



## A Practical Experiment on a Growing Bay in Bangladesh: A Model of Teaching and Learning Arabic in a Non-Native Environment

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### ABSTRACT

To learn a second language is always a bonus in the basket. Arabic language in modern context, is one of the most influential languages of the world which is used by around 300 million people around the globe as a medium of communication. Western cultural hegemony and the rise of materialistic worldview among Muslims resulted in a negative impact on the long-culturally cherished image and value of the Arabic language. To Muslims, Arabic is the language of their constitution (Al-Quran). Being a language of rituals and ibadah, the Arabic language deserves extra care from the Muslim community, which seems to be a lack among many Muslims, which (Arabic language) appeals to be practiced in the family environment as a part of *sunnah* as well. This research explores an effective way to learn the Arabic Language and articulates a model of teaching and learning the Arabic language in a non-native environment. The paper primarily delineates the experiment of a father in teaching the language in a home environment. It also discusses the methods that can make the process easy and effective. The research summarizes the effective method of teaching and learning the Arabic Language at home. In doing so, the researcher would go through the experiences encountered while teaching the Arabic language to his child, and at the same time justify his experiences with the scholarly writings that came to similar conclusions. The researcher claims the method is proven and suggests to the parents its application if they are interested in teaching a second language at home in a non-native environment.

Keywords: Arabic language, language, technic, teacher, peer, father, parents.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It goes without saying how important the Arabic language is in the lives of Muslims. The revealed scriptures reveal the importance of the language when it urges the readers to read, understand, and apply in their practical lives and to be rewarded with the citation of each letter. Thus, the religious scriptures motivate us to love, cherish, conceptualize, and master the Arabic language to extract the gist of the Qur'an and the Hadith. Moreover, the Arabic language is the only means of Muslims' prayers, it is the language of the Qur'an, Muslims scholars contributed extensively to the history and heritage of this language over the centuries. Therefore, the Arabic language matters for every Muslim if all the facts discussed above are taken into consideration. In addition, some might wonder about choosing Arabic as a second language to learn. According to a survey in the year 2000, there are about 220 million people in the world who speak Arabic as their first language. If non-native speakers who speak the Arabic language are considered; the number would be about 450 million (Ernst, 2013). Currently, Arabic is used as an official language in 26 countries of the world and about 280 million people speak Arabic. Arabic language is the fifth most spoken language in the world (Morgan, 2018).

Learning any language depends greatly on the surrounding environment, especially the Arabic language. It is one of the most popular languages and rich in terms of vocabulary and synonyms. A few policies and decisions of concerned guardians may make it easy to teach any foreign language to babies in a family environment. Nowadays, personal initiatives in a family boundary; assistance of YouTube programs, and watching television and video clips on foreign and nonnative language learning programs may help the conscious parents to teach the babies foreign languages. Here, the researchers portray notes of their firsthand experience with the learners who learned a foreign language (Arabic) through the techniques applied by the fathers (trainer researchers) besides learning their mother tongue Bengali from their mother simultaneously. The trainer researchers always pretended to be unfamiliar with the native language Bangla but Arabic. As a result of such consecutive efforts, the trainee is found able to speak, respond, and make stories like other native-speaking children in both Arabic and Bengali language at a very early age.

## 2. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE TRAINERS-RESEARCHERS IN HOMESCHOOLING AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Trainer researchers **A and B** are Bengali-speaking persons who work in a private university. The researcher decided to speak in Arabic with their sons and begin home-schooling in the family. The plan comes to a success within three years, the trainer found the son (**trainee A**) fluent in Arabic.

Primarily the job was a challenge to observe every mental prosper of the learner expected through the process. Every next movement of the trainee has been monitored very carefully to record the development process and henceforth analyze

the progress. Thus, the experiences from both ends (trainer and learner) came to the summary that an effective plan can make a difference.

