THE PRONUNCIATION DIFFICULTIES OF ARABIC SEGMENTAL SOUNDS AMONG MALAY SPEAKERS

MANSOUR DHAFER ABDULLAH AL QARNI
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
abdjafer202@gmail.com

*SHARIFAH RAIHAN SYED JAAFAR**
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
s_raihan@ukm.edu.my

SHAHIDI A.H.
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
zedic@ukm.edu.my

**Corresponding Author*

ABSTRACT

This research sought to identify the emphatic and guttural sound pronunciation challenges faced by Malaysian Malays studying in Saudi Arabia. The study sample comprised 16 Malaysian students pursuing in undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in myriad fields at the Islamic University in Madinah. Each participant was required to read two short Arabic passages adopted from Quranic verses and Kitab La Tahzen. In addition, they read and pronounce some phrases involving: 50 contexts, 150 words and 50 short sentences. The results revealed numerous complex consonant sounds in the participants' perceptions and productions. Denti-alveolar and fricative pharyngeal-glottal sounds, such as /t ت/, /ð ذ/, /sˤ ص/, /dˤ ض/, /ðˤ ظ /, /ħ ح/, /ʕ ع/ and /ɦ هـ/, appeared to be the most challenging Arabic consonants to pronounce, particularly when the sounds are in the medial position of a word. The results further demonstrated that students view Arabic as an essential language, albeit with several challenging consonant sounds. The pharyngeal and pharyngealized consonant phonemes were shown to be arduous for perception and production; however, students perceive the fricative pharyngeal-glottal phoneme contrast to be the toughest Arabic consonant contrast to acquire. It was also discovered that students opine that personal motivation, interaction with native speakers, and radio and television exposure are the most influential determinants of their ability to acquire Arabic consonants. On the contrary, the students reported that individual capabilities like mimicry and musical talent are not as effective in aiding acquisition. The findings of this study validate the specific Arabic consonants that pose a key source of difficulty for learners of the language.

Keywords: Arabic language; emphatic consonants; guttural consonants; second language; contrastive phonemes; pharyngealization.

KESUKARAN PENYEBUTAN BUNYI SEGMENTAL BAHASA ARAB DALAM KALANGAN PENUTUR BAHASA MELAYU

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan mengenalpasti cabaran lafazan bunyi empatik dan guttural yang dihadapi pelajar Melayu Malaysia yang menuntut di Arab Saudi. Sample kajian terdiri daripada 16 pelajar Malaysia yang mengikuti pelajaran sarjana muda dan pascasiswazah dalam pelbagai bidang di Universiti Islamik di Madinah. Setiap peserta diminta membaca dua perenggan pendek dalam bahasa Arab yang diambil daripada surah al-Quran dan Kitab La Tahzen, yang mengandungi segmen Arab seperti bunyi-bunyi empatik, guttural, dan campuran. Hasil mendedahkan banyak bunyi konsonan kompleks dalam persepsi dan produksi peserta. Bunyi denti-alveolar dan faringial-glotal frikatif, seperti as /t ت/, /ð ذ/, /sˤ ص/, /dˤ ض/ , /ðˤ ظ/, /ħ ح/, /ʕ ع/ and /ɦ هـ/, didapati antara konsonan Arab yang paling mencabar untuk dilafazkan, terutamanya bila bunyi terletak di posisi medial sesuatu perkataan. Kesukaran lafazan bunyi konsonan Arab dibahagikan kepada dua kategori, iaitu konsonan dentalisasi dan faringealisasi. Jenis konsonan ini mempunyai kesan signifikan ke atas segmen produksi Bahasa Arab. Hasil kajian seterusnya menunjukkan yang pelajar melihat Bahasa Arab sebagai bahasa yang penting, walaupun ia mempunyai beberapa bunyi konsonan yang sukar. Fonem konsonan faringial dan difaringial didapati sukar untuk persepsi dan produksi; namun demikian, pelajar menganggap kontras fonem faringial-glotal frikatif sebagai kontras konsonan Arab yang paling sukar untuk diperoleh. Turut ditemui bahawa pelajar berpendapat yang motivasi kendiri, interaksi dengan penutur natif, dan pendedahan ke radio dan televisyen merupakan penentu paling berpengaruh dalam kebolehan mereka memperoleh konsonan Bahasa Arab. Sebaliknya, pelajar melaporkan yang keupayaan individu seperti aksi mimik dan bakat muzik tidak begitu berkesan dalam meningkatkan perolehan. Dapatan kajian ini mengesahkan konsonan Arab tertentu yang menjadi sumber utama kesukaran untuk pelajar bahasa tersebut.

Kata kunci: Bahasa Arab; konsonan empatik; konsonan gutural; bahasa kedua; fonem kontrasif; faringialisasi.

INTRODUCTION

The Arabic language is one of the most important languages in the world. It is the fourth most spoken language worldwide with more than 315 million people from 58 different countries speaking it as their mother tongue. The language has 30 modern dialects, all of which are used in both formal speaking and writing. The Arabic language is the official language of more than 25 countries including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Yemen, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and others. The national communities in these countries use Arabic as the predominant means of communication in their daily life. The language has two different classes - Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic (henceforth, MSA) (Alotaibi & Muhammad, 2010).

