



## The Relationship between Arabic Reading Skills (ARS) and Arabic Verbal Expression (AVE) as Predictors for Undergraduate Students' Arabic Language Achievement

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between Arabic reading skills (ARS) and Arabic verbal expression (AVE) for third-year students of a tertiary institution in Malaysia. The study employed a descriptive approach, using a set of questionnaires, with a random sample of  $n=42$ . The descriptive findings yielded a high level of students' (ARS) as well as (AVE). The correlational analyses yielded a significant relationship between (ARS) and (AVE) levels for the population at ( $r$ , Sig. 2,  $n= 42$ ). An ( $r$ ) ( $H_0$ ) was rejected. An ( $r$ ) ( $H_a$ ) suggested that the more the engagement in (ARS) the better the levels of achievements in (AVE).

**Keywords:** achievements, Arabic reading skills, Arabic verbal expression

### INTRODUCTION

Reading is the process of retrieving and understanding stored information or ideas. These ideas are usually represented by linguistic symbols, such as visual symbols, or tangible ones such as Braille. Other reading bases may not be linguistic, such as music notation or symmetry, and other examples in computer science, where reading is just retrieving data from computer storages, not from language. Other than reading from non-linguistic

symbols, this research was designed to explore the level of Arabic reading skills (ARS) pertaining to the popular types of linguistic symbols including speed-reading, reading aloud, skimming, and high-speed reading, as well as extensive reading. The current researchers acknowledge the assumption that the relationships between ARS and Arabic verbal expression (AVE) are multidimensional (Kirembwe, 2020).

For instance, the speed-reading skills which are also known as reading rapidly by assimilating several words or phrases at a glance, is selective because the speed readers increase their reading rate while attempting to retain as much AVE of the text as possible. Thus, speed-reading tends to promote skimming habits rather than ARS and AVE enhancements. While speed-reading increases reading speed, it results in a significant decrease in promoting AVE. Thus, it is acceptable to assume that there is a negative relationship between speed-reading and AVE. Unlike speed-reading, reading aloud benefits the readers differently; it is preferable when listening is needed such as in interviews; student presentations; written work based on the reading; using audio material in the reading programme; and monitor the students' reading. Such reading characteristics were among the selected ARS for the current research.

Another type of reading skills that were not preferable for this research is skimming. Skimming is a high speed reading process which involves a visual search of sentences on a page for clues to the meanings. It is conducted at a higher rate than speed-reading skills. Skimming is mainly used when a reader wants to get an overall idea about the text. Just like speed-reading, the researchers were also sceptical to involve skimming skills in the investigated ARS because they are not compatible with AVE quality (Kirembwe 2020). Thus, the current research proposes that skimming is not recommended for acquiring AVE.

As far as this research is concerned, the high priority is given to extensive reading because it encourages learners to engage in a focussed resourceful acquisition of AVE and language learning. Extensive reading provides comprehensible input; it enhances learners' general language and communication competence; it increases the students' exposure to the language; it can increase knowledge of vocabulary; and it leads to improvement in Arabic writing skills. Extensive reading motivates learners to apply more AVE skills; it also consolidates the previously learned AVE; it builds confidence with extended AVE; and it facilitates the development of predictive AVE skills. Reading extensively involves other selected reading variables including reading books, newspapers, journals, and others.

## **BACKGROUND**

The problem of ARS and AVE investigated in this study lies on the observed weakness of the third-year students at one of the public universities in Malaysia in ARS, and the decline in their levels of AVE which appeared during their verbal presentations in the online as well as in the face-to-face classes. This phenomenon is common with students of Arabic as a

second language in Malaysia. They find difficulties in applying both of ARS and AVE rules in their communication tasks (Kirembwe, 1997; 2004; 2006; Su'aidi Safei, 1997).

These difficulties originate from the unique factors of ARS and AVE that call for different instructional methods to be used in teaching Arabic as a second language. Among the unique factors of ARS and AVE are the orthographic rules that influence the formation of Arabic words, spelling and sentence construction. It was observed that many students of Arabic as a second language in Malaysia find difficulties in applying such Arabic rules in their correct forms of ARS and AVE. Consequently, these students achieve low scores on ARS and AVE (Maryem Younes Grera, Ssekamanya Siraje Abdallah, Kirembwe Rashid Abdul Hamed, 2022).