The author finds that a few techniques, plans, elements, and motivations helped the father and son both to make the project a success i.e. learning Arabic and speaking easily like a native speaker without the help of grammar and institutions. Here, some approaches by the authors and highlights of the experiences that the authors encountered are penned down in the following lines.

Teaching the Arabic language to a child by homeschooling is very difficult, but the job could be easy if practiced continuously. The learner may not understand the given instructions for the time being, however, the capacity to absorb and understand will develop gradually. The learner may not answer questions or interact for a few days, as his/her speaking skills slowly develop. As long as the learner listens but does not speak that is also of great importance, the communicative skill of a learner can grow also through listening.

The trainer researcher started the journey of teaching the Arabic language to the learner as part of homeschooling. It was worrying that the child would not understand anything when the trainer communicated and would not reply. The people around the researcher made him think that he seemed to be in the wrong direction. The trainer-researcher tried to keep the home environment favorable for the trainee though the environment outside was not always supportive. In such circumstances, the trainer always tried to communicate with the child in Arabic. The response would not come in the first few months as expected. It took a long time to make the trainee habituated to talking and feel the language (Arabic) as his comfort zone.

The trainer would purposely say a word two or three times to build confidence in vocabulary while conversing with the child, and would spend free time with the trainee (child) to make the learning effective; the plan was to introduce various topics to the learner in order to bring out new words related to discussion and also to give opportunities to express his feelings. In addition, the learner was found moderately addicted to the electronic gazettes; these were allowed for him on condition that selected cartoons, and documentaries that should serve the purpose of Arabic language and also information could be enjoyed.

The activities were very useful in helping the learner grow his language capacity though the family members were a bit disappointed because of the irresponsible attitude shown by the learner for the first two/three years. A few family members thought that the trainee must be psychologically disturbed as he was listening to new things that were unfamiliar, and also the environment was not in favor of the trainee. However, the trainer researcher persisted. The learner (trainee) started talking and the trainer researcher was very happy to see that the efforts were not in vain. The trainee was gradually trying to understand and adapt to unfavorable circumstantial changes and express various expressions. Now, the learner (child) is 8 years old and can communicate fluently in Arabic with anyone interested. The trainer researcher believes the applied method was very successful and thus the researcher suggests others

parents to follow and apply the same method if they plan to teach a second language to their child.

A similar experience goes to the corresponding author of this article and trainer researcher **B**, (a Bengali native speaker and a university teacher) who applies a similar approach to teaching children Arabic as a second language. The experience is almost the same as that of the trainer researcher **A**. The researcher (trainer researcher **B**) would share various expressions and feelings in Arabic while interacting with a 4-year-old child (trainee B) though the experiences were not always pleasant but were undeniably effective. There was no response from the child in the beginning but the child (trainee B) listened and avoided any exchange of words in Arabic. This scenario changed in a year's time and gradually helped the kid improve in listening skills and then speaking. Therefore, the author (trainer researcher **B**) believes that the parents or home tutors have a significant role in a child's total progress in language acquisition.

### **3. A MODEL OF TEACHING-LEARNING ARABIC IN A FAMILY ENVIRONMENT:**

Learning and teaching do not happen alone and in isolation. A far-sighted instructor (Parents, brother, sister, and any other child lover) should make a plan at first. An ideal instructor, he/she uses/applies different types of gestures, indications, symbols, patterns, sounds, and electronic and printing media in daily activities. Kids/child-related programs can be downloaded and mobile, or television can be allowed to watched programs as amusement at the laser time of child. Successful teaching and learning occur when the expert father/mother as the instructor uses creativity and effective strategies. The necessity for group learning is discussed earlier, when families foster group collaboration, students learn more effectively (Clarkson, 2005). Also, children are greatly attached to the family environment in Bangladesh, they can learn better and faster if the members of the joint family head toward a specific goal. As an instructor, the guardian needs to look for different types of critical thinking about the learner. Family needs to constantly look for relevant and beneficial online programs for their children that help them to develop their language skills. There are enormous cartoons, documentaries, and movies that use pure Arabic dialect, these online resources not only provide a language skill but also reveal historical facts to the audience. Having a good ground in technology and its use contributes to boosting the capacity of the students, helps in continuous learning, and increases their performance in the classroom and elsewhere (Morgil, Yavus, Oskay & Arda, 2005). In addition, students are suggested to apply multiple intelligences to learn new languages (Oudeh, 2019).