This paper examines the difficulties of Arabic pronunciation among Malay speakers. However, any language in the world has a unique phonological process which is differed from other languages, although the degree of difficulties might be different from one to another. Thus, the process of mispronunciation from one language to another is a common interference between languages. The Arabic language has been influenced by other languages in the case of phonological sounds. To sum up, the problem refers to difficulties in pronunciation, which ultimately affect not only the newcomers (beginners) to the target language but also the

advanced learners in the production and the perception of introducing Arabic segmental sounds.

Significance of the Study

The present research is significant. This linguistic phenomenon, mispronunciation in Arabic, has not been so far investigated phonetically and phonologically in Malaysian students who learned Arabic in Saudi Arabia. The researcher could not get any research examining it in related literature. Therefore, it will be informative in the sense that it will broaden other researchers' knowledge of this significant aspect of language. Moreover, the paper will motivate other linguists to further look upon pronunciation difficulties among non-native speakers in the worldwide.

RELATED LITERATURE

The phenomenon of pronunciation difficulties of Arabic segmental has attracted the attention of many linguists all over the world who have researched it. In what follows, a review of the available relevant studies is looked upon. According to Al-Solami (2013), Arabic is complex coronals such as: /s/, /d/, /ð/, and /t/. Such these sounds accused as segmental problematic issue. They play significant roles in phonetics and phonology. The emphatic segments are disputed in the second system of articulation. Controversary, the phonological of Arabic sounds as in a guttural class are grouped in many studies, whereas others were excluded. The neighboring sounds were affected by emphatics segments which is varied from one Arabic dialect to another. On the other hand, Watson (1996), stated that many Arabic dialects have pharyngealized emphasis such as Yemeni Arabic. He stated that Arabic emphatic sounds are articulated, whether labialization or pharyngealization, in the directionality by Yemeni Arabic dialect speakers.

Pronunciation difficulties when learning Arabic as a foreign language was investigated by Alsulaiman et al. (2013). The subjects of the study were non-Arabs from different countries including Pakistan, Nepal, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Their evaluation showed that the nature of errors was almost similar for all people from the examined countries, proposing the fact that learners of Arabic are challenged in pronouncing pharyngeal, alveo-dental, and interdental sounds. Some of the errors detected were due to different phonemes that do not exist or occur in their mother tongues. Learners of the Arabic language are usually unable to pronounce Arabic sounds accurately and correctly.

Faryadi (2007) focused on teaching foreign languages in Malaysian settings, and Arabic is one of the foreign languages. He investigated the role of Malaysian students in multimedia interaction. The study represented the importance of teaching Arabic in Malaysia. The study also indicated the plan of the Malaysian government to introduce the major educational reforms to develop Malaysia's regional educational hub. He concluded that Malaysian students could acquire Arabic as a foreign language in classroom activities.

Abdul-Kadir and Sudirman (2011) conducted a study on the status of Malaysian children using Arabic phonemes. They stated that Arabic sounds are hard work and rarely for researchers. Although many studies have been conducted in acoustic and phonetics, the specific guidelines for Malaysian subject are difficult to find. They discussed the simplest way of producing Arabic segments in a Malay accent. They also concluded that the 25 consonants of MSA were appropriate as value formants, while only seven consonants were excluded (inappropriate value) involving /kof/ [ق], /zo/ [ظ], /kho/ [خ], /gheyn/ [غ], /ha/ [ح], /ain/ [ع], and /ha/ [هـ]. These sounds are the most difficult phonemes to be uttered by Malaysian children.

The current researcher disagrees with Abdul-Kadir and Sudirman on the number of Arabic phonemes. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) has 34 sounds, including long and short vowels.

According to bin Samah et al. (2016), stated out that Arabic language is indicated as a problematic issue in Malaysian students learning communities. The pedagogical approach is one of the most important issues at the present time employed by native Arabic speakers. Such these spoken people utilize traditional methods in teaching and rarely contribute to the achievements of Malaysian students. In addition, a problematic of breakdown in communication and interaction with native speakers of Arabic lacks to speak in or perform activities in Arabic as they have trouble understanding the subject bin Samah et al. (2016).

Versteegh (2001) stated that interference between languages is usually unidirectional stage. Nonetheless, the interference patterns were reversed outside the Arabic-speaking area. He also indicated that local languages in that area were affected heavily by the interaction of Arabic speakers. Some of these languages, for instance, Al Andalus and North India, were spoken and utilized in the Arab Empire. Arabic was used as a prestige language for thousands of loanwords got into the languages spoken there. These loanwords were influenced to a certain degree by phonological, morphological, and syntactic issues. Nunan (2012), concurred that learner errors are committed as a result of interferences between the two languages that differ in their linguistic systems. Thus, the sound system knowledge of their first language (L1) and transfer these sounds to the target language (L2) encountered phonological problems. Al-Issa et al. (2003), pointed out that errors in various aspects, such as phonology, lexis, and structure, are often made by L2 learners due to the interferences of their mother tongue and the differences between the linguistic systems of these languages. These errors have close similarities in pronouncing segments in different environments, resulting in mispronounced emphatic, non- emphatic, and guttural (uvular, pharyngeal, and laryngeal) segments.

Shahidi et al. (2020) however presented quite different research findings in describing the difference in pronunciation of voiced and voiceless Arabic fricative sounds produced by native Malay speakers. Besides proving that the voiceless fricative sound /s/ is longer than the voiced sound /z/, their research findings show that there is no significant relationship between the sounds /c/ and /sˤ/ and /ز/ and /zˤ/. In particular, this study confirms that not all Arabic pharyngealization sounds are influenced by the mother tongue, i.e. not all speech sounds of the second language will be influenced by the sounds of the mother tongue. It turns out that the sounds of the language studied can also be mastered by non-native Arabic speakers. They asserted that if the speech learning input is given in an organized manner, then native Malay speakers of Arabic have the potential to produce better speech (See also Shahidi (2010)).

