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Mohd Azrol Hafizi Azman, Abd Rauf Hassan & Nik Farhan Mustapha

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## Mastering Linguistic-Cultural Competence Through The Engagement of Higher Education Institution (IPT) Students in Abroad Mobility Programmes for Academic Purposes

Mohd Azrol Hafizi Azman, Abd Rauf Hassan & Nik Farhan  
Mustapha

Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM  
Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia.  
Email: [azrolarabiy@gmail.com](mailto:azrolarabiy@gmail.com)

### Abstract

The mastery of cultural-linguistic competence is seen as a matter that can affect the Arabic speaking level of Bachelor of Arts (Foreign Language) Arabic Language Specialization students at University Putra Malaysia to a better level after their involvement in the overseas mobility program for academic purposes at the Language Center of University Al al- Bayt, Mafraq Jordan on February 1 - March 1, 2020. Therefore, this paper aims to discuss the mastery of cultural-linguistic competence regarding the possession of knowledge of the types of language and cultural terms that affect the level of Arabic speaking of students after their involvement in the mobility program abroad for academic purposes. The Socio-cultural Competency Assessment Method of N.M. Belyakova (2008) is used to identify the mastery of cultural-linguistic competence among students through overseas mobility programs for academic purposes. Qualitative research methodology through interviews with 8 students became the main data and information collection method. Hence, the ATLAS software. ti version 6 was used in analyzing the study data. The results of the study show that students who successfully engage in this program for at least one month can gain knowledge of the types of language terms and culture native to the Arabic language in the country as well as help overcome the problem of weakness in their Arabic speaking level.

**Keywords:** Linguistic-Cultural Competence, Knowledge of Language and Culture Terminology, Students' Arabic Speaking Level, Abroad Mobility, Academic Purposes

### Introduction

The problem of weak Arabic speaking levels among students is a scenario that often occurs in various Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia. This can be proven through several studies that have been carried out including Ab.Halim (2009) study related to the level of Arabic language use among students of Public Higher Education Institutions and the reasons that prevent the use of the Arabic language; Nadwah & Nadhilah (2014) study related to the problems students face when speaking Arabic by directly examining the difficulties students

face when they perform tasks that involve speaking activities; Ab.Halim & Muhamad (2016) study related to the relationship between students' interest and attitude towards the Arabic language as well as displaying their attitude and efforts to improve Arabic language proficiency; as well as Anuar (2016) study related to the level of Arabic speaking among students and the reasons that prevent them from speaking Arabic.

Factors of weakness in the level of Arabic speaking among students that can be known based on the discussion by the researchers above include students' feelings towards the language they are learning such as shyness, lack of confidence, fear, and lack of enthusiasm (Ab.Halim, 2009); task challenges, vocabulary problems, problems using language structures (morphology and syntax), problems with the arrangement or presentation of ideas and self-confidence among students (Nadwah & Nadhilah, 2014); shyness, low self-esteem, lack of confidence, fear of being ridiculed, fear of being laughed at by friends, lack of enthusiasm, and fear of making a mistake become an obstacle for them to speak in Arabic (Anuar, 2016); less interacting and communicating with native Arabic students (Ab.Halim & Wan Muhamad, 2016).

Although the scenario above only focuses on the factors that lead to the problem of the weakness of the level of Arabic speaking among Bachelor's Degree/Bachelor of Arabic students in Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia, there are already several studies that prove the effectiveness of involvement in overseas mobility programs for academic purposes can affect the level of Arabic speaking among students, including the study of Rohana, Hayati, & Zainora (2017) related to the size of the vocabulary that students have after the end of their stay abroad, determining the level of language mastery in the speaking aspect and evaluating the effectiveness of short-term language programs according to the socio-linguistic perspective as well as Saipolbarin (2018) study regarding the effectiveness of the Outbound Program on students. Therefore, previous studies have provided preliminary information to the implementation of this further study in terms of more research on the mastery of cultural-linguistic competence that can directly influence the level of Arabic speaking to a better level among students of Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia through their involvement in overseas mobility program for academic purposes.

