

The Use of Dhomir in Paired Communication

^{*1}Muhammad Irfan Bin Mhd Rusdi, ²Ibrahim Bin Abdullah, ³Farriz Azzuan Bin Amat Supria,
⁴Muhammad Syaffiq Bin Mohammed Raffi, ⁵Abdulhadee Sabuding

^{1,2} Senior Lecturer, Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Shah Alam

^{3,4} Lecturer, Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Shah Alam

⁵Asst. Prof. Faculty of Islamic Science, Prince of Songkla University,

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ABSTRACT

Mastery of the Arabic language in communication represents a crucial skill in reflecting an individual's ability to employ it in conversation. This study aims to assess the level of understanding regarding the use of dhomir (pronouns) in paired communication among Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) students enrolled in the Teaching Arabic Communicative course. The study employed a quantitative research design, with data collected through questionnaires distributed to students following two-way paired conversation activities. A total of 195 respondents, comprising undergraduates from various years of study, participated in the survey. The findings indicate that, although the majority of students understood the meaning of dhomir, they continued to encounter difficulties in identifying its application within conversations as well as in using it accurately. This highlights the need for more frequent paired practice. The primary challenges identified include confusion in selecting the appropriate dhomir when applying contextual usage related to gender, number, and changes in nouns and verbs. Accordingly, the study recommends the adoption of interactive communication activities as a more effective approach in teaching dhomir. This includes frequent communicative exercises and greater emphasis on its application within conversational practice. The implications of this study underscore the importance of paired and group communication exercises, as well as role-play simulations, in the learning process. Ultimately, this research contributes to the teaching and learning of Arabic by emphasizing the practical integration of grammatical elements into communication.

keywords: Dhomir, komunikasi berpasangan, kefahaman tatabahasa, pembelajaran bahasa ketiga

INTRODUCTION

Effective Arabic language mastery requires not just vocabulary acquisition, but also a full comprehension of grammatical features that aid in the production of accurate and contextually adequate sentences. The dhomir (pronoun) is an important part of Arabic structure since it refers to the speaker, listener, and subject of the conversation. In spoken communication, especially in paired interactions, the proper use of dhomir improves comprehension and ensures that messages are communicated precisely.

When learning Arabic as a third language, students who use Malay on a regular basis frequently face difficulties in using Arabic dhomir. This issue derives from being unfamiliar with the numerous dhomir variants that occur in both speech and writing. Although students understand the theoretical principles of dhomir, they struggle to use them effectively in real-world communication. The current study is to assess the comprehension and use of dhomir in paired conversation among students enrolled in the Teaching Arabic Communicative course at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM).

This study also aims to pinpoint current weaknesses and provide practical, communication-focused pedagogical strategies, with the objective of integrating grammar mastery into everyday spoken interactions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

Developed by **M.A.K. Halliday**, SFL views language as a resource for making meaning within social contexts. It divides language functions into three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual.

Pronouns belong mainly to the **interpersonal metafunction**, where they construct social roles and relationships between speakers and listeners. The use of *dhomir* (e.g., “ana,” “anta,” “huwa”) indicates **participant roles** and reflects choices of **power, solidarity, and involvement**. Through SFL, pronoun use can be analysed as part of the broader system of mood, modality, and appraisal in Arabic discourse.

Cognitive and Processing Approaches

From a psycholinguistic perspective, pronoun selection reflects **cognitive processing** — how speakers track referents and manage memory load during conversation. Studies in **discourse processing** (e.g., Givón, 1983) show that speakers tend to use pronouns when referents are mentally active and accessible.

In paired communication, these choices reveal how interlocutors maintain shared understanding and efficiently manage reference during spontaneous dialogue.

Sociolinguistic Variation Theory

From a sociolinguistic perspective, pronoun use is influenced by **social variables** such as gender, age, status, and dialect. Arabic’s **diglossic nature** (between Modern Standard Arabic and various dialects) provides an additional layer of variation.

Speakers may shift pronoun forms to align with their interlocutor’s dialect or to signal social identity and group membership. This approach views *dhomir* not merely as grammatical forms, but as **sociolinguistic symbols** reflecting relationships and identities in paired talk.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a descriptive quantitative approach to assess students’ level of understanding in the use of *dhomir* (pronouns) within paired communication. The research design takes the form of a survey study, utilizing a questionnaire as the primary instrument.

Participants

A total of 195 Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) students enrolled in the Teaching Arabic Communicative course were selected as respondents through purposive sampling. The respondents comprised students from various years of study who had been exposed to the teaching of *dhomir* and had participated in paired communication activities during instructional sessions.