METHODOLOGY

The following methods are employed by the researcher to fulfill the ultimate goal of the current research which is an analysis of the pronunciation functions in Arabic. Five methods are utilized in this study involving: location of the study, population sampling procedures, participants and questionnaires and survey.

Location of the Study

The second most sacred city in the world after Makkah is Al Madinah. This city is known as the first Islamic capital city in Islamic civilization. It is located on the west border of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is also located northeast of Makkah. The population is estimated at around 1,152,991 million and the official language is Arabic. Furthermore, the distance between Makkah and Al Madinah is no more than 400 km. Also, it is approximately 150 km to

the East from the Red Sea. As mentioned before, it is home to the Prophet Mohammed's (peace be upon him) mosque. There are also many old Islamic buildings there, such as Al Baqiia Cemetery, the Quba Mosque which is the first Mosque in Islam, the Two Qiblah Mosque and the Ahod mountain. The present study was conducted at the Islamic University of Madinah. This university was established in 06 September 1962. It is a public university that is supported by the Saudi higher education. The study fees are free for all students, whether national or international. Different faculties of varying majors are available there, such as Islamic studies (Quranic and Hadith), science, engineering, computer science, law, and Arabic language. There are three Arabic institutes for foreign students. Many international students from Africa, Australia, England, Asia and America attend this university in different majors (Wikipedia, 2019).

Population and Sampling Procedures

According to Creswell (2012), a research population is a large group of individuals who share similar characteristics. These individual groups then refer to various population sectors. The current researcher selected the sample for this study from the whole population in the Islamic university. According to Morse (2007), the definition of sampling is the selection of appropriate individuals suitable for the study who share specific characteristics that meet the theoretical needs. Purposive sampling was used to select the individuals. The population of the study consisted of male Malaysian non-native Arabic speaking students who study at the Islamic University in Al Madinah. The non-native Arabic speaking students were studying at the Arabic institute in Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD degrees specializing in various academic disciplines.

Participants

A sample size of 31 Malay students for the quantitative study were selected randomly from the population to participate in this study. All were Malay speakers comprising of university undergraduate and graduate students from different majors, including Arabic language, Islamic studies, Quranic studies, interpretation, jurisprudence, prophet traditions and monotheism. They ranged in age from 17 to 30 years old and varied in the number of years they have learned the Arabic language. The researcher selected the students from different colleges at the Islamic university, which offers Arabic language studies and Islamic studies for foreign students in Saudi Arabia. The researcher ensured that the data collected was unbiased and representative.

Procedure

The questionnaire was activated online and circulated among Malay students in Saudi Arabia and Malaysia who were undertaking Arabic language courses. A total of 31 students completed the questionnaire online but data from 10 participants was eliminated as they were incomplete. Prior to the questionnaire administration, each participant signed a consent form which explained the purpose of the study to demonstrate the individual's consent to voluntarily participate in the study. The second section is a recording test. Sixteen Malay students were asked to record their voice to get the results. The participants were recorded using a microphone (BadAax CM40 Studio Mic) that was attached directly to a laptop. The data was stored as in .wav files digitized at 22-kHz sampling rate and 16-bit quantization. It was recorded individually by the participants. The language of the general and specific words was in Arabic. The researcher asked each participant to read words, phrases, sentences, and passages from a randomized list. Each participant repeated the list of words four times.

Research Instruments

A questionnaire was designated and given to the respondents. Once answered, the researcher collected the questionnaire to analyze the responses. The questionnaire was designed with 40 items using a Likert scale. The researcher divided and categorized the data into three sections. The first section collected the background information of the participants. The second section clarified the importance, easiness, and difficulties of the Arabic segmental pronunciation. The last section attempted to investigate the rate of factors that could improve L2 learners' pronunciation.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

To use language effectively and to avoid pronunciation difficulties, Arabic speakers use or resort to colloquial among other classical language. They make use of Arabic dialects to make language convey a lot of information to listeners but assumed by speakers. The following discussion sheds light upon mispronunciation in Arabic among non-native speakers (Malaysian perspective).

The study attempted to detect possible incongruities or incompatibilities in learners' views on language learning. The examination of learners' views about challenging Arabic consonants is essential. Another issue of direct concern is the factors that influence the acquisition of Arabic as a second and/or foreign language by adult learners. To this effect and according to the researcher's viewpoint, no previous research has investigated L2 learners' beliefs about the factors that influence their acquisition of Arabic consonants in an attempt to better comprehend their perspectives in Saudi Arabia. These two were the primary objectives of the present study. Conducting research in this context is considered very important as it draws educators' and researchers' attention to learners' common beliefs about the challenging consonants in their learning of Arabic sounds. Dealing with phonological challenges as perceived by students and L2 learners is critical in addressing and diagnosing phonological problems and consequently, designing courses and developing appropriate materials that can improve learners' acquisition of Arabic (Belnap, 1987).

