

**STUDENTS', TEACHERS' AND PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS THE
TEACHING & LEARNING OF ARABIC IN MALAYSIA: A CASE STUDY IN
SELECTED NATIONAL RELIGIOUS SECONDARY SCHOOL (SMKA) IN
SELANGOR: A PRELIMINARY REPORT**

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ABSTRACT

Issue of Arabic proficiency in Malaysia is never-ending and has always been the concern of policy makers and interested groups. This study aims to investigate students, teachers and parent's perceptions and attitudes towards teaching and learning Arabic at SMKA. The study employs a qualitative method. The participants of the study were three students, three teachers and three parents from three identified SMKAs at Selangor. A structured interview was used to gather the data for the study. The data were classified into several themes and analysed qualitatively. The study reveals that the success or failure of the teaching and learning Arabic depends on positive attitude towards the language itself. It was found that there was a lack of teaching method in teaching Arabic. The environment at the same time is not in favour of students to improve their Arabic language. Some recommendations were suggested by the study.

Keywords: *Learning and Teaching Arabic, perceptions towards Arabic, foreign language acquisitions*

1. Introduction

In spite of the fact that students spend so many years learning Arabic and in spite of the contributions and efforts by the Ministry of Education all these years, we can observe clearly that our students cannot master major language skills i.e. reading, writing, speaking and listening. Beside that, teachers face problems to motivate their students in learning Arabic (Arifin, 1998). "In the context, Muwāfaq (1999) stated that teaching and learning of Arabic in Malaysian secondary school face a real problem. Although a lot of efforts have been put in, still the performance of the students are not satisfactory" (Ahmad Hassan, 2000).

In view of the importance of Arabic to Malaysians in particular and the problems that they face in acquiring and performing in the language, continuous effort to identify and tackle the root causes of the declining performance in Arabic should be done. The analysis confirmed five domains as real concerns for the teachers. More specifically, it revealed that the lack of proficiency in Arabic was the most pressing difficulty followed by problems with the textbooks, curriculum structure, instructional aid and teaching methods respectively (Nur Ashikin, 2002).

Nowadays, we always find that many students have difficulty in using Arabic Language despite of spending few years at religious school (Mahmud, Nik Hanan, Nadwah, Nik Farhan, Lubna, 2007). This problem increased when they further their studies at the higher

institutions of learning. Consequently, they are unable to master the Arabic Language and they do not understand the importance of Arabic Language. Arabic Language are neglected from day to day because many of them do not see the benefits of Arabic Language for future. Mahmud Abd Wahab, et al.(2007) mentioned about several factors that may contribute to the learning difficulties in school, such as self – efficacy, curriculum, assessment as well as teachers’ experience in influencing the difficulties in learning Arabic Language from teachers’ perspective. They wrote that:

Starting from the year 2007, a new method of assessment has been introduced by Malaysia Examinations Syndicate for several subjects, including Arabic Language in Lower Secondary Assessment (PMR) (Lembaga Peperiksaan Malaysia, 2007). The important results shown that the learning difficulties of Arabic Language courses in school are related to the curriculum and assessment that improvement need to be done at Ministry level.

In Malaysia, the national curriculum, a uniform or centralized system of education in both primary and secondary schools which is known as Integrated Curriculum for Primary School (KBSR) and Integrated Curriculum for Secondary School (KBSM) has been established in schools. Common centralized assessment and examination at the end of the respective periods of schooling are also being practiced. In terms of curriculum development, the Ministry of Education through its Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) is responsible for the curriculum implementation in schools. Teachers are curriculum implementers and they have to carry out their teaching activities based on the curriculum and syllabus provided by the CDC (Zamrus A.R & Mokelas A,n.d). This standardization of curriculum is important because of the large number of schools and students. It is also necessary to ensure the curriculum philosophy and education objectives are to be achieved. The Islamic Education and Moral Division, Ministry of Education (JAPIM) is given the responsibilities to design the content of the Arabic Language curriculum which includes four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Therefore, in Arabic Language in the Integrated Curriculum for Primary and Secondary School (KBSR and KBSM), four skills are emphasized as the main contents of the curriculum. In the Malaysian classroom settings, students studying Arabic are assessed through two types of assessments known as formative (process-oriented) and summative (outcome-oriented), while the standardized assessments purely focuses on achievements.

