a consistent theme throughout, that students' prior knowledge contribute to their learning achievements. For instance, in a study conducted by Keumala et al. (2019) on the socio-cultural and educational factors that influence learners' motivation on English as Foreign Language (EFL) learning amongst 20 post-graduate students of English Department of Syiah Kuala University, Aceh, Indonesia, it was learnt that 70% of students' learning achievements could be attributed to their prior knowledge of English language.

Mukmin (2019) performed a study to observe whether the knowledge of Arabic language that one gained from before they were 12 years old has any bearings on their motivation to use and continue learning Arabic. The study was quantitative in nature, and it involved 89 students from Program Bahasa Arab (PBA) of UIN Raden Fatah, Palembang. As for the collection of data, questionnaires were used to get the picture of students' educational backgrounds and language motivation, along with gathering students' information on their competence via documentation. It was learnt that students with early exposure to Arabic language and possessed

high language competence exhibited higher motivation to learn the language. This positive influence accounted for 37.5% of the variance in motivation.

Che Mat et al. (2005) reported an interest in learning Arabic amongst students at UiTM Terengganu and Sultan College Zainal Abidin (KUSZA). This finding is in line with previous study by Ismail (2004) and subsequent study by Zubairi and Hj. Sarudin (2009). However, students from these two institutions cited lacking available options as their main motivator to learn Arabic. While other aspects of the Arabic language were not a hindrance for most students, their educational experiences were found to have effects on their achievements in learning Arabic as those who have never learnt Arabic said that they found it difficult to learn the language. Additionally, for most students, they were satisfied with the teaching staff provided both at UiTM and KUSZA.

In understanding students' decisions to continue or discontinue learning Japanese as a foreign language at universities in Australia, Matsumoto (2009) set out to learn the factors that their determination could be attributed to. The results of the study demonstrated that those with closer cultural and linguistic backgrounds to Japanese had different motivational dynamics compared to those from more distant backgrounds. Students with more exposure to the target language or similar languages were found to be more motivated and could perform better.

Matsumoto also published another paper in 2015, having investigated motivational intensity and perceptions of classroom factors that affect the motivation of university students learning second or foreign languages in Australia. The study revealed that students' motivational intensity and perception of classroom factors vary amongst cultural backgrounds, with learning experiences affecting motivation differently depending on where they come from and what target languages they are learning.

Students' motivation is also closely related to teachers' motivation. In addressing students' wide range of academic abilities and their lack of motivation to learn, a topic that was often discussed by the staff at Kanda Jogakuen school in Tokyo, Jerrems and Asami (2019) set out to establish a self-access learning centre at the school. This centre is driven by three main goals which include fostering autonomy amongst students when learning, creating more opportunities for students to learn and practice language outside the classroom settings, and fostering better language learning in general. Though they could not say that the project was highly successful, they remain optimistic of its future considering some of their accomplishments, if they can have their constraints eliminated. They cited a lack of motivation amongst the teachers due to poor staff support is what hinders the centre to be more successful.

B. The Relationship Between Interest and Learning Style

In a paper written by Sadler-Smith (1996), it emphasises the importance of viewing learning styles as part of a broader "personal style" framework that includes learning preferences and cognitive styles. This holistic perspective aids in understanding individual differences in learning, allowing for the development of more inclusive and effective educational practices. The paper highlights the value of profiling personal styles to tailor teaching methods and improve learning outcomes. This approach is particularly beneficial for human resource development practitioners, enabling them to design training that accommodates diverse learning styles and enhances overall learning performance.

Misnan (1999) performed a study to see the relationship between learning styles and achievements in Arabic subjects using the instrument of 'Learning Inventory in Schools' (Selmes 1987). Misnan adapted the inventory into memorisation style, discussion style, training style and motivational style. The study sample consisted of 200 students in form four from six schools in Perak. The findings of the study showed that the learning styles that students are interested in and are practiced by outstanding students are the motivational and the memorisation style. Meanwhile, the weak students practice the motivational and discussion style when learning Arabic.

In a study done by Habib and Azizan (1997) to determine the relationship between learning styles and science and mathematics' achievements in junior high school, the researchers presented three learning styles, namely motivational, deep, and surface style, based on Selmes' learning style inventory (1987). The study sample

consisted of 539 fourth-grade students from 20 schools around Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. The findings of the study showed that there was a significant relationship between the three learning styles and students' achievements in the subject of science and mathematics. The relationship was positive for motivation and depth style which means students will show interest in the content of the lesson and love to understand it deeply but negative for surface style which refers to situation where students will only respond when directed. This means that motivation and depth style can increase academic achievement.