The study attempted to detect possible incongruities or incompatibilities in learners' views on language learning. The examination of learners' views about challenging Arabic consonants is essential. Another issue of direct concern is the factors that influence the acquisition of Arabic as a second and/or foreign language by adult learners. To this effect and according to the researcher's viewpoint, no previous research has investigated L2 learners' beliefs about the factors that influence their acquisition of Arabic consonants in an attempt to better comprehend their perspectives in Saudi Arabia. These two were the primary objectives of the present study. Conducting research in this context is considered very important as it draws educators' and researchers' attention to learners' common beliefs about the challenging consonants in their learning of Arabic sounds. Dealing with phonological challenges as perceived by students and L2 learners is critical in addressing and diagnosing phonological problems and consequently, designing courses and developing appropriate materials that can improve learners' acquisition of Arabic (Belnap, 1987). At the conclusion of the quantitative section, this chapter addresses the following four questions: (i) Are Malay (Ll) learners aware of the importance and difficulties of Arabic consonant segments? (ii) Which Arabic consonant phonemes and consonant contrasts do learners find difficult to perceive and produce? Which single consonants and consonant contrasts do learners find easy to perceive and produce? (iii) What are learners' beliefs about the factors that influence the acquisition of Arabic consonant

phonemes? (iv) Is there a relationship between the importance and difficulty of consonant phonemes / consonant contrasts and the beliefs about the factors that can influence consonant acquisition?

From this perspective, the following sections deal with the main aspects of Malay students' perceptions and productions of Arabic segmental sounds. The study finds that Malay speakers differ in their perceptions and production of the weight and values of contextual variables, i.e., the importance of Arabic, Arabic contrastive phonemes, difficulties and easiness of Arabic segments, and Arabic pronunciation. Data was divided into five context-internal variables as presented in the succeeding sections.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

This section presents the demographic profile of Malay learners who participated in the study. It provides background information on all participants and a general categorization with respect to their difficulties in learning the Arabic language. The study covered only Malay learners at an Islamic university in Madinah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A total of 31 respondents participated in the study. Table 1 presents a summary of the respondents' profile with their demographic details.

Table 1 shows that all study participants were Malay males (100%). In age, they were between two categories: 15 to 25 years old (N=24, 77.4%) and 26 to 35 years old (N=7, 22.6%). All respondents were generally in their youth as a young age is significant in acquiring Arabic and Arabic activities. The data revealed that the majority of the respondents held a bachelor's degree (N=16, 51.6%), followed by graduands from Arabic Language Institutes (N=11, 35.5%), and those with a Master's (N=2, 6.5%) and doctorate degrees (N=2, 6.5%). A majority of the participants believed that learning Arabic at their respective institute was important in attending other faculties at the institute. The Arabic language has been a highly significant means of disseminating Islam and Islamic activities to non-Muslim areas. The frequency and percentages shown in Table 1 reflect that all respondents manifested Arabic as a language that helps Malays communicate with Arabs whether inside or outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In greater detail, the study explored eight levels of respondents' learning of Arabic as follows: Level I (N= 3, 9.7%), Level II (N=3, 9.7%), Level III (N=5, 16.1%), Level IV (N=10, 32.3%), Level V (N=1, 3.2%), Level VI (N=1, 3.2%), Level VII (N=3, 9.7%), and Level VIII (N=5, 16.1%). Their knowledge of the Arabic language was mostly intermediate with a total percentage of 61.3% (N=19). Eight of the respondents were beginners with a total percentage (25.8%), and four of the participants (12.9%) had advanced knowledge of the language.

TABLE 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Profile	Freq.	%	Profile	Freq.	%

Age (Years) of Respondents:		
15 – 25	24	77.4
26 – 35	7	22.6
36 and above	0	0

Race of Respondents:		
Malaysian-Malay	31	100
Malaysian-Indian	0	0
Malaysian-Chinese	0	0

Qualifications of Respondents:		
Arabic Language Institute	11	35.5
Bachelor's Degree	16	51.6
Master's Degree	2	6.5
PhD Degree	2	6.5

Origin of Respondents:		
Kuala Lumpur	10	32.3
Kedah	1	3.2
Terengganu	6	19.4
Kelantan	12	38.7
Others	2	6.5

Freq. = Frequency;
% = Percentage

Knowledge of Arabic Language:		
Beginner	8	25.8
Intermediate	19	61.3
Advanced	4	12.9

Level of Study in Arabic Language:		
Level 1	3	9.7
Level 2	3	9.7
Level 3	5	16.1
Level 4	10	32.3
Level 5	1	3.2
Level 6	1	3.2
Level 7	3	9.7
Level 8	5	16.6

Specialization in Arabic Language:		
Islamic Studies	1	3.2
The Holy Quran	5	16.1
Jurisprudence	8	25.8
Interpretation	1	3.2
Arabic Language	5	16.1
Prophet Tradition	3	9.7
Monotheism	4	12.9
Others	4	12.9

In terms of specialization in the Arabic language, the respondents involved had different majors, each with various levels of achievements. The majority studied jurisprudence giving a total percentage of 25.8% (N=8). The rest of the respondents had studies in The Holy Quran (N=5) and the Arabic Language (N=5), with both specializations registering similar percentages of 16.1%. Specialization in monotheism, the belief in a single all-powerful god, registered a total percentage of 12.9% (N=4), similar with Others at 12.9% (N=4). Specialization in the Prophet tradition, Islamic studies, and interpretation registered with percentages of 9.7% (N=3), 3.2% (N=1), and 3.2% (N=1) respectively. Table 4.1 also presents that the majority of the respondents came from Malaysia's state of Kelantan with the highest percentage of 38.7 (N=12), followed by Kuala Lumpur with 32.3% (N=10). The state of Terengganu recorded a percentage of 19.4% (N=6), whereas Kedah comprised 3.2% (N=1) and other states had 6.5% (N=2).