### **Literature Review**

Many western researchers agree that student involvement in overseas mobility programs is an important matter in the development of social competence and competence, civics, cultural awareness, knowledge, academic skills, and better expression among students (Vilmante Kumpikaite and Kestutis Duoba, 2013). This is in line with the view of Mcinnes et al (2019) who stated that students' competence can be developed through their involvement in overseas mobility programs including cultural competence including language and communication skills, intellectual competence including working with others to solve problems, social competence including increased self-confidence and self-awareness as well as professional competence through increased professional networking.

In addition, this language program for academic purposes has also been proven effective by several western researchers including Bolsunovskaya et al (2015) who stated that the intensive implementation of project-based methods used in foreign language teaching for specific purposes can achieve reliable results, meet the needs of students and satisfy their

interests. This is because, from the context of a foreign language, it is distinguished from language for general purposes where the concept is more focused on professional or academic demands and appropriate situations (Laborda & Litzler, 2015). Thus, language for specific purposes is a matter that requires dependence on educational growth, student age, learning style, and other factors (Kazakova, 2015).

In the context of the mastery of cultural-linguistic competence among students of Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia, an increase in the level of mastery of the Arabic language from the speaking aspect that involves increasing the size of the student's vocabulary is indeed related to their involvement in Arabic language courses abroad (Rohana et al., 2017). It is also supported by Saipolbarin (2018) who stated that the outbound program of Arabic language programs conducted abroad has increased the size of students' vocabulary from the aspect of speaking Arabic.

Despite this, the study of Rohana et al (2017) did not investigate the mastery of cultural-linguistic competence in terms of the ownership of types of language and cultural terms and the effect of student involvement in overseas mobility programs for academic purposes that affect their Arabic speaking level in more detail as the basis of the recommendations presented. It was only found related to mastery of cultural-linguistic competence from the aspect of improving vocabulary elements in general only among students who followed the program. The same is true of Saipolbarin (2018) study which also focuses on increasing students' mastery of Arabic vocabulary only after the end of their involvement in overseas outbound programs.

Therefore, this further study was made for more research on the elements of cultural-linguistic competence that can be mastered by students, among them the possession of knowledge of the types of language and culture terms that can directly affect their Arabic speaking level through involvement in external mobility programs country for academic purposes.

### **Methodology**

The Socio-Cultural Competency Assessment Method N.M. Belyakova (2008) was used to identify the mastery of cultural-linguistic competence among Bachelor of Arts (Foreign Languages) students specializing in Arabic at University Putra Malaysia through their involvement in overseas mobility programs for academic purposes at University Al al-Bayt, Mafraq, Jordan on February 1 - March 1, 2020. This qualitative study involves the collection of primary data by using the interview method on 8 respondents. All findings are described qualitatively to explain the mastery of cultural-linguistic competence which involves the possession of knowledge of the types of language terms and culture of native Arabic speakers that can influence the level of Arabic speaking of students.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Possession of Knowledge of Types of Language Terms and Culture of Native Arabic Speakers**

Throughout the period of student involvement in the Arabic language mobility program abroad for academic purposes for 1 month at Al al-Bayt University, Mafraq Jordan, there is the possession of knowledge of the types of language and cultural terms from the aspects of nutrition, lifestyle, usage and art of native Arabic speakers which is the knowledge that they

acquire especially culture-specific vocabulary knowledge as well as lexical units and standard grammatical structures and accents. All of this knowledge was mentioned by the respondents in the interview session conducted by the researcher.

