



The Contributions of Modern Islamic Schools Towards the Growth of Arabic Language: A Case Study of Lokoja, Kogi State

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Received 2 December 2024; accepted 22 December 2024
 Published online 26 December 2024

Abdullahi, A. Y., & Abdullatif, B. (2024). The Contributions of Modern Islamic Schools Towards the Growth of Arabic Language: A Case Study of Lokoja, Kogi State. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 29(3), 62-67. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/13653>
 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/13653>

Abstract

Language is an essential mechanism that fills the emptiness of communication gap. Arabic language is undisputable universal and acceptable language in the world given its connection with the fastest growing religion in the world. Therefore, there is no gainsaying the fact that the genesis and evolution of the language in Nigeria and Lokoja in particular has an enormous relationship with the introduction of Islam into the domains. The paper examines the contribution of the modern Islamic Schools to the growth of Arabic Language in Lokoja, as it investigates the diverse pedagogical methods used in disseminating the knowledge. It examines the challenges encountered during the exercise. Findings of this research, states that modern Islamic schools have displayed an enormous role in the growth of Arabic language, facilitating a topnotch learning atmosphere for the beginner of Arabic in the school to develop fast assimilation through the curriculum. It is recommended that, the school should organize a symposium on the important of Arabic language in the religion, society and the lucrative advantages imbibe in it. In addition, Arabic text should be substantiated with transliteration to assist the assimilation and learning process. However, care should be taken not to let that overrule the original Arabic text. In conclusion, the modern Islamic Schools contributed to the Arabic language to the level that you will come across who never precede higher institution to be a good translator.

Key words: Modern Islamic Schools; Arabic Language; Growth; Pedagogical Methods; Challenges; Assimilation

1. INTRODUCTION

It is notably known that Arabic language is the common language of the Arab indigenous citizens. According to Taiwo (1999), Arabic language is ascribed as a foreign language in Nigeria that has its origin back to the Arabian Peninsula. Adam and AbdulWahid (2012), also traced the origin of the Arabic language to the Arabian Peninsula, positing it as the shore from which the Islamic religion and Arabic language spread to the other part of the world. Taiwo (1999), affirmed that the spread of Arabic language education to Nigeria cannot be completely divorced from the introduction of Islamic education to Nigeria. This is because, although Islam is a religion and its education has to do with learning of the religion, but the religion came with Arabic language as its language, so, the religion was followed with Arabic language. It is therefore considered that Arabic as a language has gained a universal momentum through its connectivity with Islam. The nexus between the language and Islam has made it to be critically studied and thus attracts the attention of the Islamic schools to equip their wards with the adequate knowledge of Arabic language so as to have an intricate understanding of Islam. However, it should be noted that prior to the genetic composition of the modern Islamic schools, this cause has continued to be spearheaded and championed by the traditional Quranic schools known as the *Makaranta Allo*. In the opinion of Adam and AbdulWahid (2012), Muslims who required basic literacy in Arabic for the purpose of performing

Islamic rituals are contented with the mastery of the rules of reading and writing the Arabic script. At this rudimentary level of Arabic studies, majority of the pupils who learn Arabic do so through the non-formal Quranic schools called (*local Islamic schools*) or Tablet School in Northern and Eastern Nigeria, and *Ile Kewu* or Home of Arabic in Western Nigeria.

The development of Lokoja metropolitan is basically attuned to the activities played by the pre-colonial and colonial era, which trade was the sole attraction to the settlers of the state from other regions (Anthony 2014). It is obvious that multi-ethnicity in Lokoja through the trade and slave has abounded the religion of Islam as one of the developing religion in the metropolitan.

It is factual that the efficacious understanding of Islam could be attained through the understanding of Arabic Language. According to Yahuza (2022), Many scholars feel that Islamic studies and Arabic are inseparable as one need Arabic language to deeply understand Islam. This, however influence and inspire some individuals to establish private Islamic schools where quality western education is administered concurrently with qualitative Islamic education and Arabic language learning. As the pendulum of the educational system is radically growing faster, the Muslims in the metropolitan are as well establishing modern schools which would attain the hierarchy of the conventional system with Islamic attributes.

2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Islamic Schools in Lokoja have achieved prominences in the moral value and dignity of individuals and society at large, several literatures navigate through this path by emphasizing on the Islamic studies. As far as Lokoja is concerned, fewer literature concentrated its efforts in exploring the various contributions of the modern Islamic schools to Islam in general and Arabic language in particular. There has not been any effort to also investigate and see how the modern Islamic schools have contributed to the development of Arabic language and also brainstorm on how to improve the spread of Arabic language particularly among the Muslims students. This gives a profound significant in studying the contributions of Modern Islamic Schools towards Arabic language in Lokoja. By doing this, we will undergo the study of establishment of the selected modern Islamic School, the challenges that occurred during the process of imparting the knowledge to the student, and recommend probable yet achievable solutions to that effect.

3. RESEARCH QUESTION

- i. What are the Details on the establishment of the school?
- ii. When did your school start teaching the student/pupils Arabic language and from what class in details?