Later studies have been trying to figure out the possible explanations for such problem. Siti Ikbal (2006) claimed that all subjects in Arabic Language including the Communicative Arabic Language were not designed to serve communication purposes. The focus is always to understand the Arabic grammar and comprehension. Students were only exposed to Arabic speaking indirectly during other lessons like *Inshā’* (Essay Writing) and *Muṭāla’ah*(comprehension). On top of that, speaking skill was not assessed orally in the exam, even though it was included in the Lower Secondary Assessment (PMR).

Teachers believed that using communicative approach will slower the teaching pace and delay the completion of syllabus (Siti Ikbal, 2006). With short duration, it was impossible to vary the teaching methodologies (Anida, 2003; Khalid, 2004). Additionally Malay Language was predominantly used during the Communicative Arabic Language lesson (Siti Ikbal, 2006; Mustafa, 2004). Both researchers suggest that such practice was due to teachers’ low command of Arabic speaking skill. With all these factors, teachers will obviously face difficulties to approach Arabic Language or Communicative Arabic Language lessons

communicatively. It is not deniable that some teachers did spend efforts to make the lessons more interactive and encourage students' participation. However, the percentages were not more than 10% (Mustafa, 2004).

The other studies also revealed about time of teaching and learning Arabic Language as the time allocated for teaching Communicative Arabic Language was limited (Siti Ikbal, 2006; Anida, 2003; Khalid, 2004). While Salina (2011) concluded that students agreed with the important of Arabic Language and its rules within Syntax, Morphology and Balaghah in understanding Islamic Education especially in religious texts and old manuscript. In her study, the point is not measure with the students' interested but how to produce a student can master with Arabic Language.

Sazura (2012) said that there are 3 components of effective teaching Arabic Language in SMKA. The first is quality of teaching. This study revealed that planning of teacher is higher, but less of implementation, and the equipment of teaching not multiple. The teaching less effectiveness misleads to student's mind set that Arabic Language is difficult and boring. Second the suitable of teaching level and third, time teaching. The extrinsic "rewards" also became a part of effective teaching Arabic Language in SMKA Kedah, as an example in this study. The quality of teaching described as excellent planning of teaching, systematically in delivering of knowledge, smart in choosing strategy of teaching included the pedagogy, methodology and multiple techniques. Use the right equipment and facility of teaching language, and give a lot of training and tasking to the students, have a good skills of asking and able to evaluate and report.

Ahmad Sabri (2008), in his study about SMKA focused on the relationship between students' attitude towards learning Arabic Language and their achievement in Lower Secondary Examination (PMR) in SMKA School. Through the study, it was believed that students have the positive attitudes towards learning Arabic because of their consciousness of the importance of knowledge of Islam as well as their consciousness of their responsibility towards Allah and Islam religion.

The researcher has found that one of study in SMKA titled about perception. Farah Najah (2001) studied about perception of students SMKA in the science field towards Arabic Language. Overall, students in science field have good interest towards Arabic subject. Even though students have good perceptions towards Arabic Language but their way of learning Arabic not very well. And the students also admit with the important of Arabic Language. Students also satisfied with the activity of T&L Arabic Language in class. Findings from the study show the good perception and mind set towards Arabic Language, but the problem is the attitude of students had influenced the good or bad achievement in learning Arabic among the students. The cause it was happened because Arabic Language and major Science was not connected between them determine the attitude of student. Then, students are given motivation to understand the role Arabic Language to develop Islamic society. Therefore, the study has suggested that it must be integration between these two disciplines knowledge to inter related both of them and included in the syllabus.

2. Statement Of The Problem

Although Arabic is important and steps have been taken to help students master Arabic, the issue of Arabic proficiency as a foreign language in Malaysia is never-ending and has always been the concern of policy makers and interested groups. Student's performance in Arabic

Language at all levels of education in Malaysia is still poor and not satisfactory (Ahmad Hassan, 2000). The previous studies showed many problems came out through the teaching and learning Arabic Language in SMKA. The focus of studies were about the communication approach such as Tarmizi (1997) discovered no much difference in the approach of teaching Arabic Language and Communicative Arabic Language in three government religious secondary schools (SMKA) located in Selangor. Traditional methodologies such as memorization, reading and grammar-translation were also extended to teaching Communicative Arabic Language which was also observed by (Anida,2003;Khalid,2004). Quote from Osman Khalid (1993), the cause of the weaknesses among students in Arabic Language because some reasons. There are students' interested, the way of learning, attitude and students' perception, and aspects of T&L Arabic Language in class. Mowafak (1998) suggested to use communicative method must be highlighted and it is parallel with the study Nik Rahimi and Kamarulzaman (2000) about the success of teaching Arabic when subject Islamic Education is taught in Arabic Language.