Pintrich published a paper in 1999 to present a comprehensive framework for understanding the role of motivation in self-regulated learning. His research showed that three types of beliefs in motivation (self-efficacy belief, task value belief, and goal orientation belief) are appropriate and can promote and sustain the process of self-learning and students' academic achievements. Pintrich's study highlights the importance of motivation in self-regulated learning. By fostering positive motivational beliefs and goal orientations, educators can enhance students' self-regulatory skills and improve their learning outcomes.

A study by Laidra et.al. (2007) explores the relationship between personality traits, intelligence, and academic achievement across different educational stages. This study involved 3618 Estonian school students from grades 2,3,4,6,8,10 and 12. This research used Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices instrument to measure intelligence and for the personality traits, they were measured using the Estonian NEO Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) and Big-Five Questionnaire-Children version (BFQ-C). The results of the study found that intelligence is the best predictor in determining Grade Point Average (GPA) for all grades specified. While personality traits (Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness) show a positive correlation with students GPA, the same cannot be said of neuroticism as it showed a negative correlation with GPA in each grade. In general, though there are personality traits that affect GPA, the academic achievements of students are very much closely related to cognitive ability in each grade level.

Duff et.al (2004) conducted a study to investigate how personality traits, learning approaches, and background variables relate to academic performance in undergraduate students. The study design included participation from 146 social science students from a Scottish university, whose personality traits were measured using Cattell's 16 Personality Factor Inventory (16PFI), and learning approaches were assessed with the Revised Approaches to Studying Inventory (RASI). The study also factored in background variables such as students' age, gender, and prior educational achievements. The study highlights the intricate interplay between personality, learning approaches, and academic performance. It suggests that while personality traits are significant, their influence on academic performance may be mediated through learning approaches. As a result, educators should consider these factors holistically when developing strategies to support student learning.

Che Mat and Goh (2010) study related to the situation of foreign language learning at the Institute of Higher Education, from which it can also be concluded that the attitude of students towards learning foreign language is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include motivation, psychology, and beliefs that are directly or indirectly formed by external factors such as language structure, instructors, modules, and teaching design. Students' attitude towards the language they learn must also be understood by language teachers to achieve the objectives of teaching and learning.

Overall, previous studies report that there are several factors which can affect students' interest and performance in learning language learning. Amongst the factors that have been identified to be able to influence the interest and performance of students in learning Arabic is a strategy, technique and teaching and learning style language. The relationship between interest and learning style is multifaceted and significant, impacting educational outcomes across various subjects and educational levels. The reviewed studies collectively underscore the importance of understanding and accommodating individual differences in learning preferences and cognitive styles to enhance educational effectiveness.

C. The Use of The Student-Centred Learning (SCL) Approach as An Effective Approach

Student-centred learning (SCL) is an educational approach that places the student at the heart of the learning process, emphasising active participation, autonomy, and personalised learning experiences. SCL involves

viewing students as whole individuals, considering their personal growth, consciousness, and empowerment. This approach integrates cognitive, agentic, and humanist dimensions to support student development (Tangney, 2014; Starkey, 2017). The role of teachers in SCL shifts from traditional authoritative figures to facilitators of learning. This requires teachers to let go of conventional responsibilities and focus on creating an environment that fosters students' autonomy and engagement (Hashim et al., 2007; McCabe & O'Connor, 2013). SCL promotes active learning through methods such as problem-based learning, project-based learning, and interactive activities, encouraging students to engage deeply with the material, reflect on their learning, and develop critical thinking and critical thinking skills (Noor, 2004; Geven & Attard, 2012; Um, 2017). Students in an SCL environment are expected to take responsibility for their learning, making choices about what, how, and why they learn, fostering a sense of ownership and self-direction (Nanney, 2020). The learning environment in SCL is designed to be supportive and adaptive to individual student needs, using technology for interactive learning, providing diverse assessment methods, and creating a positive and motivating learning climate (Greener, 2015; Um, 2017). Implementing SCL can be challenging, particularly in terms of shifting traditional power dynamics and ensuring adequate resources and support. Furthermore, the large class size and enormous number of students, managed by one instructor, is seen as a challenge to the effectiveness of SCL implementation. This is a major issue in teaching and learning because the teaching method is "mass lecture" (Kasmo, 2004). Felder (1997) agrees that any form of teaching and learning that involves a large class and a large number of students will be more effective if implemented in a small class. However, successful implementation can lead to improved student engagement, satisfaction, and learning outcomes (Lea et al., 2003; Jordan et al., 2014).