Instruments

The main tool used in this study was a closed-ended questionnaire that was constructed based on concepts concerning how to utilize *dhomir* in communication. The questionnaire comprised three main sections:

Part A: Respondents’ Demographic Information

Part B: Understanding of the Meaning and Types of *Dhomir*

Part C: Ability to Identify and Use *Dhomir* in Paired Conversations

A structured questionnaire was administered to the students following the completion of paired conversation activities in order to gather data. The questionnaire consisted of short-response items that were intended to evaluate their confidence, their comprehension of dhomir usage, and the obstacles they encountered during spoken interaction.

Data Analysis

Statistical methods were employed to analyze the collected data descriptively using Excel software. In order to assess students' comprehension and to identify patterns of usage and common errors in the application of dhomir, the analysis employed pie charts and percentages.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Participants' Demographic:

Age	:The majority were 21 years old (53.8%).
Gender	:134 female (68.7%) dan 61 male (31.3%).
Year of Study	:Year 1 (89 students), Year 2 (70 students), Year 3 (34 students), Year 4 (2 students).

The primary goal of the study was to evaluate the comprehension and confidence of students regarding the utilization of Arabic dhomir (pronouns) in paired communication, as well as to determine the necessity of more frequent practice to improve their proficiency. The results of the data analysis of 195 respondents are further elaborated upon in this section.

Experience in Learning Arabic

Figure 1 illustrates that the majority of students (82.6%) had studied Arabic at the primary school level, followed by 62.6% at the secondary school level, 51.3% at the diploma level, and only 38.5% at the bachelor's degree level. This suggests that Arabic exposure is more prevalent in the initial stages of education but decreases as students proceed to higher educational levels. This sort of decrease could make it harder to keep up with important skills like dhomir.

SAYA PERNAH BELAJAR BAHASA ARAB (BOLEH TANDAKAN LEBIH DARI SATU)
195 responses

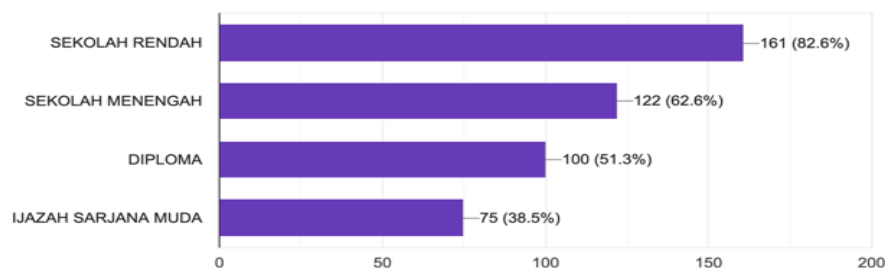


Figure 1

Primary School

A total of 161 students (82.6%) reported that they had studied Arabic at the primary school level. This demonstrates that the vast majority of students had been exposed to Arabic from the early stages of schooling.

Secondary School

A total of 122 students (62.6%) had studied Arabic at the secondary school level. This indicates a continuity of exposure to Arabic, although with a slight decline compared to the primary level.

Diploma

A total of 100 students (51.3%) had experience studying Arabic during their diploma studies. This percentage is relatively high and indicates that half of the students continued to pursue Arabic at the early stage of higher education.

Bachelor's Degree

Only 75 students (38.5%) reported having studied Arabic at the bachelor's degree level, specifically among those who had completed levels 1, 2, and 3.

Level of Dhomir Understanding

Based on Figure 2, a total of 45.1% of students assigned a score of 4, indicating a good level of understanding of the meaning of dhomir. Meanwhile, 32.3% assigned a score of 3 (moderate understanding), whereas only 16.4% demonstrated a high level of understanding (score 5). A very small percentage (6.1%) comprised those who had little or no understanding. This indicates that, although the basic comprehension of dhomir is relatively high, only a small proportion of students possess a truly comprehensive mastery of all types of dhomir.

The majority of students (77.4%) assigned scores of 3 and 4, indicating a moderate to high level of understanding. However, the percentage of students who were truly proficient (score 5) remained low (16.4%), suggesting that there is still room for improvement in terms of practice and reinforcement of contextual understanding in the use of dhomir. This study affirms the necessity of paired communication exercises and practical activities to enhance both comprehension and actual application in conversation.

Saya faham maksud setiap dhomir yang digunakan dalam perbualan Bahasa Arab.