### Nutritional Knowledge

In terms of socio-cultural Arab society in Jordan, food and drink are the biggest cultural component that can be observed comprehensively by the respondents. This is because it is expressed every day and openly, making it easier for respondents to research and understand their daily eating style. The following is a summary of the respondent's knowledge table from the nutritional aspect:-

No	Category	Type	Habit
1.	Food	Bread	Likes to eat bread
		Rice	Rarely eat rice
		Sweets	Loves sweet food
2.	Food	Tea	Drink herbal tea
		Coffee	Drink coffee with cardamom
		Milk	Love sour milk

### Bread

Food that is a daily routine for Jordanian Arabs is a meal based on bread. Various types of bread are their choice and it can be categorized into several other terms as follows:-

No.	Types of Bread	Side dishes
1.	<i>Khubs</i> (خبز)	<i>Laban</i> (لبن) <i>Murabba</i> (مرابي) <i>Batotos</i> (بطاطس)
2.	<i>Mu'ajjanat</i> (معجنات)	<i>Jubnah</i> (جبنة)
3.	<i>Falafil</i> (فلافل)	-
4.	<i>Syawarma</i> (شوربي)	-

### Rice

Various varieties of rice are found on the menu of Arab Jordanian cuisine. The respondents' observations are summarized in the following diagram:-

No	Types of Rice	Side Dishes	Habits
1.	<i>Mansaf</i> (منسف)	i. <i>Mukhalal</i> (مخلل)	i. Rarely eat rice
2.	<i>Maqlubah</i> (مقلوبة)	ii. <i>Salatoh</i> (سلطة)	i. A large quantity
3.	<i>Mandy</i> (مندى)		iii. More fond of sour
4.	<i>Kabsah</i> (كبسة)		iv. Don't like spicy

### Sweets

The Jordanian Arab community is also famous for various types of sweets. It is easily available and enjoyed by respondents at stalls near Mafraq town. The two types of sweets that are of concern to them are listed in the following diagram:-

No	Kinds of Sweets	Habits
1.	<i>Kunafah</i> (كنافة)	Likes to eat sweets
2.	<i>Esh al-Saroya</i> (عش الثرايا)	
3.	<i>Kakku Turkiya</i> (كعك تركيا)	

### Tea

In addition to food, the drinks of the Arab community in Jordan also have many variations. Tea that is used as a daily drink has various types as shown in the following table:-

No	Types of Tea	Habits
1.	<i>Naknak</i> (النعناع)	i. Drink tea every morning ii. Love tea with herbs
2.	<i>Zattar</i> (زعترا)	
3.	<i>Maramiyyah</i> (مرمية)	

### Coffee

In addition to tea, coffee is also known as the daily drink of Jordanian Arabs. In general, it can be divided into two main types as shown in the following diagram

No	Type of Coffee	Habits
1.	<i>kowwah sadah</i> (قهوة سادة)	Love the herbal mix
2.	<i>kowwah sadah ma'a hell</i> (قهوة سادة مع هيل)	

### Lifestyle Knowledge

Knowledge about the lifestyle of the Jordanian Arab community is very important to facilitate interaction and social communication. Based on the respondents' observations, there are three most prominent characters that they can learn from. The following table is a summary:-

No	Lifestyle	Habits
1	Sociable	i. Start the meeting with a greeting ii. Fluent in conversation
2	Generous	i. Be open to guests ii. Cheap in giving iii. Cheap with praise
3	Quick to act	i. Driving ii. Waiting for answers to questions

### Wear Knowledge

Clothing is an outward appearance that symbolizes the personality and culture of a society. In Jordan, among their traditional clothes is serban, *jubah* (جبة), *abaya* (عباية), *muthorozat sharqiyyah* (مطرزات شرقية), and *iqol* (عقال) or *igal* (إغال) as stated in the following diagram:-

No.	clothes	Side Clothing	Habits
1.	<i>Serban</i>	-	-
2.	<i>Jubah</i> (جبة)	<i>Iqol</i> (عقال) or <i>Igal</i> (إغال)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For men</li> <li>• worn with a red turban</li> </ul>
3.	<i>Abaya</i> (عباية)	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For women</li> <li>• Daily wear</li> </ul>
4.	<i>Muthorozat Syarqiah</i> (مطرزات شرقية)	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For Women</li> <li>• Formal or party wear</li> </ul>

### Art Knowledge

Art and tunes are also important cultural components that can be observed and experienced comprehensively. It is as shown in the diagram below:-