Cannon (2000) wrote that SCL refers to ways of thinking about learning and teaching that emphasise students' responsibility in learning activities such as planning their learning, the process of interaction between teachers/educators and other students, along with researching and evaluating learning results. Gibbs (1992) defines student-centred learning as an approach that shifts the focus of activity from the teacher to the student. This method emphasises active learning, where students engage with the material through discussions, projects, and problem-solving activities, rather than passively receiving information. Gibbs advocates for creating learning environments that foster independence, critical thinking, and a deeper understanding of subject matter, as opposed to traditional methods that rely heavily on lectures and rote memorisation. The implication of this definition of SCL is that students need to act, play a role and be responsible in their learning situation and context, and indirectly, be active in determining goals and objectives in managing their learning process. In other words, students are given the freedom to deeply explore the understanding of knowledge in the learning process based on their own desires and interests, especially in solving problems with the help and support of lecturers who function as facilitators.

D. Language Learning Strategy Theory (LLS)

Language Learning Strategy Theory encompasses the techniques and approaches that learners employ to acquire a new language effectively. These strategies are categorised into cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social domains. Cognitive strategies involve direct interaction with the language, such as practicing repetition and summarisation (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Metacognitive strategies focus on planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's learning process (Oxford, 1990). Affective strategies help manage emotions and motivation through techniques like relaxation (Arnold & Brown, 1999). Social strategies enhance learning through interactions, including group work and feedback seeking (Chamot & Kupper, 1989). These strategies collectively aim to optimise language acquisition by aligning learning processes with individual learner needs and preferences. Chamot, et al. (1999) argue that language learning strategies (LSLs) are techniques that students can use to help with learning tasks. While Rigney (1978) thinks LLS can be related as a conscious step or a behaviour used by language learners in achieving, storing, recalling, and reusing added information. In other words, language learning is a cognitive process that involves conscious mental effort and takes place in a social dimension where learning occurs through interaction (Griffiths, 2003). The differences between Malay and Arabic, particularly in terms of linguistics and orthography calls for a study related to LLS in learning Arabic in Malaysia. (Kamarul Shukri et al. 2009).

E. Language learning strategies and cognitive learning theory

Initially, studies on second language learning strategies use the “study first, theory later” approach. (Skehan, 1991). At that time, LLS research was not based on a solid theory. After the emergence of cognitive learning theory, most LLS researchers began to make that theory the theoretical framework of their studies (Griffiths, 2003). This is because learning strategies are not much different from cognitive processes. Both focus on the question of how students store, recall and acquire information when learning new knowledge or skills (Anderson, 1993). Cognitive learning theory sees learning as an active and dynamic process, that is, students will process information or data. Thus, the role of learning strategies in acquiring information can be understood by referring to the framework (O' Malley & Chamot, 1990). According to this theory, students will face the environment and get various stimuli consciously or unconsciously and intentionally or unintentionally. Stimulus will be felt or experienced through the senses and then processed through the nervous system to be recognised. Part of the information will be sent to the short-term memory store or working memory to be encoded to get a certain meaning and the other part will be lost or forgotten. Short-term memory stores have limited payload space. If the information in it is not used or encoded it will be lost or forgotten.

According to Macaro (2001), language information that comes from outside will be stored in the brain in a different form than when it is outside. If it is outside, language information may be in the form of sounds and the like but in the brain, it is in the form of meaning and ideas. Language information that reaches the short-term memory area stays there for a few seconds. However, in this brief time working memory performs various processes such as selecting, changing, interpreting, storing, discarding, and recalling. Then the language information will be transferred to long-term memory to be stored more permanently and organised. When students' efficiency in interacting with language items increases, the speed of short-term memory to recall the information from long-term memory also increases until it becomes automatic. Likewise, language learning strategies theory also suggests that when learning is conducted in a controlled manner, over time it will occur automatically without being controlled.

Cognitive psychology sees the process of acquiring information through four stages, namely selection, acquisition, construction, and integration. (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). While the stages of selection and acquisition show how much has been learnt, the construction and integration stages show what has been learnt and how it is organised (O' Malley & Chamot, 1990). In going through the four levels mentioned, students will use various appropriate language learning strategies. They will create mental connections, use images and sounds, analyse and reason by making judgments and evaluations using reason, guess using linguistic clues and so on. All of these are done to speed up the acquisition, storage, recall and use of information and they are amongst the elements that define language learning strategies (Ehrman & Oxford 1990).

In addition, language learning theory is also influenced by another cognitive theory put forward by Anderson (1993) which is related to the theory above and is seen as more convincing. O' Malley and Chamot (1990) in particular have made the theory of information processing presented by Anderson (1993) as a theory that supports their research. According to them, this theory is most relevant to talk about second language acquisition. Amongst the reasons is that the theory represents a combination of several concepts found in the field of cognitive processing. This theory can also be expanded to be able to include strategy processing in describing how the information is learnt.

