

The Use of Arabic Vocabulary Notebook among Islamic Studies Students at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin In Malaysia

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Abstract

This paper aims to measure the effectiveness of using vocabulary notebook among students of Islamic Contemporary Studies at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Terengganu. The use of vocabulary notebook is one of the techniques of enriching Arabic vocabulary suggested by some academicians. Typically, this technique practiced by many students of Islamic studies because Arabic language becomes medium of instruction for their courses taken. It is observed that most students are mastering in Arabic vocabularies by just knowing their literal meaning but failed to apply them in a proper manner. This study used a quasi-experimental methods using instruments pre-test and post. A total of 146 respondents were randomly selected. 73 of them were chosen to be in an experimental group and they were trained to use vocabulary notebook technique while the rest were considered as a control group. The data obtained had been analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 22. Statistical inference t-tests were used to test the hypothesis at the significant level of $p < 0.05$. The finding had shown a significant difference for students' achievement scores in Arabic writing tests after using vocabulary notebook technique. Therefore, this study recommends the use of vocabulary notebook technique to all students majoring in Islamic studies in order to improve their Arabic writing skills.

Keywords: Vocabulary notebook, Arabic language, Islamic studies student, writing skills

1. Introduction

The weakness of students in Arabic is not a new problem. But, this issue happened for decades, either at school or higher education institutions. Similarly, this also happened among students of Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA) including Islamic studies students. There are often complaints from various parties especially lecturer regarding the weakness of students in mastering Arabic language that includes those who take Arabic programme or other Arabic courses. For an example, students of Diploma in Islamic Studies at UniSZA who use Arabic

language as a medium of instruction and they are expected to be proficient in Arabic during the process of their study for six-semester study.

Students pursuing Islamic studies at the Faculty of Islamic Contemporary Studies must take basic Arabic courses including *al-Qiraah*, *al-Kitabah* and *al-Muhadathah*. These courses are the basic subjects for mastering Arabic language. The main purpose of offering these compulsory courses is to ensure students who are taking Islamic studies will be able to master in Arabic language because almost subjects offered using reference books in Arabic. In order to improve writing skills, the faculty offers a special subject namely *al-Kitabah wa al-Taâbir*.

In fact, there are many students of Islamic studies who are not able to master writing skills of Arabic language. This is obvious when they want to write an Arabic essay, they will apply the method of translating from the native language into Arabic language. As a consequence, the sentence became misleading in terms of grammatical error and was not understandable by Arabic speakers. Additionally, when the students were asked about certain words, they can give well explanation. Some students are rich in Arabic vocabulary, but they do not know how to use them properly in the sentence. In many cases, some students are not only able to speak and write well, but they are also unable to understand Arabic texts and their vocabulary are also very limited. This factor of less mastery of Arabic vocabulary is contributing to lack of competency to understand the Arabic texts or articles read among Islamic studies students. They are also unable to construct even a correct sentence and very impossible for them to compose a good essay. They also could not speak in Arabic properly.

According to Kamus Dewan (2005), vocabulary means the whole word in a language that is vocabulary. Thus, in this study, Arabic vocabulary covers the entire words in Arabic language including nouns, verbs, and particles. Vocabulary notebook used by students to collect and record vocabulary based on items constructed and arranged in a systematic manner.

According to al-Naqah (1985), mastering vocabulary is vital because it is the first step of learning Arabic language. This is due to the significance of vocabulary as a tool of understanding meanings and method of thinking before being translated into meaningful sentences and understandable by others. Thus, Madkur (2009) asserts that a systematic learning process is required in order to ensure Arabic vocabulary is well-mastered, a. It starts with writing a word or phrase and its meaning in the native language, then writing synonym or antonym words, or make own sentence to explain the meaning of vocabulary, and finally build a correct sentence using that word or phrase.

This study will examine the level of mastering vocabulary in order to improve writing skills among students of Diploma in Islamic Studies from Faculty of Islamic Contemporary Studies at UniSZA. This study attempts to examine on how the processes of collecting and recording the words into students' special vocabulary notebook and how those vocabularies were used in constructing sentences and writing a short essay. Therefore, this study was carried out to measure the effectiveness in using vocabulary books in standard Arabic writing.

2. Methods

This study used quantitative method to measure the effectiveness of using a vocabulary notebook in Arabic writing among students of Islamic studies. The research design was quasi-

experiment involving two groups of respondents namely control group and experiment group as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Quasi-experimental research method

Group	Pre-test	Vocabulary book	Post-test
Experiment group	√	X	√
Control group	√	Y	√

* X Students who used vocabulary notebook

* Y Students who were not using vocabulary notebook

Pre-test and post-test had been carried out for both groups to measure their achievement in the same test. This quasi-experimental design was to meet a research objective that is measuring the effectiveness of using the vocabulary notebook. Hence, the effect of using the vocabulary notebook could be seen through by comparing pre and post test score min results.

3. Findings and Discussions

3.1. Ho1: There is no significant difference in the pre-test mean scores of the writing skills test between students using vocabulary notebook with those who were not using it.

Data were analyzed in order to determine the mean of the writing test results for the experimental group and the control group before using the vocabulary notebook during pre-test. Both groups were given a set of writing skill test which covered three categories of questions namely vocabulary, phrases and essays. Thus, Independent Sample t-Test was conducted to determine the significant mean difference in students' achievement between the experimental group and the control group.

Table 2: T-test results for mean difference scores in the pre- test

Sample	N	M	SD	T	p
Experiment Group	73	26.0959	4.85960	0.104	0.918
Control Group	73	26.0137	4.73314		

The t-test analysis showed that there was no significant difference between the scores of experimental and that of control group, $t = 0.104$, $p > 0.05$. Therefore, the first hypothesis for this study, that is "There is no significant difference in the pre-test mean scores of the writing skills between students using vocabulary notebook with those who were not using it" is acceptable. This means both groups have the same level of writing performance before the treatment session of using vocabulary notebooks.