Reliability Analysis

In constructing the validity and reliability of the present study, preset questionnaires were given to a jury of two experts in linguistics who opined that the questionnaires had content validity and reliability. Since the total number of respondents for the questionnaires were only 31, validity and reliability (of the questionnaires) were tested using Cronbach's Alpha for each sub-construct and the overall 96 items of the questionnaire. The results of the tests are subsequently discussed. Hair et al. (2013) cited that determining the reliability of a dataset requires testing the extent to which the items consistently measure what they are intended to measure. In order to measure the reliability of an instrument, the aspect of internal consistency can be estimated by using Cronbach's Alpha (α) with the following set of rules: "α is good above 0.9; α is excellent over 0.8; α is good over 0.7; α is acceptable over 0,6; α above 0.5 and α below 0.5 is uncommon" (Gliem, 2003). From these rules, it can be interpreted that the closer the alpha coefficient to 1.0, the higher the internal consistency of the measured items. Table 2 presents the reliability statistics using Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Index for each sub-construct and all variables. It can be seen that the reliability coefficients were well over 0.619 for all measured elements, suggesting that the questionnaires generated in the present study were reliable in terms of internal consistency.

TABLE 2. Summary of Reliability Analysis

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha, *α*
Language Importance	35	0.827
Language Difficulty	15	0.619
Perception of Arabic Sounds	28	0.962
Arabic Contrastive Phonemes	9	0.956
Arabic Pronunciation	9	0.868
All Variables	96	0.857

Findings and Analysis

The present study explored the production of Arabic segmental sounds by non-native speakers from Malay learners' perspectives. The study specifically aimed at investigating the emphatic and guttural segmental sound problems in producing Arabic consonants among Malay students. It also attempted to categorize the consonantal problems of emphatic and guttural segments among Malay students based on interferences between two languages. The 96 items in the self-developed questionnaire were divided into five context-internal variables comprising language importance, language difficulties, perception of Arabic sounds, Arabic contrastive phonemes, and Arabic pronunciation. The analyses of each sub-construct are presented in the subsequent sections.

Language Importance and Difficulties

In the present section of the study, the respondents were asked a set of 34 self-rated descriptive statements on the importance and difficulties of the Arabic language. The self-rated questionnaires used a Likert rating scale of one to five consisting of Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the responses by comparing the means and standard deviations of every item in order to determine whether there was statistical evidence that the associated population means were significantly

different. The descriptive statistics were also used to analyze the percentages of respondents' agreements and disagreements.

The present section highlights the use of the Arabic language and its importance and difficulties among Malaysian communities in domains such as communications, youth behavior, understanding the Holy Quran, spread of Islam, tourism, job opportunities, and higher education. The responses to items pertaining to the attitudes of all the Malay students towards Arabic are summarized in Table 3. The results of the study revealed that the responses from the respondents recorded a consensus for Arabic learners' awareness of the difficulties and importance of Arabic segmental sounds. In terms of language importance, about 27 (87.1%) of the respondents indicated the significance of the language. Mean responses of Arabic consonant sound difficulties showed that 16 Malay learners (51.6%) denoted the difficulty of the consonants.

In terms of Arabic language importance and difficulties, about 45.2% of the respondents agreed that they need to know the Arabic language for communication with Arabs (Item 1 Table 3). The widespread nature of the Arabic language has convinced many Malay students of its importance in the world in general and in Malaysia in particular. This result could be attributed to the fact that Arabic can be a means for disseminating Islam to other parts of the world. This importance is supported by Faryadi (2007), who published that the importance of teaching Arabic in Malaysian settings comprises classroom activities and communication, multimedia interaction, economic transactions, and education. About 41.9% of the respondents strongly agreed with this notion, while 9.7% and 3.2% of them disagreed and felt neutral, respectively. None of the respondents strongly disagreed with Item 1, which indicated that they have positive attitudes toward the importance of knowing the Arabic language, especially in communicating with Arabs in the country.

A closer look at the data revealed that Arabic language permeation in Malaysian society appears to face critical challenges. The response to Item 2 (Table 3) indicated that 38.7% strongly agreed that the Arabic language is more difficult compared to Malay language. About 32.3% agreed with the statement, 9.7% disagreed, while 19.4% were neutral or had no opinion. These responses did not display a positive attitude towards Arabic difficulties. None of the participants expressed strong disagreement, indicating a high level of difficulty of the Arabic language for Malay learners compared to their own language.