No	Song Type	Sample Song	Situation or Habit
1.	Folk song	-	i. in the vehicle ii. at the graduation ceremony
2.	A song of passion	<i>Dahia "Hala and Hala"</i> "الدحية " هلا و هلا"	i. in the vehicle ii. at the graduation ceremony
3.	Romantic song	<i>Ordet Ruhi</i> أردت روحي	i. review time ii. free time and relaxation iii. busy time for peace

### Culture-Specific Vocabulary Background Knowledge

The culturally specific vocabulary of the Jordanian Arab community is one of the important cultural components from the aspect of their social communication that can be observed by the respondents. It is divided into two sub-themes which are greetings and other than greetings.

### Greeting Words

Starting communication with specific greetings has become a cultural practice of the Arab community in Jordan in social communication. Among the speeches that were recorded by the respondents were: *assalammualaikum* (السَّلَامُ عَلَيْنَكُم), *ahlan* (أَهْلًا) or *ahlan wasahlan* (أَهْلًا وَسَهْلًا), *marhaba* (مَرْحَبًا) or *marhaban* (مَرْحَبَانْ), *slunak* (شَلُونَكْ), *syukhbarat* (شُخْبَارَكْ), *shu ismak* (شُو إِسْمَكْ), *shu biddakh* (شُو بَدَّكْ) or *shu sawwi* (شُو سَاوِي), as in the diagram below:-

NO.	The situation	Greeting Words
1.	When meeting	<i>Assalammualaikum</i> (السَّلَامُ عَلَيْنَكُم)
		<i>Ahlan</i> (أَهْلًا) or <i>Ahlan wasahlan</i> (أَهْلًا وَسَهْلًا)
		<i>Marhaba</i> (مَرْحَبًا) or <i>Marhaban</i> (مَرْحَبَانْ)
		<i>Slunak</i> (شَلُونَكْ)
		<i>Syukhbarat</i> (شُخْبَارَكْ)
2.	At the counter	<i>Shu ismak</i> (شُو إِسْمَكْ)
		<i>Syu biddakh</i> (شُو بَدَّكْ)
3.	when active	<i>Shu sawwi</i> (شُو سَاوِي)

### In addition to Greeting Words

What is meant by 'other than the words of greeting' here is referring to the phrase that is said before parting. Refer to the following diagram for details:-

NO.	The situation	Speech
1.	When you want to break up	<i>Maassalamah</i> (مَعَ السَّلَامَةِ)
		<i>Ilal liqo</i> (إِلَى اللِّقَاءِ)
		<i>Allah ya'tika al a'fiyah</i> (اللَّهُ يَغْفِرُكَ الْعَافِيَةَ)

### Knowledge of Lexical Units and Grammatical Structure of Cultural Languages

Lexical units and cultural grammatical structures in the daily communication of Jordanian Arabs touch on the dialect or accent aspect of daily conversation. The knowledge of lexical units and grammatical structures of Arab Jordanian culture obtained by respondents can be divided into three sub-themes, namely nouns (اسْمٌ), verbs (فِعْلٌ), and question words (أَدَاءُ الاسْتِفْهَامِ).

#### Noun

The use of nouns is used directly in the daily speech accent of the Jordanian Arab community. The change in the use of nouns from the term Fusha (standard) to the term ammiyah Arabic (accent) is very noticeable and noticed by the respondents.

No	Standard Terms	Accent Terms
1.	<i>Ma ismuka</i> (مَا إِسْمُكَ)	<i>Shu ismak</i> (شُو إِسْمُكَ)
2.	<i>Kaifa haluka</i> (كَيْفَ حَالُكَ)	<i>Sylunak</i> (سِلُونُكَ)
		<i>Syukhbarat</i> (شُخْبَارَاتُكَ)
3.	<i>Faroh</i> (فَرْحٌ) <i>Saiid</i> (سَعِيدٌ)	<i>Mabsut</i> (مَبْسُوطٌ)

#### Verb

The change in the use of the verb fusha to the Arabic word ammiyah is also easily identified by the respondents as it is often used by them in daily communication. The following are the intended terms:-