As mentioned earlier, studies have shown that the problem of mastering the Arabic Language in SMKA is caused by many weaknesses which may be contributed by the teaching and learning processes. But, rarely the discussion of study in teaching and learning Arabic Language in SMKA about the perception of students, teachers and parents towards teaching and learning Arabic Language in school. The perception is the process, act or faculty of perceiving or the effect or product of perceiving. Students' perception is important to guide the process of learning Arabic Language in fulfil their needs. Indeed, teachers' perception is important to give a right way the process of teaching Arabic Language. The important of students', teachers' and parents' perception and attitude play an important role in ensuring the successful teaching and learning of the Arabic Language. Good perception without good strategies, good methods, effective technique in teaching and learning would cause the failure of that process. Good perception without design good syllabus, preparation well organized by teacher during teaching, and the holistic of students' attribution also guide to the failure T&L Arabic Language as foreign language in Malaysia. Simple example about perception by look up what happen in Europe. Even Islamic religion is seems bad perception among them, but many of the citizen convert to Islam. Vice versa in Malaysia, even more all parties had perceived Arabic Language is important, but there were still poor performance among students who learned Arabic at school. The cause of the failure from researcher's own observation and investigation that a flawless and lacking of approach, strategies, method, and technique in process of T&L Arabic Language. Parents nowadays, prefer to send their children to religious school in primary and secondary school, even at pre-school, they would send their children to Tahfiz pre school, because the awareness of offering Islamic value in these schools would shaping their children to be good ummah. Therefore, nowadays, there are a lot of Tahfiz school or school oriented based on Islamic background are opened in public because the highest demands from parents. This situation shown that the good perception of Arabic Language among the parents in teaching and learning.

Amel Shoaib & Zoltan Dornyei (2005) in study revealed that teachers, however, have been noted as the only contributor to the childrens' success in grasping this language. This study identifies two factors as salient motives which are less frequently mentioned in the second language literature where one of that is parental influence, thus underscoring the importance of the home environment in the learning of a second language. Parents become role model to the children to be good or bad in their life. Same goes to the early education in childhood. If

they want their children improve in learning Arabic in school, they must become factor to determine their children success in school learning Arabic Language.

Nik Azis (2002, as cited in Jamiah,2013) mentioned that the strength of the family depends on the family members, and the most significant among them are the parents. Parenting is the most challenging role for any parent because it is an extensive educational process. It is about the parent's ability to foster overall stage of their children development (Brooksm 2008). Good parenting refers to the parent achievement in developing the potential of their children to make them a person with strong faith, good ethics of conduct, and benefits others.

Children have their own right from their parents. Fathers are responsible to their family members; mothers are responsible to the family members, while the children are responsible for both of their parents. Children have the right to receive proper education as Rasulullah SAW said: "It is a duty of the family to inculcate proper education in his son". Consequently, parents must also shield their children from hellfire (Quran, *at-Tahrim: 6*) because each child is born in a state fitrah (innate goodness), but it is his parents who will make him a Jew or Christian (*Sahih al-Bukhari & Muslim*). Ultimately, children's education is the parent's responsibility (Jamiah, 2013).

In this regards, there are two types of education: formal education and informal education. Formal education is the teaching conducted at school or educational organization. Meanwhile informal educations means learning through experience (Abdul Fatah,2007). Both types of education are equally important and it serves to complement each other to produce great individuals. However, education in family is of a greater concern because family is the basis of human development and plays the most significant role from the time human are conceived until they die (Jamiah, 2013).

Perhaps, through this study would revealed parents' responsibilities in support learning Arabic Language because they are part of the solution to become a parents who understand about Arabic Language in the family institution.