195 responses

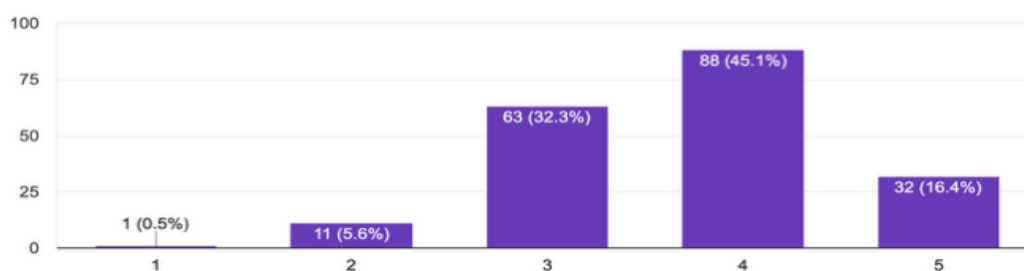


Figure 2

This question measured the extent to which students understood the meaning of each dhomir (pronoun) used in Arabic conversation, employing a Likert scale of 1 to 5, where: 1 = Strongly do not understand to 5 = Strongly understand

The findings from this question revealed that:

Score 4 (Understand)

A total of 88 students (45.1%) assigned a score of 4, indicating that nearly half of the students had a good understanding of the meaning of dhomir used in conversation.

This indicates a relatively high level of understanding among the students.

Score 3 (Moderate)

A total of 63 people (32.3%) marked a score of 3, indicating that they understood most of the dhomir, but still needed reinforcement.

This group has the potential to improve through further practice and guidance.

Score 5 (Strongly understand)

Only 32 students (16.4%) assigned a score of 5.

This indicates that only a small proportion of students truly mastered the meaning of all dhomir within the context of communication.

Score 2 (Do not understand)

A total of 11 students (5.6%) demonstrated that their understanding of the meaning of dhomir remained weak.

Score 1 (Strongly do not understand)

Only 1 student (0.5%) represented an isolated case of very weak understanding. This was because the student was a non-Muslim in their first year, learning Arabic for the very first time.

Level of Confidence in Using Dhomir in Conversation

Figure 3 shows that 44.6% of students were at a moderate level of confidence (score 3), while 26.7% were confident (score 4), and only 11.8% were highly confident (score 5). Meanwhile, 14.9% reported low confidence (score 2), and 2.1% were very unconfident. Although the majority understood the meaning of dhomir, their confidence in using it in actual communication remained limited. This signals that practical training and continued pedagogical support are still necessary.

Saya berasa yakin menggunakan dhomir yang betul dalam perbualan dengan rakan sekelas.
195 responses

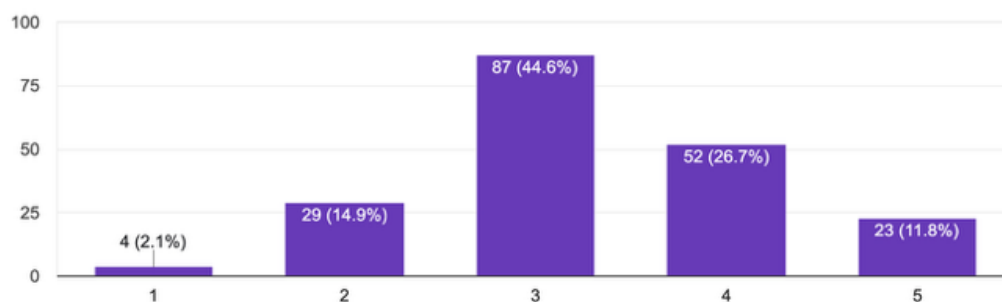


Figure 3

Score 3 (Moderately confident)

A total of 87 students (44.6%) selected a score of 3, indicating that nearly half of the students had moderate confidence in using dhomir.

They may have understood its usage but lacked confidence in terms of accuracy.

Score 4 (Confident)

A total of 52 students (26.7%) demonstrated relatively high confidence, indicating that they were more certain about the correct use of dhomir in conversation.

Score 5 (highly confident)

Only 23 students (11.8%) were highly confident. This indicates that only a small number were truly proficient and assured in the use of dhomir within actual conversational contexts.

Score 2 (Low confident)

A total of 29 students (14.9%) were at a low level of confidence, even though they may have understood the meaning of dhomir.

Score 1 (Very unconfident)

Only 4 students (2.1%) were very unconfident — a minority who may require specific intervention or targeted guidance.