Clearly Anderson's study (1993) can be used as a basic theory to explain the phenomenon of using language learning strategies in learning *balaghah* as the essence of the Arabic language. During the language learning process, students will receive two types of knowledge about the language being learnt (Faerch & Kasper, 1983). First, declarative knowledge which is usually implicit or implicit. It involves the internalisation or absorption of language rules and the memorisation of language such as definitions of words, grammar rules, and spelling. Second, procedural knowledge that is generally explicit or clear. It involves the strategies and procedures used by students to process information about the second language in order to improve their language skills such as language comprehension and generation. Language learning strategies have an effective relationship and strong connection with information processing to produce successful language learning (Lan, 2005). Cognitive theory encourages students to regulate their learning and develop the concept of learning strategies that can be used to

facilitate the learning process (Griffiths, 2003). In addition, seeing language learning as a cognitive skill allows learning ability to be improved and language learning strategies to be learnt (O' Malley & Chamot, 1990).

F. Theoretical Framework

The Causal Attributional Theory by Pintrich and Schunk (1996) serves as the foundational theoretical framework for this research. This theory posits that individuals attribute their successes and failures to specific causes, which in turn affects their motivation, emotions, and future behaviour. The theory categorises these attributions into dimensions such as locus of control (internal vs. external), stability (stable vs. unstable), and controllability (controllable vs. uncontrollable). These attributions significantly influence learners' motivation and their engagement with the learning process.

In the context of UiTM students learning Arabic, the Causal Attributional Theory helps to understand how students' perceptions of their past experiences with the Arabic language influence their current motivation and level of interest. The diverse educational backgrounds of UiTM students—ranging from those with prior exposure to Arabic to those with none—provide a unique context for applying this theory.

Students with prior exposure to Arabic may attribute their success in learning the language to internal factors, such as their own abilities and efforts. Conversely, students without prior exposure may attribute their struggles to external factors, such as the lack of foundational knowledge or inadequate teaching methods.

Attributions related to the stability dimension can influence students' expectations for future success. Students who view their difficulties in learning Arabic as stable and unchanging may feel demotivated. In contrast, those who see these difficulties as unstable and improvable are likely to be more motivated to persevere. The perception of controllability affects students' motivation and engagement. If students believe that their success in learning Arabic is within their control through effort and effective study strategies, they are more likely to be motivated. On the other hand, if they perceive it as uncontrollable due to external constraints (e.g., lack of appropriate resources or support), their motivation may decrease.

Understanding these attributions can help educators develop strategies to enhance students' motivation and learning outcomes. Encouraging students to view their successes as a result of their own efforts can boost their confidence and motivation. This can be achieved through positive reinforcement and by setting achievable goals. Educators can help students understand that their current level of proficiency is not fixed and can be improved with effort and effective learning strategies. Providing feedback that emphasises growth and improvement can foster a growth mindset. Teaching methods should emphasise the controllable aspects of language learning, such as effective study techniques and the use of available resources. Additionally, creating a supportive learning environment that addresses the diverse needs of students can help them feel more in control of their learning process.

The application of Causal Attributional Theory to this research on UiTM students' motivation and level of interest to learn Arabic provides valuable insights into how past experiences and perceived causes of success and failure impact current motivation and learning behaviour. By understanding and addressing these attributions, educators can better support students in overcoming challenges and achieving higher proficiency in Arabic.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study applied quantitative methods through questionnaires distributed to respondents. A total of 175 students from a population of 320 students from social sciences courses who take the subject of Arabic as a subject be the respondents of the study. This number of samples is based on the calculations of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) who stated that if the number of the population is 320, then the size of the sample is 175. The number of these respondents has exceeded 30% of the entire population and a minimum number of students is set.

The questionnaire in this study consists of two parts, namely the first part and the second part. The first part contains five background-related questions that include personal information and experience learning Arabic. The second part consists of nine types of closed questions about interests in learning Arabic, level of Arabic language mastery, motivational factors, as well as the suitability of the syllabus and Arabic teaching methods according to the students' point of view.

Data analysis for the questionnaire is done through the distribution process frequency. The next section is an analysis of the data obtained from the respondents as well as research findings and conclusion from the analysis.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

G. Part one:

This section reveals the findings for questions related to the background of the respondents.