Furthermore, the parents' perception is rarely discussed before in any studies. Therefore, what are their perceptions towards teaching and learning can contribute to the success of learning Arabic Language in school. The studying of perception towards teaching and learning Arabic in schools hopefully can search the right position of process teaching and learning Arabic in schools according to their agreements and evaluations. So, the problems arise would be seen from their perspectives and can solve through their views.

Therefore, this study seeks to investigate students', teachers' and parents' perception towards the teaching and learning of Arabic Language in SMKA schools. The schools of SMKA are religious government schools which has offered Arabic Language subject from Form 1 until Form 6 lower. So, the case study would choose the right participants from those schools as a representative other schools who had offer the same subject, Arabic Language. It was believed that the three years of students' exposure to Arabic is considered sufficient for students to be competent in the subject.

3. Research Questions

How do the students', teachers', parents' perceive the teaching and learning of Arabic in the SMKAs?

4. Methodology

This research is designed as a case study because of its applicability to real-life, contemporary, human situations and its public accessibility through written reports. Case study results relate directly to the common readers' everyday experience and facilitate an understanding of complex real-life situations.

The study would employ in-depth interviews as the prime instrument. The qualitative data emerge from responses to a written interview. Qualitative data would be produced from open-ended interviews of selected participants. Three sets of interview questions would be asked of the participants. They are three of students, three of teachers and three of parents in selected SMKAs in Selangor. The interview would be asked of participants to respond to a set of statements regarding the T&L of Arabic scenarios in schools. A set of interview questions about students' attitude, motivation and language anxiety would also be asked. Together the items would yield the data to address research questions "*How do the students', teachers' and parents' perceive the teaching and learning of Arabic in the SMKAs?*"

5. Findings

This section presents the findings of the interviews in order to analyse the STPs' perception of the T&L of Arabic in the SMKAs in response to research questions "*How do the students', teachers', parents' perceive the teaching and learning of Arabic in the SMKAs?*"

Five major themes emerged from the analysis of the data that relate to the perception of T&L of Arabic Language. There are perceptions on the importance, objective, curriculum, textbooks and evaluation of T&L of Arabic Language.

1) Perception on the Importance of Teaching and Learning Arabic

Important things guide the desire to achieve it. Therefore, the importance of T&L of Arabic Language in school are not limited to fulfil the requirement apart of system education in Malaysia, under Education Act 1996 as an additional subject, or an elective subject, or any kind of foreign language should be chosen if deemed logical and practical. For the Malay community, T&L of Arabic Language is more important than that because it's related to understanding Qur'anic language. But, for Chinese students or Indian students or other races in Malaysia who are learning Arabic Language in their school see this subject as an additional subject equal in rank with other subjects taught in school. As a Muslim, learning Arabic became *fardhu ain*, and this subject is not chosen to learn it, but it made compulsory. Realizing that, the Ministry of Education, Malaysia had officially introduced Arabic Language subject into national curriculum in January 1977, parallel with the establishment of National Religious Secondary Schools (SMKA) (JAPIM, 2009). P2 has mentioned the importance of Arabic Language in SMKA because that language becomes the identity of SMKA schools.

I really like Arabic in SMKA, because I feel that is SMKA. SMKA is Arabic. If Arabic is not taught in SMKA, it would be the same as SMK, a regular SMK...I feel in whatever SMKA, this should be our identity. (P2:D.U 110)

At the same time, she asserted that the perception towards religious subject among parents is also better.

Many parents feel that attainment in this subject is improving. (P2:D.U 254)

Respectively, she perceived that T&L Arabic Language in SMKA was achieved. Looking for the students' ability to pursue their study to the higher level in Arabic Language based on their learning basic in SMKA.

I feel we achieved. Because it could provide whatever their parents could not give and when they...at this point students who completed Form 5 could go to university, pursue their undergraduate studies, continued BA, looks o.k, looks good. Meaning, whatever was established, in the duration of 5 years, is adequate...adequate for them. It is ok...(P2:D.U 194)

Furthermore, P3 seemed that important of Arabic Language because the language of the Quran and the language of the heavens.