## **PROPOSALS AND STRATEGIES**

### **4. SETTING UP THE GOAL OF FAMILY MEMBERS**

A child's language learning process eventually develops in the family, where they usually enjoy and experience a loving atmosphere to live in. Parents also are undoubtedly among the most significant stakeholders in this process. Due to this

intimacy, children typically copy the beliefs and behaviors of their parents (Hawarneh, 2010). On the other hand, children who are facing linguistic deficiency often struggle to cope with the existing social features and context. Therefore, it is observed that smart parents plan well in advance for their kids and also encourage them to acquire skills in a second language besides their native one.

Remarkably, it is suggested that any of the family members must have the skill in the respective foreign language. The author suggests that during the period of teaching and learning, the instructor should tactfully overlook issues related to family disputes, and physical or psychological problems of the kids. They should be adamant about their goal for at least two years. Gulam Azom, a colleague of the author followed the suggestions prescribed and applied them to his daughter received the expected result. Now the daughter is three years old and ably communicates with her father in English fluently.

Family members are suggested to have required experiences if not abundant experiences to contribute to the process so that the learners can be active in conversation and express themselves without fear and embarrassment. Parents sometimes should play the role of teacher, and sometimes friends with their kids. The active engagement of both parties is highly required in this regard;

Teachers should speak Arabic while teaching and their students should speak Arabic from the beginning of the study even in a few words and in simplified terms. However, teachers should encourage their students to speak the simplest sentences or words in Arabic and to participate in language activities, especially in Arabic (Xuan & Mei, 2018, p. 55).

The researcher does not engage in the explanation of any grammatical rule to the learner (son) at the very beginning of the process, rather, he overlooked grammatical mistakes in conversation. The introduction and identification of grammatical errors gradually began when the learner (son) was 11 years old. This is because the traditional method of learning a language seems to be less effective in the current time. Thus, it is suggested to avoid the traditional method of teaching Arabic, "which is fundamentally dependent on grammar, not on everyday language practice and is committed to translation methods, so they may not have time to speak Arabic in and out of the classroom" (Xuan & Mei, 2018, p. 55). On the other hand, the family members should realize that,

*"Second language mastery is a long process, and this thing cannot be segmented into levels. Even the process should be done from the kindergarten level to the university level. And of course, the long process of study needs a detailed and measured plan. That is why the Arabic teachers of course are the most hoped to make Arabic learning become good day to day" (Sari, 2020, pp. 3-4).*

The children typically always follow the attitude, culture, behavior, sound, and language of their family members. Language expert parents and their children can play an important role in the success of the language program. Any kind of shyness or

hesitation will be deleted or rooted out from the minds of the children when parents engage in practicing language with them.

"By doing the peer learning, the Arabic learning seems to be easier to be done. If they want to ask because they don't understand yet, or if they make some mistakes in pronouncing or in writing, they will feel freely to ask without feeling shy. These strategies also make the course interesting and alive. They are considered as the best way to do practicing and studying language program which needs more attractive activities because language is a matter of practicing skill" (*Sari, 2020, pp. 10-11*).

## **5. ARABIC GRAMMAR AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IS MORE DIFFICULT:**

Every learner of the Arabic language experiences that Arabic is a difficult language. Critical grammatical rules hinder the process of smooth sentence-making. But in a family environment and homeschooling period; an expert Arabic instructor can make the task easier for the learners by speaking only.