Table 1. Distribution Of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	53	30.3
Female	122	69.7
Sum	175	100

Table 1 above shows the distribution of study respondents based on gender. It shows that the respondents consist of both male and female students. A total of 53 people male students (30.3%) involved. While there are 122 (69.7%) female students.

Table 2. Faculties Of Study

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Faculty of business and management	103	58.9
Faculty of hotel and tourism management	72	41.1
Sum	175	100

Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents according to their respective faculties. Based on the distribution of the respondents, a total of 103 (58.9%) respondents are from faculty of business and management while a total of 72 people (41.1%) respondents consisted of faculty of hotel and tourism management.

Table 3. Time Spent Learning Arabic

Duration of studying Arabic	Frequency	Percentage
1-5 Years	62	35.4
6-10 Years	57	32.6
11-15 Years	27	15.4
16 years and above	29	16.6
Sum	175	100

Table 3 shows the distribution of respondents based on time spent learning Arabic. A total of 62 (35.4%) respondents studied Arabic within a period of 1 to 5 years, a total of 57 (32.6%) respondents involved in learning Arabic within a period of 6 to 10 years. While 27 (15.4%) respondents studied Arabic within a period of 11 to 15 years and 29 (16.6%) respondents studied Arabic in the period of 16 years and above.

Table 4. First Experience Learning Arabic

Started learning Arabic since	Frequency	Percentage
Primary school	105	60
Secondary school	70	40
Sum	175	100

Table 4 shows the number and percentage of respondents related to their first experience learning Arabic which either starting in primary or secondary school. The results of the study show that a total of 105 respondents (60%) started Arabic language learning when in primary school while a total of 70 people respondents (40%) started learning Arabic when they were in secondary school.

Table 5. The Purpose of Learning Arabic

The purpose of learning Arabic	Frequency	Percentage
To deepen Islamic knowledge	47	26.9
To deepen Arabic knowledge	61	34.9
To speak Arabic	48	27.4
As an additional subject	19	10.9
Sum	175	100

Table 5 shows the findings of the study about the respondents' purpose in learning the Arabic language. A total of 47 respondents (26.9%) learns Arabic with a purpose to deepen their knowledge of Islam. A total of 61 people (34.9%) learn Arabic because they want to deepen their Arabic language knowledge. While 48 people (27.4%) learn Arabic so that they can speak Arabic. While 19 people (10.9%) study Arabic in order to meet the requirements as an additional subject only.

H. Part two:

This section reveals the findings of the questions related to the respondents' interests in learning Arabic, level of mastery, motivational factors, as well as the suitability of the syllabus and Arabic language teaching methods.

Table 6. Students' Motivation and Interest In Arabic

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES					
	Agree		Not Sure		Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Are you interested in learning Arabic?	162	92.6	11	6.3	2	1.1

Do you speak Arabic well?	32	18.3	105	60	38	21.7
What are the main factors that motivate you to study this language? (Choose only one).						
i) Environment	18	10.3	-	-	-	-
ii) Teacher's teaching technique	25	14.3	-	-	-	-
iii) Syllabus	19	10.9	-	-	-	-
iv) Support from parents, teachers, and friends	16	9.1	-	-	-	-
v) Future career opportunities	33	18.9	-	-	-	-
vii) As a medium to learn the Quran	64	36.6	-	-	-	-
In your opinion, is the syllabus of Arabic language course at UiTM appropriate and does it meet the needs of students?	150	85.7	19	10.9	6	3.4
Are teaching techniques important in improving students' Arabic language proficiency?	169	96.6	6	3.4	-	-
Are psychological factors such as interest, background, etc. are important in increasing the mastery students' Arabic language?	151	86.3	13	7.4	11	6.3
In your opinion, does every skill in Arabic language lesson (writing, reading, speaking, and listening) require a different approach in teaching?	135	77.1	34	19.4	6	3.4
In your opinion, are the teaching techniques used by UiTM lecturers sufficient to increase students' interest and help them master the language?	133	76	30	17.1	12	6.9
Are extracurricular activities, such as the mentor-mentee programme and Arabic intensive courses, likely to help increase students' inclination towards learning this language?	125	71.4	41	23.4	9	5.1

Based on the students' responses, majority of them are interested in learning Arabic, which is 162 students (96.2%). However, there were 105 respondents (60%) who are not sure whether they have mastered the Arabic language well or not. A total of 64 students are motivated to learn Arabic in order to understand the content of the Quran while 18 people (10.3%) learn Arabic only because of the environment. The majority of respondents a total of 150 people (85.7%) agree that the Arabic syllabus at UiTM is appropriate and meets the needs of

students. While only 19 students (10.9%) think they are not sure and only 6 students (3.4 %) think that the Arabic language syllabus at UiTM is not appropriate and does not meet the needs of students.