...we cannot deny the language of the Quran, the language of the heavens... a language that is...as a Muslim, we have to, to, to have to acquire it. This means our parents should also acquire it, however Arabic, the importance and as Muslims we can't say otherwise.(P3:D.U 26)

Prior to that, P3 said that Arabic knowledge can build the good character. As he said, in order to build a lineage, people must have mastery of the Arabic Language because this knowledge comes from the Quran. At least, when they have the basics and understand Arabic, it would be easier for them to learn knowledge associated with the Quran. Directly or indirectly, they would be able to empower themselves with Quranic knowledge that they could apply to themselves. No other knowledge is comparable with Arabic Language because the guidance bring with it and Allah bless with it as Allah said : And certainly We have brought them a Book which We have made clear with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe (Quran, *al-A'raf* :52). P3 also mentioned that Arabic Language from its' importance can be a cure of diseases as Allah said: And We reveal of the Quran that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers, and it adds only to the perdition of the unjust (Quran, *al-Isra*': 82).

...As for me, in order to build a lineage, we must have mastery of the Arabic Language. And better yet...because this knowledge comes from the Quran, right? A lot. If we have the basics, for example if we understand Arabic, then it would be easier for us to learn knowledge associated with the Quran. Directly or indirectly, we will be able to empower ourselves with Quranic knowledge that we could apply to better ourselves. It would be, what we call an 'antivirus' aa... in English, these can be a cure...aa of diseases. It is important to think like this, as no other knowledge is comparable. Aa even invoking (Bismillah) in Arabic also, we can study in depth, and understand the language to strengthen ourselves. Strength, the strength is there. Aa I feel that we have to...(P3:D.U 124)

However, P1 perceived that Arabic Language seems less important from other foreign language even though it is become awareness very important to Muslim society in Malaysia. P1 added that Mandarin language more highlighted in Malaysia compared to Arabic Language was left behind.

In the context of our country, we are a lagging behind in Arabic Language acquisition...I really feel that we lack people who are experts in the Arabic Language. Emphasis in Arabic Language is lacking. In fact, I see that in terms of language...Mandarin is given more emphasis.(P1:D.U 18)

Pertaining to that, S1 said English language is more highlighted than Arabic Language. English language is easier to understand and used compared to AL because of the exposure to the language is more. While for AL is lack and being used only when they were told to do so. People who are proficient in Arabic Language in school will also fluent and good in English but those who are good and master in English will not necessarily master in Arabic. They are inclined towards English. Maybe, efforts to heighten Arabic exist, but they still quite synonymous with English. She perceived that student who was able to master Arabic; he would master English as well. But, if he can master English in school, it does not mean that he can master Arabic.

...English is better understood, we are more exposed to English. It is as though Arabic...is...aa...as though er...for example when we uhm say Arabic, lately, when they were told, they did. English is as though, maybe our tongue is used to it, used to speaking English. So, definitely less than Arabic. (S1:D.U 372)

The same findings in the study Mohammad Rofian et.al (2013). Therefore, in this study, the findings have revealed that the success or failure T&L Arabic language in school depends on the awareness of school community towards this language.

2) Perception on the Objective of Teaching and Learning Arabic

Objective defines as an aim or target to achieve by teacher and student at the end process of T&L. Objective is first unit of the curriculum T&L language. There are two categorize of objectives. First; the objective of teaching, second the objective of learning and both of these objectives are related. According to Mujawir (2000), there are five principals in view of the objectives of teaching in secondary level. The five principles: i) Students' need and interest in learning Arabic. ii) Seeking the similarity objectives among them towards learning language. iii) Continuously expand the language and develop it. iv) The objective of teaching must be arranged. v) This objective must blendered with all subjects in school.

Meanwhile, T1 perceived that the objective T&L AL in SMKA is succeed. He also satisfied with the performance of students' SMKA to speak in Arabic and doing exam very well. This means when they reach Form Three PMR, there are those who can get an 'A' and excel up to Form Five. They can converse, write Arabic essays, this means they have succeeded, in this regards, he said the process of T&L have achieved success.

Ah, yes...I feel...that we have succeeded...which is having students in Forms 1,2 and 3...Alhamdulillah, they are able to speak, converse in simple, basic Arabic and can answer examination questions... (T1:D.U 22)

P2 also agreed by this statement who satisfied with her daughter who learning Arabic very well in SMKA. The objective of T&L is prepared students to communicate, because it inclines heavily on conversations.