If a child lives with any close relative; an experienced father, mother, brother, sister, or anyone else in a healthy relationship such a person may share the knowledge and transfer the experiences more easily than anyone else. Modern technology, multimedia, video clips, and YouTube programs that are befitting for the children not only motivate learners but also enhance performance and capacities in a family environment if done in a planned way. There are many programs and resources available on the internet designed according to age category to boost the capacity and skills of a child, which will significantly contribute to improving the skills of a baby and acquiring knowledge. The initiative and eagerness of expert parents are the most important in this regard.

There are hundreds of Arabic grammatical rules. After learning all the grammatical rules, a foreigner will not be able to speak in Arabic. However, the scenario could be different if a peer learning system is applied as discussed in the previous points. Since the journey to learning a foreign language is a long process, which can be effectively accomplished and shortened by the role and intervention of a teacher i.e. peer (*Sari, 2020*). 'Peer learning' is defined as "a form of cooperative learning that enhances the value of student-student interaction and results in various advantageous learning outcomes" (*Sari, 2020, pp. 3-4*). Peer learning makes Arabic learning easier to complete. Also, someone can easily ask for clarity, and solve the confusion whether in pronouncing, writing, or reading. Such a method makes the lesson more exciting and livelier. It is considered the finest way to practice language because language is a skill that must be practiced (*Sari, 2020*). On the other hand, the expectation level from the school is not as high as from the parents or peers. For, institutional teaching is only a formal platform. Teachers remain busy and may not have enough time to practice with the students. They (institutes) teach the languages through grammatical rules in most cases. But the teachings of the parents are informal and without grammatical rules (*Sari, 2020*).



The researcher believes the application of the 'direct method' (i.e., starting communication from day one in a foreign language like the mother tongue) to teach a foreign language is difficult at some points. However, it is argued that following the 'direct method' i.e., to begin communications with students in a foreign language from the very beginning, and thus developing their skills in a foreign language could be conducive to learning a foreign language. It is suggested to teachers "to practice the direct method of their students in the primary stage and that students return this method from the beginning of the study to develop the idea of language. And avoid from traditional methods inherited" (Xuan & Mei, 2018, p. 55). In addition, watching audio video programs about learning the Arabic language is also more helpful in the very beginning. Xuan and Mei (2018) suggest to train students to constantly practice listening to Arabic audio materials in order to acquire this skill.

Teaching Arabic to non-Arabic speakers is not fruitful if the parents do not use proper strategies, plans, and approaches during childcare. With the help of grammatical rules, teaching and learning the Arabic language is difficult. Among the problems that a teacher faces while teaching Arabic language are; the structure of Arabic sentence, its unusual pattern, and the organization of its vocabulary items, etc., (Oudeh, 2019). Some children may inherit language skills from their parents. If the parents are careful to teach their achieved language, it is rationally possible.

Linguistically intelligent learners acquire language through explanations and usage of vocabulary and structures; they love to produce and receive language, and they enjoy games and storytelling with vocabulary. It can be used in any classroom, emphasizing vocabulary acquisition (Oudeh, 2019). Learning Arabic represents Islamic culture and religion.

Teaching Arabic to non-Arab speakers is a social, cultural, and religious obligation that brings people from diverse backgrounds closer together, and highlights the Arabic language as a rich and universal language for those who are eager to learn about this humanitarian culture although a lot of people fail to use Arabic language properly due to their incapacity to understand its embedded linguistic features. As a result, it lessens the level of animosity that the West has toward the Arab people, such animosity stems from the misrepresentation of the characters of Arabs and also ignorance of their real image (Oudeh, 2019).