A total of 169 students (96.6%) think that teaching techniques are important in improving students' Arabic language proficiency. In addition, the majority of 151 respondents (86.3%) agree that psychological factors such as interest, background and so on are important in increasing students' mastery of Arabic language and only 11 people (6.3%) disagree with that opinion. In addition, 135 people (77.1%) think that very skill in Arabic language lesson (writing, reading, speaking, and listening) requires a different approach in teaching while only 6 students (3.4 %) do not agree with the opinion.

The majority of respondents, namely 133 people (76%) agree that the teaching technique used by UiTM lecturers is sufficient to increase students' interest further helping their mastery in learning this language. A total of 125 people (71.5%) admit that extra co-curricular activities such as mentor-mentee programme and intensive Arabic courses can help increase students' inclination towards this language while only 9 students (5.1%) disagree with the statement.

DISCUSSION

This paper seeks to explore the level of interest and the motivational factors influencing UiTM students in their pursuit of learning the Arabic language. Based on the survey results, the researchers identified several key points related to the respondents' interest and motivation in studying Arabic, including:

- a. The need to learn and understand the content of the holy verses of the Quran and matters that are related to religion is the main factor for respondents to learn the language Arabic. The support factor of parents, teachers and friends as well as the environment is also a key factor for respondents to learn Arabic.
- b. Psychological factors which include interests and favourable family background in learning this language is a crucial factor in increasing students' interest in learning Arabic.
- c. Many students agree and think that to acquire Arabic language skills which include listening, speaking, reading and writing skills require different teaching approaches. Therefore, teaching staff is recommended to use and apply appropriate teaching techniques and methods such as the Student-Centred Learning (SCL) approach so that students' interest and focus can be improved.
- d. Universities and institutions of higher learning are advised to always study and updating the learning activities contained in the learning syllabus from time to time in order to always be compatible with the needs of students. Based on the result, the majority of respondents, 150 people (85.7%) agree that the Arabic syllabus at UiTM is appropriate and meets the students' requirements. This situation may create a more interesting learning atmosphere to increase their interest and motivation and inclination to learn Arabic. In addition, teaching techniques and strategies used by educators also play a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of Arabic language lessons.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Arabic is a crucial subject amongst students at UiTM, Alor Gajah, Melaka. In addition to being an elective, it is a subject that enhances the understanding of Islam by providing deeper insights into the language of the Quran. The study found that while students' mastery of the Arabic language is still unsatisfactory, their interest in learning Arabic is strong. However, improvements are needed, particularly in classes with students from diverse language backgrounds. Several key factors contribute to this disparity and must be addressed to enhance overall language proficiency. Several key factors influence student engagement and success in learning the Arabic language, including psychological and environmental factors, as well as the quality of teaching staff and university support.

Addressing these factors is essential for improving students' mastery and fostering a profound interest in Arabic.

In the classroom, it is important to consider the diverse backgrounds of students, especially those without a foundational knowledge of Arabic, to prevent feelings of pressure, inadequacy, and discouragement. Lecturers must not only be proficient in Arabic but also skilled in pedagogy to effectively meet the needs of different learners. A diverse range of teaching and learning techniques should be employed, including the Student-Centred Learning (SCL) approach, which positions students as active participants in their education. Encouraging active involvement in each learning session, along with offering a variety of co-curricular activities at the university level, can significantly enhance students' interest and proficiency in Arabic.