TABLE 3. Descriptive Statistics for Language Importance and Difficulties (Arabic Language Importance and Difficulties)

Strongly Disagree	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	14 (45.2%)	1 (3.2%)	5 (16.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (6.5%)	0 (0%)
Disagree	3 (9.7%)	3 (9.7%)	8 (25.8%)	0 (0%)	4 (12.9%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (9.7%)	1 (3.2%)
Neutral	1 (3.2%)	6 (19.4%)	6 (19.4%)	10 (32.3%)	3 (9.7%)	3 (9.7%)	1 (3.2%)	1 (3.2%)	3 (9.7%)	3 (9.7%)	3 (9.7%)
Agree	14 (45.2%)	10 (32.3%)	3 (9.7%)	13 (41.9%)	18 (58.1%)	5 (16.1%)	18 (58.1%)	3 (9.7%)	10 (32.3%)	19 (61.3%)	5 (16.1%)
Strongly Agree	13 (41.9%)	12 (38.7%)	0 (0%)	7 (22.6%)	1 (3.2%)	23 (74.2%)	11 (35.5%)	27 (87.1%)	18 (58.1%)	4 (12.9%)	22 (71.0%)

Standard Deviation	0.910	1.000	1.031	0.910	1.223	0.661	0.682	0.454	0.677	1.050	0.653
Mean	1.81	2.00	4.06	2.19	2.81	1.35	1.74	1.16	1.52	2.35	1.32
Number and item	I need to know the Arabic language for communication with Arabs in my country.	The Arabic language is more difficult than my own language (Malay language).	The spread of Arabic words in Malaysian public threatens my mother tongue (Malay language).	Arabic has a positive effect on the behavior of youth in the Malaysian community.	I find difficulties in pronouncing some Arabic sounds.	I like Malaysian children with Arabic names	I believe that learning Arabic is an important issue in my local community.	I learn the Arabic language to help spread Islam.	Arabic language is distinguished from other languages by its specific features in phonetic, phonology and morphology.	I face challenges in learning Arabic language. .	Learning Arabic is a very important factor in reciting the Holy Quran
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10	11

Responses to Item 3 (Table 3) on the spread of Arabic words in Malaysian society threatens my mother tongue' showed that most of the respondents strongly disagreed (45.2%) that Arabic words threaten the native language of Malaysians. About 25.8% of them disagreed, 19.4% were neutral, 9.7% agreed, and none strongly agreed, suggesting that the spread of Arabic words does not threaten the development of local language in Malaysian society. It is in the opinion of the researcher that the majority of the respondents held positive attitudes towards spreading Arabic in Malaysian communities. This positive reaction implies that Arabic does not threaten the Malay language. The finding agrees with that of Faryadi's (2007) study, which cited that Arabic in Malaysian societies plays a highly significant role in governmental issues.

In the same context of language importance and difficulties, the data revealed that about half (41.9%) of the respondents agreed that Arabic has a positive effect on the behavior of youths in the Malaysian community (Item 4, Table 3). About 32.3% were undecided, 22.6% strongly agreed, and only 3.2% strongly disagreed with the statement. It is evident that Malaysian youths have benefitted from learning Arabic language as it has shaped their behaviors within the community. This clearly manifests the positive attitude of the respondents toward youths' behaviors. Many respondents indicated that the spread of the Arabic language in the local community is not affected negatively.

The present finding agrees with that of Shehata's (2015) on the production and the perception of sound system of the Arabic language. The study reported that non-native Arabic speakers were able to produce Arabic sounds accurately and designated that the most difficult Arabic sounds to non-native speakers is in pronouncing the segments involving /t-ṭ/, /h-ħ/ and /s-ṣ/ whereas the easiest is pronouncing the phonemes /ħ-ʕ/.

Arabic is one of the most difficult languages in the world. Arabic is the only formal language in Saudi Arabia, with many other foreign languages used limitedly such as English, French, Pharisee, and others. These languages are used in universities, general learning institutions, academic writing, and private schools. In addition, names of many Islamic places, road signs, as well as instructions for pilgrims are written in Arabic and English languages in order to cater to Islamic activities for new Muslims and non-Arabic speakers.

Data on Item 5 (Table 3) indicated a strong agreement towards difficulties in pronouncing Arabic sounds. It shows that more than half (58.1%) of the respondents agreed that they found difficulties in pronouncing some Arabic sounds. About 16.1% and 12.9% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively, that Arabic pronunciation is difficult. About 9.7% of the respondents were neutral while 3.2% strongly agreed. The data gives the implication that some Arabic sounds are difficult for Malay learners to pronounce. Such difficulties are in agreement with Asfoor (1982) who asserted that non-native speakers of Arabic, from the English perspective, found difficulty in the production of Arabic stop consonants. The results indicated that for English learners, dialect does not influence the acquisition of Arabic sounds.

The majority of the respondents in the present study showed agreement with Item 6 (Table 3). It is clear that the attitude of the respondents was positive towards using Arabic names for Malaysian children. The most reasonable explanation is that Arabic names provoke young Malay people in adopting Saudi norms in various domains, especially children's names. In fact, almost three-quarters (74.2%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they liked Malaysian children with Arabic names. Data also showed that about 16.1% agreed, 9.7% were neutral, and none of the respondents expressed their disagreement with Arabic names for Malaysian children. In their opinion, replacing Malaysian names with Arabic names refers to being more Islamic. With Arabic names, most young Malaysian children may have beneficial

effects on their attitudes, mentality, styles, and behaviors in being good Muslims. Most Malay students in the study thus preferred using Arabic names for their children.

On the same note, learning Arabic is a common practice among many Malay students for preaching Islam, engaging in tourism, getting better jobs, and understanding Quranic verses. The Holy Quran is totally revelated in Arabic. The biggest problem facing Malay students is the language. Arabic, in these environments, is a good language for helping Malay students communicate with Arab tourists in the country. For Item 7 (Table 3), about 58.1% of the respondents agreed that learning Arabic is an important issue in their local communities. About 35.5% of them strongly agreed and 3.2% were neutral with the statement. In contrast, 3.2% disagreed while none of the respondents strongly disagreed. This finding shows the importance of learning Arabic in the local community. They regard Arabic as an important skill to learn as it is beneficial to understand Islamic religious scripts and communicate with Arab people.