Jassem (2000) believes teaching the Arabic language as a first language or applying the 'direct method' is more effective than teaching it as a second language. For, the Arabic language is perceived to be the most difficult subject by the learners when taught as a second language. To effectively teach Arabic, instructors and teachers should employ field-tested theories. To capture students' attention, teachers must improve their pedagogy by incorporating multimedia into their lessons (Ashton & Zalzal, 2004). Besides the teachers, parents can also implement this project at their house. Moreover, getting engaged in conversation, dialogue, and expression of emotions, etc., is the way of practicing any language in the very beginning. The language capacity will not be developed without practice and bilateral engagement with others. It is believed that learning any language does not happen in isolation,

because the process requires student-teacher interaction. Students feel motivated in continuous learning if teachers introduce plan-oriented learning models (Lui, 2005). Buddy learning groups and cooperative learning are instrumental to language learning for students and are conducive to teachers in successful teaching to the students. Neo (2005) notes that teachers who use creativity and effective strategies based on cooperative learning can facilitate successful teaching and learning.

Besides the cooperative learning of students, the role of teachers is equally significant to make Arabic language learning easy, effective, and meaningful as claimed in a study. However, the plan requires the teachers to incorporate multimedia into their regular lessons (Faryadi, 2007).

## **6. THE CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO A CHILD'S EXTRAORDINARY/ LANGUAGE SKILL**

The etiquette, manners, and behaviors that are cherished and celebrated in a joint family and its members like grandfather, grandmother, well-wishers, and tutors (though they are not often blood-connected, in the Bangladeshi traditional context, they live with the family and teach the kids) primarily and significantly contribute to the learning of the children. Family and social atmosphere are also part of the learning of the children. The storytelling of the grandfather and mother, and the electronic media helps in improving the listening, thinking, and language skills of the child, but everything should be done in a planned way.

Parents surely discharge great responsibilities; a caring father, as an instructor, would motivate and encourage kids. He also would create courage among the learners to avoid fear and embarrassment. A father as an instructor should be a knowledgeable, critical thinker and should encourage questions from the learners' side. Traditional Muslim parents typically cherish Islamic culture and the Qur'an and aim to inculcate its zeal in the minds of their children. El-Omari and Bataineh (2018) explain the social scenario while saying;

"An important issue in this regard is the family's religious culture. Muslim families usually care about the basic language of their religion and the Holy Koran. Therefore, families which do not care about their Islamic culture, their children usually suffer from language weakness leading to using poor vocabularies expressing their meanings and social relationships practiced in the family which entails more speech linguistic supplies in the culturally poor environment" (p. 1096).

Educated parents can play a vital role in teaching such a foreign language easily on which the parents are skilled in. In doing so, parents also use the methods and techniques suggested by the experts in this regard; students can get involved in an engaging language-learning environment and could be encouraged to practice the language. The practices include classroom activities that are specific to a session or period; a student can describe his or her city using pictures and discuss a landmark or location. Not to mention, extracurricular activities are a crucial part of language



learning. Parents can accompany their kids when they are out of their house or classroom; like on a tour or an outing to historical places or sites where they can engage in conversations in the target language after gathering the relevant information beforehand (Faryadi, 2007).

A caring parent as an instructor would motivate and encourage his son/daughters. He also would create courage among the learners to avoid fear and embarrassment. A parent as an instructor should be knowledgeable, and a critical thinker, and should welcome questions from his children. Informal learning and teaching have led to the use of Arabic vocabulary.

## **7. TEACHING IS ONE KIND OF ACTING OR ART**

The unseen capabilities of the children may be explored by the thinking and creative minds of the instructor. The goal of a parent as an ideal instructor is to engage the children in useful dialogues that may bring progress and prosperity in the lives of children.

Teaching a foreign language is not an easy goal to achieve. Initiatives should be taken from the very beginning when a child starts speaking. However, only speaking with kids is not enough. Besides speaking, picture dictionaries and some vocabulary books can be presented to the children who excel in their language practice. Mutually sitting, eating, talking, and gossiping with the help of books may bring a better benefit to learning a foreign language. A parent as an instructor is suggested not to open any chance to know about his native language until the completion of speaking of the child. Acting with a child as if he/ she is a native is a technique often used in language learning (Maliki, Ismail, Abdullah, & Salleh 2018).