REFERENCES

1. Anderson, J. R. (1993). Problem solving and learning. *American Psychologist*, 48(1), 35–44. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.48.1.35>
2. Arnold, J., & Brown, H. D. (1999). A map of the terrain. In J. Arnold (Ed.), *Affect in Language Learning*. Cambridge University Press.
3. Cannon, R. (2000). Guide to support the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Plan Year 2000. Australia: The University of Adelaide
4. Chamot, A. U., & Kupper, L. (1989). Learning strategies in foreign language instruction. *Foreign Language Annals*, 22(1), 13-24.
5. Chamot, A. U., Barnhardt, S., El-Dinary, P. B., & Robbins, J. (1999). *The learning strategies handbook*. Addison Wesley Longman.
6. Che Mat, A., & Goh, Y. S. (2010). Situasi Pembelajaran Bahasa Asing di Institut Pengajian Tinggi: Perbandingan Antara Bahasa Arab, Bahasa Mandarin Dan Bahasa Perancis. *AJTLHE: ASEAN Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 2(2), 9–21. <http://journalarticle.ukm.my/1498/>
7. Che Mat, A., Yaakob, A. F., & Hashim, M. R. (2005). Kecenderungan Pelajar Memilih Bahasa Arab Sebagai Bahasa Asing Di Uitm Terengganu Dan KUSZA Satu Perbandingan. Universiti Teknologi MARA Institutional Repository. <https://ir.uitm.edu.my/id/eprint/54592>
8. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*. Springer US. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-2271-7>
9. Dörnyei, Z., Csizér, K., & Németh, N. (2006). Motivation, Language Attitudes and Globalisation. *Multilingual Matters*. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781853598876>
10. Dörnyei, Z., & Ottó, I. (1998). Motivation in action: A process model of L2 motivation. *Working Papers in Applied Linguistics*, 4. <https://nottingham-repository.worktribe.com/output/1024190>
11. Duff, A., Boyle, E., Dunleavy, K., & Ferguson, J. (2004). The relationship between personality, approach to learning and academic performance. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 36(8), 1907–1920. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2003.08.020>
12. Ehrman, M., & Oxford, R. (1990). Adult language learning styles and strategies in an intensive training setting. *The Modern Language Journal*, 74(3), 311–327. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1990.tb01069.x>
13. Faerch, C., & Kasper, G. (1983). *Strategies in interlanguage communication*. Longman.
14. Felder, R. M. (1997). Beating the numbers game: Effective teaching in large classes. *Papers on Engineering Education Repository*. 1997 Annual Conference, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. <https://doi.org/10.18260/1-2--6433>
15. Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*. Edward Arnold.
16. Geven, K., & Attard, A. (2012). Time for student-centred learning? In A. Curaj, P. Scott, L. Vlasceanu, & L. Wilson (Eds.), *European higher education at the crossroads* (pp. 153–172). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-3937-6_9
17. Gibbs, G. (1992) *Assessing more students*. Oxford Centre for Staff Development
18. Griffiths, M. (2003). Problem gambling. *The Psychologist*, 16(11), 582–584.
19. Greener, S. (2015). What do we mean by “student-centred” learning? *Interactive Learning Environments*, 23(1), 1–2. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2015.1005423>
20. Habib, A. R., & Azizan, R. (1997). Hubungan antara stail pembelajaran dengan pencapaian sains dan matematik sekolah menengah rendah. *Jurnal Pendidikan Malaysia*. *UKM Learning and Research*