...it is more towards conversation...the content is it prepares students for...so step by step, it teaches students in a systematic way, and you can see the objectives, quite clear to prepare them towards mastery in communication.(P2:D.U 18)

In conjunction with that, P2 likes to hear her daughter who learn Arabic Language can communicate with this language between her siblings rather than excellent in examination. As she want to hear from sound of her daughter spoke Arabic was like an Arab speaker.

She can communicate with her siblings. Let them speak...because sometimes her...her...pronunciation, to achieve fluency. (P2:D.U 126)

T3 also perceived that the objectives of learning Arabic Language in SMKA is for the students to use and practice the language in their daily life and to understand and learn the Islamic knowledge very well. Apart from focusing on students who can converse in Arabic and practise in their daily life, she really hope that they learn Arabic and acquire true Islamic knowledge.

The objective of Arabic education in SMKA?...so that students will use Arabic daily, yes, practise this in their daily life. Then, aa...so the students could, learn Islamic in depth, more so in Arabic. (T3:D.U 22)

Supported to that, P3 add the objective T&L Arabic Language more than communication purpose, but for moral purpose and business purpose. As he viewed the process T&L Arabic just to pass papers. It is quite limited to apply a job, to apply for a business, communication that would encompass these aspects.

A communication language, a moral language, up to our level...all of us can understand Arabic. Now we can't develop because of that. Maybe communication but just to pass papers. Not enough to apply a job, to apply for a business, communication, or...whatever that would encompass these aspects. It is quite limited. (P3:D.U 141)

Therefore, according to the above perception, objective T&L Arabic in school considered succeed when student able to speak, use Arabic as daily life, communicate with others, converse in simple or basic Arabic Language, can answer examination questions and practise a good value through learning it.

3) Perception on the Curriculum of Teaching and Learning Arabic

According to Glatthorn (2005:12 as cited in Kazeem,2014)'s definition of curriculum, he holds the view that curriculum should be defined in either prescriptive or descriptive perspectives. He defines the prescriptive curriculum as “opinion of experts about what needs to take place in the course study.” While descriptive curriculum is defined as any “aspect of learning that provides us with all what supposed to happen in the learning process, and in most cases it may not take the form of a planned action”

Therefore, the view of participants in this study were categorized as descriptive curriculum. As P1 perceived about the learning landscape of Arabic Language curriculum in SMKAs school. He stated that the learning environment influence the emphasis on understanding the Arabic Language of the Quran. Many of the students study Arabic and *Fardhu Ain* in school from the primary level. However, the efforts to understand and mastering the language of the Quran especially in terms of application is very less and minimum. Many of them are talking about Qur'anic recitation (Tilawatul Quran) not to understand of the Quran, and none place talk about the understanding of the Quran, and none strive so that secondary students can understand the Quran.

It is mandatory for Muslims in Malaysia to follow Qur'anic, Fardhu Ain and Arabic lessons at pre-school level. Nevertheless, not enough emphasis is given in these

lessons, especially in terms of application in the Arabic Language. At the very least... Children should be taught basic Arabic so that they could understand the Quran. Even that is not achievable. None. (P1:D.U 166)

He told many parents aim their children becoming pious children through understanding Quran with Arabic Language. Like he wants his children to master the Arabic Language completely and he was certain that many parents did the same thing (P1:D.U 330). He added that if students understand Arabic Language, it means they understand the Quran (P1:D.U 332). And it was cause the main objective they sent their children to the religious school. As parents, how he would think when he fears that when he leaves his children, they will not be pious children of lineage (P1:D.U 336).

As the S1 underlined with the P1 statement as she not satisfied with her ability to understand Quran instead she got all A's in PMR subject including Arabic subject. She commented about government is emphasizing English more than Arabic. As she said that as a student, she understands more English than Arabic.

As for me it hasn't. Hasn't. From a lot of aspects, still a lot aa...Arabic knowledge that I lack, like Al-Qur'an, in terms of recitation, there's still a lot that I don't know. It's as though it's not enough. And like...aa...government is emphasizing English more than Arabic. Like...to make it second after Malay Language, so no, not yet. I am...ah, like student understands more English than Arabic. What's more, schools do not teach Arabic. Like, I don't know about Arabic. (S1:D.U 370)

As the conclusion, Arabic curriculum in SMKA as perceived by STP was parallel with the first principle in Arabic curriculum; educational principle. As viewed by P1, the contents of Arabic knowledge should determines subject of value (*adab*) according Quran and Sunnah.