Russo-Rastelli (2006) believes, that acting helps to build and stimulate speaking skills, reading, and writing. It is experienced by the researcher that paralinguistic signals used to communicate with the kids have a great role in developing the language capacity among the babies though they cannot fully express their expressions. However, they capture the signals and act accordingly.

## **8. VISUAL INTELLIGENCE:**

Children who enjoy visual intelligence learn through their interest in space, color, and shape, and acquire language more deeply if it is related and presented in the light of shapes, drawings, pictures, colors, maps, and tables. With these toys, play cards, and tools of playing, parents can play with their children and help increase their vocabulary and speaking skills. For any language, listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills are considered basic skills (Maliki, Ismail, Abdullah, & Salleh, 2018). Here, apart from the father's role, a mother can play a vital role even more effectively than a father if she is technical in daily activities. The strengths and weaknesses of a child's language development are influenced by the home environment headed by a mother. Children with high levels of linguistic intelligence are observed to retain extensive vocabularies, sentence structures, and figurative language images and styles that imply that their upbringing was in an ideal and aristocratic society. Conversely, children who are found

to be idle and suffering from language deficiencies grow up in a chaotic, and tense environment (El-Omari & Bataineh, 2018). Hence, it is suggested to double the focus on a child at a very young age. When the baby starts to speak, the parents should arrange modern technology to teach a foreign language as the technology helps to motivate and also increase performance.

Fairbanks and LaGrone (2006) believe that an instructor is highly required to be well-equipped with state-of-the-art technology. For, teaching is an art, where only a creative teacher can explore the hidden potential of the students. However, this job is not achievable without systematic education and training for the teachers on the whole process.

## 9. CONCLUSION

To conclude, the Arabic language is one of the most spread languages in the world. The language has earned an incredible position among Muslim minds due to its socio-cultural and religious appeal. A Muslim is bound to practice the language consciously or subconsciously due to its supremacy and in some contexts as the only legal agent as a language of worship. Despite the theological guidance that celebrates the lofty stature and religious importance, the typical Muslims tend to ignore the reality and thus the practice of the Arabic language remains absent in their life. It is believed by the researcher that the informal learning/ direct method/parent care can contribute massively in this regard to speed up the learning process. Also, the use of technology in various capacities can add value to the expedition of Arabic language learning. It goes without saying how important the Arabic language is in the lives of Muslims. The revealed scriptures reveal the importance of the language when it urges the readers to read, understand, and apply in their practical lives and to be rewarded with the citation of each letter. Thus, the religious scriptures motivate us to love, cherish, conceptualize, and master the Arabic language to extract the gist of the Qur'an and the Hadith. Moreover, the Arabic language is the only means of Muslims' prayers, it is the language of the Qur'an, Muslims scholars contributed extensively to the history and heritage of this language over the centuries. Therefore, the Arabic language matters for every Muslim if all the facts discussed above are taken into consideration. The researcher believes that some other curtail factors contribute to teaching children a new language. The educated family members can maintain the exercise of a target language (foreign language) always with the kids in the family environment. Families or institutions arrange tours and outing sessions for the children on various occasions, it is suggested to choose the spots where an opportunity to learn various words and subjects will be facilitated and the children will be able to master them easily. Such learning becomes more effective due to kids' staying outside of their comfort zone. Also, learning gears us through friends. Thus, the parents accordingly guide their kids to choose their peers carefully. A good friend circle is very supportive of a better schooling and education process. Since there is reciprocal learning and bilateral exchange of experiences. Even if the teacher in the school communicates with the

students in a foreign language to promote a target language, it definitely plays an effective role in boosting language capacity among the children.

Due to the socio-cultural developing lifestyle, it is often tough to keep children away from electronic gadgets in modern times. However, sometimes electronic gadgets contribute more effectively to educating children than any other existing media. There are so many contents and learning materials on various online platforms that are often unavailable offline. The research suggests making a better and alternative use of mobile or television for the kids. Various audio-visual programs that help them word stock, learn the target language, and gather information can be enjoyed in their free time.

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