Another cause of students' low scores on ARS and AVE is an unsystematic application of general ARS and AVE skills. It was observed that when students carry out ARS and AVE assignments, they rarely follow the general ARS and AVE rules. These difficulties are manifested in improper organisation of ideas and lack of focus on main ideas. Difficulties in applying general ARS and AVE rules among students are further noticed through insufficient elaboration of ideas and incorrect use of grammar and morphology in their expressions.

Other indicators of students' problems in the application of the general ARS and AVE rules are improper vocabulary use and incorrect application of ARS and AVE mechanisms. Such difficulties are common with the majority of low achieving students in ARS and AVE (Kirembwe, 2004; Yuslina, Mikail, Wan Ahmad, Hajib, 2018).

The verbal expression variables are normally predictable by reading skills' variables (Paivio, & Harshman, 1983). In another research, the children with reading disability have been reported to score significantly lower on verbal expression (Richman & Ryan, 2003). Hence, for this case study, the researchers used the explorative, descriptive, as well as the correlative approaches to investigate the problem. The researchers hypothesised that there is no relationship between ARS and AVE for third-year students at alpha ( $r$ , Sig. 2,  $n= 42$ ). The researchers used a valid and reliable set of questionnaires to estimate the levels of ARS and AVE (Yuslina Mohamed, Mikail Ibrahim 2016).

## **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this study were to explore the level of practising ARS for the third-year Arabic students; to explore the level of AVE for the third-year students; and to test the null hypothesis of no relationship between ARS and AVE for third-year students at alpha ( $r$ , Sig. 2,  $n= 42$ ).

## METHODS

This study used a valid and reliable set of questionnaires with a random sample of  $n=42$  for data collection. The null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between ARS and AVE for third-year students at alpha ( $r$ , Sig. 2,  $n= 42$ ) was tested. The descriptive correlational statistics were also used. The following Tables 1 to 3 present the descriptive as well as the correlational analysis of the data collected for this research.

## Findings

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics of ARS for Third-Year Arabic Students

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1. Reading Books	3.4762	.74041	42
2. Reading News Papers	3.1905	.77264	42
3. Reading Journals	3.1667	.82393	42
4. Reading With Others	3.3333	.84584	42
5. Reading Extensively	3.0000	.76509	42

Source: Siti Nur Liyana Bakri (2022)

Table 1 above indicates that the level of practising ARS for the third-year Arabic students is high, which include: reading books, reading newspapers, reading journals, reading with others, and reading extensively. The following Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for AVE among the third-year Arabic students.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics for AVE among Third-Year Arabic Students

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1. Integrity of the idea	3.3333	.65020	42
2. Clarity of thoughts	3.2143	.64527	42
3. Using correct language	3.2143	.47038	42
4. Avoiding repeating similar words	3.1667	.53723	42
5. Avoid grammatical errors	3.0714	.60052	42
6. Avoiding morphological errors	3.1905	.67130	42
7. Sticking to the appropriate tone	3.1429	.47223	42
8. Sticking to appropriate accent	3.2143	.56464	42

Source: Siti Nur Liyana Bakri (2022)

Table 2 above shows that the level of AVE for the third-year students is high. The AVEs in question include integrity of the idea, clarity of thoughts, using correct language, avoid repeating similar words, avoiding grammatical errors, avoiding morphological errors, sticking to the appropriate tones, and sticking to appropriate accents. Such a reality deterred the initial assumption that the levels of both ARS and AVE for the third-year

students were low. The following Table 3 presents Pe(ARS)on (r) Sig. a2, n=42, 0.05 among the selected (ARS) and (AVE) variables.