- Repository. <https://doi.org/0126-6020>
21. Hashim, S., Yaakub, R., & Ahmad, M. Z. (2007). *Pedagogi: strategi dan teknik mengajar dengan berkesan*. PTS Publications & Distributors Sdn. Bhd.
 22. Ismail, Ab. R. (2004). *Al-Lughah al-Arabiyyah: Dawruha wa makanatuha fi al-Hadir wa al-Mustaqbal*. In E. A. Jamsari, F. Mat Zain, H. Zainal, & S. Ahmad (Eds.), *Al-Hadharah* (pp. 135–144). UKM: Jabatan Bahasa Arab dan Tamadun Islam.
 23. Jerrems, M., & Asami, L. S. (2019). Diversity and motivation in a small school: Positioning self-access learning. *JALT2018—Diversity and Inclusion*, 2018(1), 67. <https://doi.org/10.37546/jaltpcp2018-09>
 24. Jordan, L., Bovill, C., Othman, S. M., Saleh, A. M., Shabila, N. P., & Watters, N. (2013). Is student-centred learning a Western concept? Lessons from an academic development programme to support student-centred learning in Iraq. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 19(1), 13–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2013.827649>
 25. Kamarul Shukri Mat Teh, and Nik Mohd Rahimi Nik Yusoff, and Mohamed Amin Embi, and Zamri Mahamod, (2009) Hubungan penggunaan strategi pembelajaran bahasa dengan tahap penguasaan Bahasa Arab. *JIAE: Journal of Islamic and Arabic Education*, 1 (1). pp. 41-56. ISSN 1985-6236
 26. Kasmu, M. A. (2004). Latihan kakitangan resos kursus Tamadun Islam. *Prosiding Bengkel Kebangsaan Ketiga Pengajaran TITAS di IPTA, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Perak*.
 27. Keumala, M., Samad, N. M., Abdul Samad, I., & Rachmawaty, N. (2019). The influence of socio cultural and educational background on EFL learners' motivation. *Indonesian TESOL Journal*, 1(1), 67–77. <https://doi.org/10.24256/itj.v1i1.556>
 28. Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*. 30(3), 607–610.
 29. Laidra, K., Pullmann, H., & Allik, J. (2007). Personality and intelligence as predictors of academic achievement: A cross-sectional study from elementary to secondary school. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 42(3), 441–451. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2006.08.001>
 30. Lan, R. L. (2005). Language learning strategies profiles of EFL elementary school students in Taiwan. Retrieved from <http://drum.lib.umd.edu/bitstream/handle/1903/2480/umi-umd-2352.Pdf;jsessionid=7651B184A75D944C4B4D9D1591E666CE?Sequence=1>
 31. Lea, S. J., Stephenson, D., & Troy, J. (2003). Higher education students' attitudes to student-centred learning: Beyond “educational bulimia”? *Studies in Higher Education*, 28(3), 321–334. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070309293>
 32. Macaro, E. (2001). *Learning Strategies in Foreign and Second Language Classrooms* (1st ed.). Bloomsbury Publishing.
 33. Matsumoto, M. (2009). Persistence in Japanese language study and learners' cultural/linguistic backgrounds. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, 32(2), 10.1–10.17. <https://doi.org/10.2104/ara10910>
 34. Matsumoto, M. (2015). Chapter 10. Motivational changes and their affecting factors among students from different cultural backgrounds. In W. M. Chan, S. K. Bhatt, M. Nagami, & I. Walker (Eds.), *Culture and Foreign Language Education: Insights from Research and Implications for the Practice* (pp. 223–244). De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501503023-011>
 35. McCabe, A., & O'Connor, U. (2013). Student-centred learning: the role and responsibility of the lecturer. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 19(4), 350–359. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2013.860111>
 36. Misnan, J. (1999). Hubungan Antara Gaya Pembelajaran Dengan Pencapaian Bahasa Arab Komunikasi Sekolah Menengah Rendah di Negeri Perak. *Projek Sarjana*. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
 37. Mukmin, M. (2019). The effect of educational background and language competence on students' Arabic language motivation. *Arabiyat: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab Dan Kebahasaaraban*, 6(1), 36–52. <https://doi.org/10.15408/a.v6i1.10484>
 38. Nanney, B. (2020). Student-centered learning. In M. E. David & M. J. Amey (Eds.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Higher Education* (pp. 1404–1406). SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529714395.n530>
 39. Nik Yusoff, N. M. R., Mahamod, Z., & Ab. Ghani, K. (2008). Motivasi pembelajaran Kemahiran mendengar Bahasa Arab dan hubungannya dengan pencapaian pelajar. *Jurnal Pendidikan Malaysia*, 33, 3–18. <http://journalarticle.ukm.my/199/>

40. O'Malley, J. M., & Chamot, A. U. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. Cambridge University Press.
41. Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Newbury House Publishers.
42. Pintrich, P. R. (1999). The role of motivation in promoting and sustaining self-regulated learning. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 31(6), 459–470. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0883-0355\(99\)00015-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0883-0355(99)00015-4)
43. Pintrich, P.R, and Schunk, D.H. (1996) *Motivation in Education*. Prentice-Hall.
44. Rigney, J. W. (1978). *Learning strategies: A theoretical perspective*. In H. F. O'Neil (Ed.), *Learning Strategies* (pp. 165-205). Academic Press.
45. Sadler-Smith, E. (1996). *Learning styles: a holistic approach*. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 20(7), 29–36. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090599610127891>
46. Selmes. I. P. (1987). *Improving study skills: Changing perspective in education*. Hodder and Stoughton Ltd
47. Skehan, P. (1991). Individual differences in second language learning. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 13(2), 275–298. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0272263100009979>
48. Starkey, L. (2017). Three dimensions of student-centred education: a framework for policy and practice. *Critical Studies in Education*, 60(3), 375–390. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2017.1281829>
49. Tangney, S. (2014). Student-centred learning: a humanist perspective. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 19(3), 266–275.
50. Um, J. (2017). Student-centred learning and teaching: Theoretical versus practical approach. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 0(0). <https://oapub.org/edu/index.php/ejes/article/view/747/2118>
51. Weinstein, C. and Mayer, R. (1986) The teaching of learning strategies. In: Wittrock, M., Ed., *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, Macmillan, 315-327.
52. Noor, H. (2004). *Student centered learning at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences UPM. Bengkel SCL anjuran Fakulti Ekologi Manusia*.
53. Zhang, H., Dai, Y., & Wang, Y. (2020). Motivation and second foreign language proficiency: The mediating role of foreign language enjoyment. *Sustainability*, 12(4), 1302. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12041302>
54. Zubairi, A. M., & Hj. Sarudin, I. (2009). Motivation to learn a foreign language in Malaysia. *GEMA: Online Journal of Language Studies*, 9(2), 73–87. <http://journalarticle.ukm.my/2309/>