No	Standard Terms	Accent Terms
1.	<i>Ma turidu</i> (مَا تُرِيدُ) or <i>Uridu</i> (أُرِيدُ)	<i>Syu biddakh</i> (شُو بَدَّكَ) or <i>Bidni</i> (بِدْنِي)
2.	<i>Maza taf'al</i> (مَاذَا تَفَعَّلَ)	<i>Shu sawwi</i> (شُو سَاوِي) or <i>Shu taf'al</i> (شُو تَفَعَّلَ)
3.	<i>Asytari</i> (أَشْتَرِي)	<i>Bisytari</i> (بِشْتَرِي)

#### Question Word

Effective communication occurs when two-way interaction runs smoothly between them with questions and answers. Questions and answers in the conversation between the respondents and the Jordanian Arab community apparently made it easier for them to identify some changes in the lexical and grammatical units of Arab culture.

It is more noticeable when the change in the use of the question word fusha is not used but is replaced by the Arabic word ammiyah. Among the question word changes learned by the respondents are: *maza* (مَآذًا) to *shu* (شُو), *kam* (كَمْ) to *eddish* (إِدْشَن), *limaza* (لِمَآذًا) to *leyh* (لَيْش) and *aina* (أَيْنَ) to *wen* (وَيْن), as summarized in the figure below:-

No	Standard Terms	Accent Terms
1.	<i>Maza</i> (مَآذًا)	<i>Shu</i> (شُو)
2.	<i>Kam</i> (كَمْ)	<i>Eddish</i> (إِدْشَن)
3.	<i>Limaza</i> (لِمَآذًا)	<i>Leyh</i> (لَيْش)
4.	<i>Aina</i> (أَيْنَ)	<i>Wen</i> (وَيْن)

### Conclusion

Overall, it can be summarized that the mastery of cultural-linguistic competence that focuses on the possession of knowledge of the types of language terms and culture of native Arabic speakers is an important thing that needs to be paid attention to by students in dealing with the problem of their Arabic speaking level. Accordingly, cultural-linguistic knowledge with student involvement in mobility programs abroad for academic purposes has a strong correlation. Their active involvement in the daily life of the Arab community in Jordan makes it easier for them to acquire cultural knowledge, especially in terms of nutrition, lifestyle, clothing, art, culture-specific vocabulary as well as lexical units and standard grammatical structures and accents. Therefore, the mastery of linguistic-cultural competence that is established with the possession of knowledge of the terms of the language and culture of native Arabic speakers is very important for students at the Higher Education Institution level in Malaysia as well as being able to improve their level of speaking Arabic to a better level. For the mastery of linguistic-cultural competence by students, participating in mobility programs abroad for academic purposes is necessary to succeed.

Therefore, this study has the following importance and contribution

Importance	Contribution
This study investigates the main elements in the mastery of cultural-linguistic competence that have a relationship with the involvement of students in overseas mobility programs to increase their level of speaking Arabic. Therefore, the results of this study are expected to increase knowledge about cultural-linguistic competence indicators that can increase the level of Arabic speaking among students.	Make students aware of the importance of involvement in mobility programs abroad for academic purposes in addition to attending formal lectures and participating in language activities outside the lecture room.
Emphasis on the theory of using cultural-linguistic competence is based on Belyakova's Socio-cultural Competence model (2008). This theory highlights the importance of culture and language and shows similarities in several important	Helping lecturers and administrators at university to encourage students to strengthen their mastery of existing cultural-linguistic competence while also having a positive effect on their Arabic speaking level.

aspects in the field of second language acquisition.	
This study is believed to be significant to all parties involved in second language acquisition such as students, lecturers, administrators of higher education institutions, researchers and the general public. This is because cultural-linguistic competence cannot be completely separated from involvement in overseas mobility programs.	Helping lecturers or instructors to create an atmosphere of compulsion so that students are exposed to various language skills such as reading news in Arabic, listening to Arabic radio channels and so on.

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