It appears to be a totally accepted fact that Arabic is one of the most important channels for spreading the Islamic faith, values, and culture to other parts of the world. Data for Item 8 shows strong agreement among the participants on the use of Arabic in preaching Islam to non-Muslims. The majority of the respondents agreed that Arabic is a sufficient and helpful language in preaching and disseminating Islam to other parts of the world. Almost all (87.1%) respondents strongly agreed that they learn Arabic language to help spread Islam. About 9.7% agreed and 3.2% were neutral. None of the participants expressed their disagreement on the statement. This result shows the respondents' understanding of the importance of learning Arabic for Islam. Since the Al-Quran, as the main source of Islamic religion, was entirely written in Arabic, it is hopeful that every Muslim learns how to read and speak in Arabic to read the Al-Quran and then to understand and spread the messages of Islam. Arabic, in this respect, is a suitable language in this environment to display Islamic values to others.

The Arabic language is distinguished from other languages by its specific features in phonetic, phonology, and morphology. In response to Item 9 (Table 3), about 58.1% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement. About 32.2% of the respondents agreed and some (9.7%) were neutral. None of them expressed their disagreement with the statement. The findings for this item corresponded with the unique linguistic characteristics of the Arabic language. Arabic is considered a phonetic language because its letters correspond to their sounds. This point of view was supported by Al Mahmoud's (2013) findings, who pointed out that in Arabic there are more concerted efforts on linguistic studies of the language, and hence, more emphasis on morphology, semantics, and syntax. The Arabic language was developed and promoted by Muslims, academics, educators, and learners with continued assessment of its successes and shortcomings.

In other languages, such as English, many spellings of words do not correspond to their letter sounds. However, Arabic has the same roots of phonology and morphology with other semitic languages (Al-Huri, 2001). According to the researcher's viewpoint, this uniqueness of different levels of Arabic language are expressed via language being one of the most important avenues in understanding, adopting, and accepting other nations' customs, traditions, culture, and even language. The Arabic language, in this respect, plays a significant role in communication among different peoples. Some Malay students tried to explain or convert their friends to Islam through Arabic language, bringing some Arabic Islamic books to them in their efforts.

In conclusion on the importance and difficulties of the Arabic language, it is obvious from the participants' responses that Arabic has positive effects on the religious and social behavior of the people in Malaysia. This is evident from their agreement on Items 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8 (Table 3). However, responses to Item 4 did not show a positive or negative attitude towards affection among the Malaysian youth. Most of the participants faced some challenges

in learning Arabic language. The respondents felt that these challenges made life-learning less easy in Saudi Arabia. The majority (61.3%) of the respondents agreed and 12.9% strongly agreed that they faced challenges in learning Arabic language. About 9.7% of the respondents were neutral, while 9.7% of them disagreed and 6.5% strongly disagreed (Item 10, Table 3).

This finding confirmed the difficulties of learning Arabic, especially among Malay learners. The difficulties are attributed to many factors, such as students' prior knowledge, level of study, and experiences. Data shows that the majority of the respondents have negative attitudes toward learning Arabic. Such challenges are reflected in their hesitation in learning new language especially Arabic. Arabic, in this capacity, is utilized as an instrument in gaining benefits of spreading Islamic activities to other nations since Arabic in the current globalized world is the language of the Holy Quran.

Arabic is necessary for reciting the Holy Quran. This is manifested in the responses of the participants to Item 11(Table 3). Most (71.0%) of the respondents strongly agreed that learning Arabic is an important factor in reciting the Holy Quran, while others (16.1%) agreed with the statement. The firm positive agreements are understandable because Muslims must read the Al-Quran in its original language. By learning the Arabic language, it contributes to a better understanding of the Al-Quran.

The Arabic language also plays significant roles in several Islamic activities apart from reciting the Holy Quran. The respondents held positive attitudes towards learning Arabic as an important factor in reciting the Holy Book. In reality, English has been used in preaching to and communicating with international newcomers to Saudi Arabia who convert to Islam, as they do not know Arabic initially. Later, these foreigners and expatriates find themselves overcoming some of the difficulties in learning the Arabic language, such that they can recite the Holy Quran rather easily.

Only 3.2% of the respondents disagreed with the statement and none of them strongly disagreed, suggesting that Arabic language is preferred to any foreign languages especially in reciting the Holy Quran. Malay student respondents believed that Arabic is the language for all community purposes in Saudi Arabia such as governmental documents, streets signs, markets transactions, special parties, and other ccasions. However, about 9.7% of the respondents were undecided.

Conclusion

The present study dealt with emphatic Arabic segmental sounds from Malaysian students who are studying the Arabic language in Saudi Arabia. It was an attempt to investigate the most difficult Arabic sounds in pronunciation, mainly that of the commissive between the two languages in which the Malay language is considered as L1 and the Arabic language is L2. This study thus discussed participants' production of Arabic emphatic and guttural segmental sounds. The goals were quadruplicate. First, it was to distinguish similarities in sounds of Arabic phonemes among Malay students compared to native Arabic speakers. Second, it was to investigate the difficulties in Arabic sounds that takes place among Malay learners' perceptions as well as to explore productions of Arabic segmental sounds. The third goal was to examine the relationship of the interferences between the two languages. The fourth was to draw inferences by analyzing the reasons behind pronunciation difficulties among non-native speakers of Arabic (from Malay learners' perspective). Such difficulties justify the present study's search of suitable tools and techniques to solve the problems often faced by Malay learners in acquiring and learning Arabic language as a foreign language.