**Table 3.** Pe(ARS)on (r) Sig. a2, n=42, 0.05 among the Selected ARS and AVE Variables

	Read1	Read2	Read3	Read4	Read5	VE1	VE2	VE3	VE4	VE5	VE6	VE7	VE8
Read1	1	.690**	.506**	.480**	.388*	.676**	.343*	.260	.409**	.360*	.500**	.359*	.333*
r Sig.(2)		.000	.001	.001	.011	.000	.026	.096	.007	.019	.001	.020	.031
Read2	.690**	1	.715**	.498**	.619**	.647**	.356*	.288	.450**	.496**	.681**	.525**	.631**
r Sig.(2)	.000		.000	.001	.000	.000	.021	.065	.003	.001	.000	.000	.000
Read3	.506**	.715**	1	.478**	.735**	.668**	.390*	.220	.377*	.468**	.691**	.313*	.655**
r Sig.(2)	.001	.000		.001	.000	.000	.011	.161	.014	.002	.000	.043	.000
Read4	.480**	.498**	.478**	1	.264	.503**	.626**	.490**	.250	.336*	.530**	.427**	.357*
r Sig.(2)	.001	.001	.001		.091	.001	.000	.001	.110	.030	.000	.005	.020
Read5	.388*	.619**	.735**	.264	1	.490**	.198	.068	.356*	.425**	.570**	.270	.565**
r Sig.(2)	.011	.000	.000	.091		.001	.210	.670	.021	.005	.000	.084	.000
VE1	.676**	.647**	.668**	.503**	.490**	1	.581**	.399**	.605**	.500**	.689**	.397**	.598**
r Sig.(2)	.000	.000	.000	.001	.001		.000	.009	.000	.001	.000	.009	.000
VE2	.343*	.356*	.390*	.626**	.198	.581**	1	.729**	.528**	.463**	.635**	.537**	.540**
r Sig.(2)	.026	.021	.011	.000	.210	.000		.000	.000	.002	.000	.000	.000
VE3	.260	.288	.220	.490**	.068	.399**	.729**	1	.531**	.635**	.640**	.518**	.466**
r Sig.(2)	.096	.065	.161	.001	.670	.009	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.002
VE4	.409**	.450**	.377*	.250	.356*	.605**	.528**	.531**	1	.567**	.654**	.577**	.523**
r Sig.(2)	.007	.003	.014	.110	.021	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
VE5	.360*	.496**	.468**	.336*	.425**	.500**	.463**	.635**	.567**	1	.691**	.479**	.673**
r Sig.(2)	.019	.001	.002	.030	.005	.001	.002	.000	.000		.000	.001	.000
VE6	.500**	.681**	.691**	.530**	.570**	.689**	.635**	.640**	.654**	.691**	1	.605**	.791**
r Sig.(2)	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
VE7	.359*	.525**	.313*	.427**	.270	.397**	.537**	.518**	.577**	.479**	.605**	1	.706**
r Sig.(2)	.020	.000	.043	.005	.084	.009	.000	.000	.000	.001	.000		.000
VE8	.333*	.631**	.655**	.357*	.565**	.598**	.540**	.466**	.523**	.673**	.791**	.706**	1
r Sig.(2)	.031	.000	.000	.020	.000	.000	.000	.002	.000	.000	.000	.000	

Source: Siti Nur Liyana Bakri (2022).

**Note:**

- \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
- \*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
- The sequence of nominal numbers in this Table 3 is based on the sequence of variables' list in the Tables 1 & 2 above.

Table 3 above shows that there is a significant relationship among ARS and AVE for the third-year students at alpha (r, Sig. 2, n= 42). The findings suggest that the more the engagement in ARS the better achievements in AVE.

## DISCUSSION

The results presented in Table 1 show that the level of practising ARS among the third-year students is high. Further results presented in Table 2 also showed that the level AVE for the third-year students is also high. Such results denied the initial assumption that the levels of both ARS and AVE among third-year students were low.

Further correlational findings presented in Table 3 revealed that there is a significant relationship between ARS and AVE among third-year students at alpha (r, Sig. 2, n= 42).

The correlational findings suggest that the more the engagement in ARS, the better achievements in AVE. Hence, the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between ARS and AVE for third-year students at alpha ( $r$ , Sig. 2,  $n= 42$ ) was rejected (Cohen Jacob, 1992).

The apparently observed weakness of the population in both ARS levels which appeared during students' verbal presentations in their lectures might be attributed to various social-psychological factors including the possibility that what apparently seemed to be causing a problem of low AVE was not a reflection of ARA but instead it might be an AVE itself for some confounding verbal communication disorders (VCD) that temporarily seemed to interfere with ARS qualities. Numerous consequences of VCD were reported to affect oral and written expression, comprehension, and reading skills (Kpadonou, Alagnidé, Niama-Natta, Houngbédji, & Adjaka, 2013).