The majority of students (70.3%) were at a moderate to high level (scores 3 to 5) in terms of confidence in using dhomir; however, only 11.8% were truly confident.

This indicates that understanding does not necessarily guarantee confidence, and more practice-oriented and oral training is greatly needed.

The Need for More Frequent Paired Conversations

Figure 4 demonstrates strong support for the need for paired communication training. A total of 40% of students selected a score of 4, while 38.5% selected a score of 5, making 78.5% of respondents express a high level of need for such training. Only 1.5% indicated low necessity, and no respondents rejected the importance of this practice. This finding indicates that paired communication activities are a well-received approach and should be further strengthened in the teaching and learning of Arabic grammar.

Saya perlukan lebih kerap perbualan berpasangan untuk lebih faham berkaitan dhomir bahasa arab
195 responses

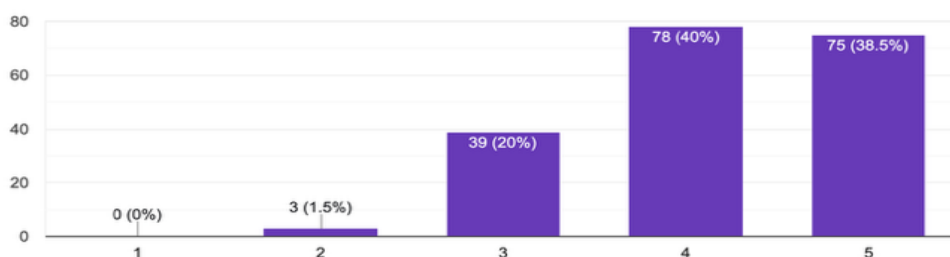


Figure 4

Score 4 (Necessary)

A total of 78 students (40%) agreed that they required more paired practice to better understand the use of dhomir.

Score 5 (Highly necessary)

A total of 75 students (38.5%) expressed a very high need for more frequent paired communication practice.

Score 3 (Moderately necessary)

A total of 39 respondents (20%) indicated a moderate level of need.

Score 2 (Less necessary)

Only 3 students (1.5%) stated that they had little need for such activities.

Score 1 (Not at all necessary)

No respondents selected this score (0%), indicating that none of the students rejected the importance of paired practice.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

These findings indicate that the majority of students possess a solid foundational understanding of dhomir, but still require reinforcement in terms of confidence and practical application. Contextualized teaching of dhomir through communicative approaches and consistent paired practice is strongly recommended to be implemented in a more interactive and student-centered manner, particularly through paired activities and conversational simulations. Pedagogical interventions such as dialogue simulations and two-way conversations are expected to enhance students' skills in using dhomir within real communicative contexts.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

This study identified that students' understanding of the use of dhomir ranged from moderate to high; however, confidence in applying it in conversation remained low among some students. The majority expressed a strong need for paired conversation practice as a method to strengthen both their understanding and confidence. Therefore, an interactive and contextual approach to Arabic language instruction is of critical importance to ensure that students can master the use of dhomir more effectively.

Suggestions

Emphasis on Regular Paired Practice

Lecturers are encouraged to integrate two-way conversational activities regularly into their teaching in order to build students' confidence and grammatical application skills.

Use of Communicative Approaches and Simulation

Simulation-based exercises, such as role-playing daily situations, can assist students in understanding the real context of dhomir usage.

Development of Interactive Arabic Language Modules

The development of teaching aids such as interactive training modules, videos, and mobile applications focused on the use of dhomir in communication.

Continuous Monitoring and Assessment

Students should be provided with continuous feedback through oral tests, video recordings, or self-reflection sessions in order to address and improve weaknesses in the use of dhomir.

Greater focus should be placed on creating conversational situations that enable students to internalize the use of dhomir.

Teacher and Lecturer Training

Professional training for Arabic language instructors in communicative pedagogy and practical approaches to grammar teaching.

Instructors should use the original Arabic words such as أنا، هو، أنت without translating them into Malay. If these terms are translated, it may create confusion for students in understanding them. For example, if a teacher says “change this sentence to ‘you’ (singular masculine)”, students must first interpret the given situation before analyzing the information. However, if the teacher says “change this conversation to أنت”, the instruction becomes much clearer.

This study contributes to strategies for teaching Arabic by emphasizing the importance of integrating theoretical understanding with contextual oral application, particularly in the instruction of grammatical aspects such as dhomir.

Further research may be conducted to examine the effectiveness of more innovative teaching methods in enhancing students’ understanding of dhomir usage in Arabic communication.

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