4) Perception on the Textbook of Arabic Language

An Arabic textbook is an important tool of T&L Arabic Language as second language in school. It contents of syllabus in the curriculum. A good content in the textbooks determine the level of achievement among the students towards learning language. Ta'imah (2004) listed three principals to be followed by the syllabus. First, educational principle, second psychological principle, and third one sociological principle.

In conjunction to that, T1 stressed that it is important for the teachers to teach based on the students' level of understanding and ability which is from the simple one to the hardest. T1 also agreed that the teachers have to sit down and discuss on how to deliver the knowledge with the suitable level of Arabic Language for the students as he said that the need of discussion in using text books or other sources, so that the level of language is quite easy and makes it easy for teachers to teach and makes it easy for students to refer to the text books themselves. He said when students saw the text books difficult, they are not interested to refer to the text books, so teachers have to use simple examples, the ones which are easy for students to understand.

For example, we must start with something simple first...Give names first. Sometimes we teach students by giving difficult examples...steps in showing examples must be carefully thought out...choose the simple ones. Then give them the difficult ones. Ok.

We do the simple ones. But sometimes, we teach the students to do the difficult ones. So step by step instruction is necessary... (T1: D.U 106)

Meanwhile, T3 viewed that the grammar used in the text book is also moderate and suitable for the students at their level. The example used in the textbooks took sample around the students. Therefore, teacher should using example close to the students that they can visualize around them in teaching Arabic. She gave example like Twin PETRONAS Towers, as they can imagine it and the information can be related to whatever is close to them. The students can understand and teacher who not gives examples which are not apparent, maybe they are not able to visualize. But by giving the examples are of things that are around them, such things in Malaysia, it was better, because they can visualize.

One to three. If one to three, up to this, aa...the level of language is average. To say that it's too easy, it isn't so, and to say that it's too hard, it's not. [Examples given in the text books?] For example, I see, in the secondary books, not so, eh, I am not sure, but it inclined towards what surrounds us. Even if there are stories, they are stories about us. For example, a mousedeer and a tiger, like that. (T3:D.U 72)

This finding corresponds to Mujawir (2000) that the subject learned must be related with their lives daily and another study also showed that when learners are exposed to content materials which are relevant to their needs, their motivation to learn continues (Melanie Cardell, 2005). This is parallel with third principle in Arabic curriculum principle; sociological principle that means the application of Arabic Language should relevant with the perception of society. Therefore, the principle of sociological focus on the growing up society with Arabic knowledge.

Prior to that, she said the teachers need to maximize the use of the text book and deliver it to the students by giving examples which is quite familiar and close to them so that they can remember and understand well. The most important thing is the ways of students themselves utilize the text books.

I feel that up to this, I did not make any comments. Only, the most important thing, we maximize the usage of text books, I feel this is good, because in language mainly, whatever is in the exams, there are used. That's it, that's my opinion Em...Arabic, text books, I feel is not a problem. (T3:D.U 74)

In addition, T1 said to attract students' interest towards learning Arabic, the language of Arabic textbook must easy. As he said students would be more interested in Arabic when using text books with the level of language is easy and that way it would all be easy (T1: D.U 110). The finding corresponds to what Allah said: "And certainly We have made the Quran easy for remembrance, but is there anyone who will mind?" (Quran, *al-Qamar* :17). Therefore, in any process of learning, let begin with simple one first before go to the further.

5) Perception on the Evaluation of Teaching and Learning Arabic

Evaluation is the last phase of the teaching process. It means an ongoing appraisal of the student's learning progress during and after teaching. And it also last part of unit in the curriculum.

P1's perception towards evaluation of Arabic Language was seen as a subject to pass exam in school, instead of understand Quran. The use of Arabic Language in school is less when the teachers only read out and define the terms in Arabic according to the text book. While in class discussion and conversation, they will speak in Malay.

(If...if) If we retain aa....teachers only use Arabic when they need to define terms or recitations in the kitabs but when they are done with the kitab recitation, they will resume speaking in Malay. This is why I feel that we will never be able to master the language to a level that...we can be proud of. (P1:D.U 54)

When students learned Arabic only to pass the examination through predicting questions and memorizing answers, this will led to the shortage of mastering Arabic in school. As P1 said when students learned only pass Arabic as a subject by predicting questions and memorizing answers from test scripts, then this would not be a way to master the language and this is what's happening in all schools which are teaching Arabic Language as an SPM subject as teachers are compelled to give or predict questions that might be asked. These are the essays.