The findings on Arabic text analysis research assert that ARS learning activities are categorised into three levels: (i) level of analysis; (ii) level of evaluation, and (iii) level of creation. The first level of ARS is the level of analysis which is centred on students' ability to distinguish the form of the word (*Isim*) or (*fi'il*) from a text and classify the position of (*fi'il*, *fa'il*, or *maf'ul*), describe the content text using a concept map, and link main ideas or compare information about a topic from reading results.

The second of ARS is the level of evaluation which is centred on students' ability to check or determine errors in writing letters, vocabulary, language rules, and punctuation in a text, and criticise, refute, conclude, provide reviews or reasons, and communicate reading results with different expressions. Thirdly, the level of ARS is the level of creation which is centred on students' ability to formulate a hypothetical statement based on the deep understanding of the text, reconstruct a reading text into a conversation, and produce reading results by developing thoughts or opinions into ideas or notions (Ilmiani, & Delima, 2021).

The researchers suggest the possibility of the results presented in Table 1 and Table 2 about students' high level of ARS to be a function of what might be deemed easy for the sample in question. Thus, the above taxonomy of Ilmiani, & Delima, (2021) of ARS levels might imply the necessity to re-examine the null hypothesis of this study in a more rigorous manner that may change the face of the current research findings.

What is said about ARS levels above might also apply with AVE levels especially when the expressed phenomenon is associated with emotions and the probability of risks involved in AVE content (Harris, & Corner, 2011). Okamoto and Kikkawa (2014) analysed several problems that arose during the critical situations caused by the accidents at the Fukushima nuclear plants following the Great East Japan Earthquake from pragmatics, linguistic psychological and social psychological perspectives. They focussed on verbal expressions with implicatures and expressions incongruent with sender's right of involvement, highlighting that these expressions can lead to negative consequences to

both the receiver the sender. The findings showed the illusion of transparency which was identified as a factor that may worsen the procedures of problem examination. Such finding can remind the user of the current findings to re-think about the environments of the selected AVE. Probably the high student rates on AVE for the current research are reflected by the conducive AVE environments. The magnitude of these findings can probably change if the samples of students are drawn from the risky AVE environments.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the results, the researchers strongly recommend for the students to frequently engage in ARS in order to boost their AVE. The researchers also encourage learners of AVE to engage into frequent Al- Qur'an recitation because Al- Qur'an is the best composition of reading that improves the rest of Arabic language-arts including AVE.

This notwithstanding the fact that the Messenger Muhammad S.A.W encouraged us to engage in all productive skills acquisition. However, unlike other types of ARS, the rewards of Al- Qur'an recitation far higher than the rest of readings; Allah S.W.T promised to reward us upon the recitation of the Al- Qur'an for each letter multiplied by ten; not for every word, but for each and every letter we recite. The Messenger of God, peace be upon him, said: "If anyone reads a letter from the Al- Qur'an he will be rewarded by ten with every letter he recites" (Sahih Muslim Hadith, Hadith 2335, Al-Tirmidhi, Hadith, 2137).

Finally, the researchers warrant further research to discover the causation of mutual correlations between ARS and AVE for the third-year students, the findings of which would contribute to the existing body of literature in the field of teaching Arabic as a second language (Byabazaire Yusuf, 2017).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This study investigated ARS and their relationship with AVE for third-year students. This study was explorative as well as descriptive in nature which aimed to find out the level of correlation between the ARS and the AVE for the students. The problem of the study stemmed from the observed weakness of the students in ARS and the apparent decline of AVE levels which appeared during students' verbal presentation in their lecture halls. The researchers also used a valid and reliable set of questionnaires with a random sample of, n=42 for data collection. They also used the descriptive and correlational statistics.

The results showed that the level of practising ARS as well as AVE for the students was high. Such descriptive results refuted the initial assumption that the levels of both ARS and AVE among the students was low. The correlational findings further revealed that there was a significant relationship between ARS and AVE for third-year students at alpha ( $r$ , Sig. 2,  $n= 42$ ). Hence, the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between ARS and AVE for sample in question was rejected at alpha ( $r$ , Sig. 2,  $n= 42$ ). The correlational findings

suggested that the more the engagement in ARS the better the levels of achievements in AVE.

Based on the results, the researchers strongly recommend to frequently engage in ARS in order to boost the level of AVE. The researchers also warranted further research about the matter so as to discover the causation of such mutual correlations between ARS and AVE for better academic achievements and innovation in the field of ARS and AVE for the sample in question.

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