3.2. Ho2: There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of the writing skills test between students using vocabulary notebook with those who were not using it.

Table 3: T-test results for mean difference scores in the post-test

Sample	N	M	SD	T	p
Experiment group	73	30.9452	4.64247	1.317	0.190
The group controls	73	29.8630	5.26866		

Note: * the significance level of .05

Table 3 shows the mean test results obtained by the experimental group using the vocabulary notebook is 30.9452 and Standard Deviation is 4.64247. The control group also obtained mean 29.8630 and SD 5.26866. The t-test analysis also showed there was no significant difference between the mean of post-test score of the experimental group and that of the control group, $t = 1.317$ $p > 0.05$.

This result shows that the mean score of the writing skills test for students in the experimental group using the vocabulary notebook is quite similar to those in the control group. Therefore, the second hypothesis for this study which is "there is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of the writing skills test between students using vocabulary notebook with those who were not using it" is accepted.

3.3. Ho3: There is no significant difference in the mean score of writing among male students between the pre-test and the post-test.

Table 4: T-test for the mean score in pre and post-test for male students

Sample	N	M	SP	T	p
Pre-test	47	26.9787	4.92328	-5.07	0.000
Post-Test	47	30.6596	4.67234		

Table 4 shows that there is a significant difference among male students in the pre-test and post-test of Arabic writing skills, $t(47) = -5.077$, $P < 0.05$. Therefore, the third hypothesis for this study which is "there is no significant difference in the mean score of writing among male students between the pre-test and the post-test" is rejected. This finding also means that the male students' performance has increased after using the vocabulary notebook.

3.4. Ho4: There is no significant difference in the mean score of writing essay among female students in pre-test and post-test.

Table 5: T-test for the mean scores in pre- and post-test for female students

Sample	N	M	SD	T	p
Pre-test	99	25.6162	4.67234	-10.534	0.108
Post-Test	99	30.2828	4.97348		

Based on the findings presented in Table 5, the mean scores for the pre-test of Arabic language proficiency among female students was 25.6162 and SD 4.67234. The mean score of post-test was 30.2828 and SD 4.97348. T-test analysis also showed that there was a significant difference in mean score in pre and post-tests among female students, $t(99) = -10.534$, $p < 0.05$. Consequently, the fourth hypothesis in this study which is "there is no significant difference in the mean score of the writing test for female students in pre and post-test" is rejected.

Table 6: T-test for mean differences in experimental group achievement of writing essay in the pre-test and post test

Sample	N	M	SD	T	p
Pre-Test	73	8.1918	2.28314	6.721	0.00
Post-test	73	10.0274	2.21091		

Based on the findings shown in Table 6, the mean scores for experimental group students in the pre-test is 8.1918, SD 2.28314. While the mean scores for the post-test is 10.0274 and SD 2.21091. The t-test analysis showed there was a significant difference between the mean of the test performance of the writing essay section for the experimental group in pre and post-test, $t(73) = 6.721$, $p < 0.05$.

Therefore, the fifth hypothesis in this study, which is "there is no significant difference in the mean score of essay writing for the experimental group in the pre and post-test" is rejected. This t-test also showed that the performance of the students in the experimental group in this study increased after using the vocabulary notebook. The significant results of vocabulary notebooks have a positive impact on students.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings showed that the use of vocabulary notebook gave effects on students' achievement of Arabic writing skill. By using vocabulary books, students have benefitted from the list of difficult terms and know the meaning of those terms and finally, they have learnt on the correct usage of the term in various contexts by referring to dictionary. Finally, students could construct their own sentences in a proper manner using correct Arabic grammar.

This finding supported Rosni (2012) who mentions that students who are able to construct sentences based on the vocabulary learned, are able to master the Arabic language accordingly. This is compatible with method applied by the researchers which required the student respondents form experimental group to construct the sentences from the vocabulary collected and recorded in their vocabulary notebook. Indirectly, those students were not only exposed to the required vocabulary but they can even increase the knowledge of other vocabulary. This matter in deed would help students improve their language competencies

through thinking in the respective language (Scholfield, 1982; Abdullah Hasan, 1987) especially among students in foreign language or second language at higher level of learning.

Supposedly, students at higher education should take this opportunity to use vocabulary notebook as a way of enhancing their ability in Arabic language on their own without depending on their teachers or instructors. Indirectly, this will become their own references in learning language besides using various types of existing dictionaries. Rigney (1978) and Oxford (1990) argue that language learning strategies could be linked as conscious steps or behaviour used by language learners in achieving, preserving, remembering and reusing new information.

In addition, based on students' experience, they were prefer to enrich their vocabulary by recording themselves in vocabulary notebook and were able to memorize because they used simple sentences and similar to their surroundings. However, continuous monitoring from the mentors will ensure that the various forms and types of vocabulary collected by students are properly used in their writing and are appropriate to their meaning (Karim & Faranak, 2013; Rosli, 2008). This is in line with the affirmation of Harun (2016) that effective application of vocabulary in context is the ultimate goal of vocabulary learning.

In summary, this study has found that the use of vocabulary notebook gave a good impact on students' vocabulary mastery in Arabic language learning and also has increased the level of students' achievement in Arabic writing. This study gives a major implication on the significance of self-learning in mastering of Arabic vocabulary especially in writing skill among students of Islamic studies. This is to optimize their learning skills and their language proficiency. However, it should be noted that teachers are still expected to play their vital role and give influence in teaching and learning of Arabic language especially improving Arabic language skills.

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