He also viewed that eventhough 70% students pass in their examination, they were actually not mastery in Arabic skills. The rest is considered failures or mediocre or unsatisfactory passes.

For me the level of achievement should be 70%. If we talk about level of success, it can be said that at least 70% can cope in the Arabic Language subject... We should also not consider those who attained 70% as having mastered the language. (P1:D.U 156)

Supported the success of SMKA students' in examination, T3 said at this stage,its' achievement, quite satisfactory with the students' performance in PMR for Arabic subject (T3:D.U 32). But at the same time, she viewed that student must be able to master speaking skills rather than pass in examination.

Hmm...in terms of objective, {ha} to use it daily, for example, to use Arabic daily, still lacking, the usage, ya.(T3:D.U 24)

6. Discussion& Conclusion

Arabic Language is among the important language in this world. Nowadays, its' important become more highlighted in this world. In the Muslim world, learning Arabic became *farḍu 'ayn* and compulsory because it's related to Islamic religion and the Quran as the guidance. Learning Arabic strengthen to understand Quran and *Hadith*. In view of students' perception towards the important of learning Arabic because some reasons as to further study in local university or middle east, professional who had knowledgeable with Arabic Language and understand the Qur'anic language and *Hadith*, understand the Arabic conversation, bright future, get respect, higher payment, and entrance to job vacancy with the capability skills of Arabic, success in life, know foreign language and paradise language, international language, highest reward who learn Arabic known because its' seems difficult language, talk in many languages, speaking Arabic, writing Arabic and expand knowledge. It was proven with Salina (2011) that students agreed with the important of Arabic Language and its rules within syntax, morphology and *Balaghah* in understanding Islamic education especially in religious texts and old manuscript.

The teachers also talk the same things about the importance of Arabic Language, add on to prophet tradition, Islamic revealed knowledge narrated, experiment the new knowledge.

Prior to that, Arabic Language future very excellent because economy factor like working place at middle-east, Islamic references written in Arabic Language, deeply know the Islamic knowledge overall, continue study in local university at Islamic field like *Usuluddin* and *Syariah*. Besides an international language, besides English language, Malaysia has many students in Egypt or other country at middle-east.

But, parents' view about the important of Arabic Language more interesting. Malaysia is a model of Islamic country in many sectors. Medical sector which doctor able to speak Arabic with Arab patient. In the tourism sector, Arab tourist come to Malaysia are reported arising, gives the opportunity to hotel provided worker who can speak Arabic. In investment sector, Arabic investor comes to Malaysia country to invest in Malaysia, dealing good business with Arab businessman. In Islamic banking sector provides a good opportunity to Malaysian nations develop with Arabic Language.

Besides that, the important of Arabic Language, it could be prevention of social disease and as a shield for the *Muslims*. And it gives advantage to have skills in Arabic feel the Prophet speech through his *Hadith*, and foremost bring to *taqwa, iman* and right thinking. Arabic Language also can build good personality to Arabic learners, because this knowledge comes from Quran, learn good *akhlaq* through this knowledge, in line with verses of Quran. Understand Arabic Language bring to *khushū'* with understand the meaning of reciting in *solah*.

From the findings above show that the important of Arabic Language significance with objective of learning and teaching in school. Therefore, objective T&L Arabic Language must be related with the important of learning Arabic for religious such as understand Quran and communication language. Similar finding was reported Zawawi et al. (2005).

The findings also show the same findings with Lazim (2000), Mat Taib (2006) concluded that the teaching of Arabic Language in Malaysia was irrelevant with its objectives. The findings also revealed that Arabic curriculum should be design for the specific purpose in business, medical, banking, tourism and else. For the further, the syllabus content in Arabic textbook must be enclose with the specific purpose of learning Arabic and suitable with the need of learning Arabic Language recently. And this parallel with Islamic education philosophy which is to impart knowledge and skills that cater the need of job market in accordance with the teaching of Quran and *Sunnah*, as to mould the character, skill and personality in order to bear the responsibility as vicegerent of Allah to achieve success in this world and hereafter (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2002).

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