Thus, it is obvious from the participants' responses that Arabic has positive effects on the religious and social behavior of the people in Malaysia. This is evident from their agreement

on Items 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8 (Table 3). Most of the participants faced some challenges in learning Arabic language. The respondents felt that these challenges made life-learning less easy in Saudi Arabia. The majority (61.3%) of the respondents agreed and 12.9% strongly agreed that they faced challenges in learning Arabic language. This finding confirmed the difficulties of learning Arabic, especially among Malay learners. The difficulties are attributed to many factors, such as students' prior knowledge, level of study, and experiences. Data shows that the majority of the respondents have negative attitudes toward learning Arabic. Such challenges are reflected in their hesitation in learning new language especially Arabic. Arabic, in this capacity, is utilized as an instrument in gaining benefits of spreading Islamic activities to other nations since Arabic in the current globalized world is the language of the Holy Quran.

To summarize, Arabic is favored by many Malay students in the fields of education, tourism, and social life. The attitude of the respondents is positive towards using Arabic in Malaysian society. However, the respondents held the view that Arabic was not a means of social etiquette and prestige. Arabic is not widely utilized in the community's intercommunication. A few of the respondents, on the other hand, stated that using some Arabic segments makes most Malay students feel upset and nervous about learning and acquiring new language. It is opined that using Arabic loanwords could reduce the status of their native language.

REFERENCES

Abdul-Kadir, N. A., & Sudirman, R. 2011. Difficulties of standard Arabic phonemes spoken by non-Arab primary school children based on formant frequencies. *Journal of Computer Science*, 7(7), 1003.

Al-Huri, F. I. 2001. The Body in Islamic Culture.

Al-Issa, A. 2003. Sociocultural transfer in L2 speech behaviors: Evidence and motivating factors. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* 27(5), 581-601.

Al Mahmoud, M. S. (2013). Discrimination of Arabic contrasts by American learners. Studies in Second Language, 3(2), 261-292.

Alotaibi, Y. A., & Muhammad, G. 2010. Study on pharyngeal and uvular consonants in foreign accented Arabic for ASR. *Computer Speech & Language,* 24(2), 219-231.

Al-Solami, M. 2013. Arabic emphatics: Phonetic and phonological remarks. *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, 3(4), 314-318.

Alsulaiman, M., Ali, Z., Muhammed, G., Bencherif, M., & Mahmood, A. 2013. KSU speech database: text selection, recording and verification. In *2013 European Modelling Symposium*, pp. 237-242. IEEE.

Asfoor, M.A. 1982. *Difficulties English speakers encounter in Arabic phonology.* University of San Francisco.

Belnap, R. K. 1987. Who's taking Arabic and what on earth for? A survey of students in Arabic language programs. *Al-'Arabiyya*, 29-42.

Bin Samah, R., Puteh-Behak, F., Saad, N. S. M., Ali, S. M., Darmi, R., & Harun, H. 2016. Effective methods in learning Arabic language as a foreign language. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences.*

Creswell, J. W. 2012. *Educational research*. pearson.

Faryadi, Q. 2007. Enlightening Advantages of Cooperative Learning. Online Submission.

Gliem, J. A., & Gliem, R. R. (2003). Calculating, interpreting, and reporting Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for Likert-type scales. Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference in Adult, Continuing, and Community Education.

Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., and Sarstedt, M. 2013. A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Morse, J. M. 2007. Sampling in grounded theory. *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory*, 229-244.

Nunan, D. 2012. *Learner-centered English language education: The selected works of David Nunan.* Routledge.

Shahidi, A. H. (2010). An acoustic and perceptual analysis of the phonetic properties of Malay English in comparison to those of Malay. (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Shahidi, A.Hamid, Majdan Paharal Radzi, Rahim Aman, Mumad CheLaeh & Anwar Omar Din. 2020. Ciri-ciri akustik kontras penyuaraan bunyi frikatif Arab berasaskan parameter tempoh frikasi [The acoustic properties of Arabic fricative voicing contrast based on the frication duration parameter]. *Journal of Nusantara Studies*, 5(1) 143-168.

Shehata, A. 2015. Problematic Arabic consonants for native English speakers: Learners' perspectives. *The International Journal of Educational Investigations*, *2*(9), 24-47.

Versteegh, K. 2001. Linguistic contacts between Arabic and other languages. *Arabica*, 48(Fasc. 4), 470-508.

Watson, J.C.E. 1996. A syntax of Ṣanʿānī Arabic. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Watson, J. C.1999. "Remarks and replies: The directionality of emphasis in Arabic". *Linguistic Inquiry*, 30, 289–300.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_University_of_Madinah

Author Biodata:

Sharifah Raihan Syed Jaafar (PhD) is a senior lecturer in Linguistics Programme, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, National Universiti of Malaysia. Her research interests are in the areas of theoretical Phonology and Morphology and the interface between them.

Shahidi A.H. (PhD) is an Associate Professor in Malay Language Studies Programme, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, National University of Malaysia. His areas of expertise are Malay Dialectology, Acoustic Phonetics, and Second Language Learning.

Mansour al-Qarni is currently a Ph.D student at the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, National Universiti of Malaysia. His Ph.D research is on Arabic phonology.