- iii. What has been the challenges towards teaching the pupils/students Arabic language as a subject?
- iv. What has been the contributions of the school towards development of Arabic language in Lokoja?

4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- i. To examine the Establishment of Modern Islamic Schools and Arabic Language
- ii. To assess the challenges of the teachers during the course of teaching.
- iii. To assess the contributions of the Modern Islamic Schools towards Arabic language.

5. SIGNIFICANT OF THE RESEARCH

This research is utmost fundamental in the 21st century, which has essence in the Modern Islamic schools' activities, and the religion. Therefore, it will enable the schools to have a suitable syllabus for the subject. It will also assist in unraveling the different challenges that has confronted the development of Arabic Language in Lokoja and how to overcome these challenges through feasible recommendations. Moreover, Arabic language is an international language that possesses mechanism in policy making, International diplomacy. This research will harness the students to concentrate on the knowledge of Arabic while unleash them to the prospect of the subject.

6. ESTABLISHMENT OF MODERN ISLAMIC SCHOOLS

6.1 The Institute of Arabic and Islamic Student, Lokoja

This institution was founded in 1960 by Sheikh Yusuf Abdullah. It began with the formative of system of Quranic cycle and *Ilimiyah* at Ibadan in 1952 and the name ascribed to the school at the infant period was Nurul Islam (light of Islam). After myriad years of its existence, the proprietor relocated to Lokoja in 1958. The school was renamed Mah'dul Taalimi al-Arabiyy wal Islamiyy (Institute of Arabic and Islamic studies) until its relocation to Lokoja.

The reformation of the school from Quranic setting to *Nizamiyah* (Modern Islamic School) was a golden success in year, 1961, which formally attributed to the native Lokoja authority. It is recorded that ulterior motive of changing it, was the call from some Muslim elites, who envisaged the inimical and radical conversion of Muslim children into Christianity. As it maybe, the havoc and predicament to be averted, the integration of western education with the core knowledge of Arabic and Islamic was unarguably considered.

Sheikh Yusuf established the primary school which is

purely built upon the western for the secondary second not curtail from its main creation, which is Arabic and Islamic Studies. In 1968, the primary school was taken over by the local government management in charge of education. It is unprecedented accomplishment to the school by enjoying all the facilities enjoyed by other schools in the local government. And perhaps the time of the school still remain as from inception.

6.2 Al-Azhar International School

The school was established in September 2010. The founders aim was to divert the muslims from going to other schools were they have no value attached to Arabic language. The school started with thirty-five (35) teaching staff and fifteen (15) non-teaching staff with a sum total of over a thousand five hundred (1,500) pupils/ students. The school started with Mrs. Mansurah Bello as the head teacher and Mr. Ismail Ebidero as the first principal and she's currently headed by Mrs. Aliyu Muhibbat Adewole as the principal and Mr. Muhammad Tajudeen Muhammad Raji as the current head teacher.

6.3 NURUL HAQQ BASIC SCHOOL

Nurul HAQQ basic school was founded September 2010. Nurul haqq basic school is located at opposite Chari Maigumeri Barracks, Lokoja, Kogi State. The school from pre nursery to primary three as it first set of classes and progresses gradually. It started with four (4) teaching staff and two (2) non-teaching staff with a total of 25 pupils at start with Mr. Muhammad Isah as the principal and was letter succeeded by Mrs. Habibatu Muhammad and currently with Mrs. Muhammad Hamamatu as the principal.

7. CONTRIBUTIONS OF ISLAMIC SCHOOLS TOWARDS GROWTH OF ARABIC LANGUAGE

7.1 Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies

The Institute of Arabic and Islamic studies has been playing significant roles in the shaping and developing Arabic language within Lokoja and with its extension to the North Central geopolitical zone. In reference to the aim and objective of Sheikh Yusuf by creating the school, is to build a society where it inhabitants would be conversant with knowledge of Arabic and the acquisition of the knowledge aid the understanding of Islam. In tandem to the school priorities, the curriculum of the institute has Arabic language, Arabic literature, and Arabic grammar, Arabic metaphor in it curriculum, and all students are to offer the divisions upon the specialization of students in the western education.

An affiliate with Ahmadu Bello University was a

spring of Joy in the institution by introducing National Board of Arabic and Islamic Studies contributed to the striving and performance in the Arabic Language. It is asserted that Institute of Arabic and Islamic has produced numerous scholars, who are distinctively acquitted with sound knowledge of Arabic.

- The school is playing a vital role in ensuring that no student takes the subject for granted and make them to see the importance of learning the language.

- The school also engages her teachers to ensure they make learning of the language fun and complex to enable easy assimilation and understanding for the students.

- The school made sure to prioritize the language over any other language and made the fees and registration affordable to even a common man.

7.2 Al-Azhar International School

The school starts teaching the pupils Arabic language as early as pre nursery class down till Senior Secondary School 3 (SS 3) and starts more detailed form of Arabic from as early as primary 1 and starts to learn deeply nahwu (Arabic grammar) and sarf (Arabic morphology) from as early as junior secondary School 1 (JSS 1).

Notable among the contributions of the school towards the development of Arabic language are:

- Laying emphasis on the importance of the language and making the students see reasons to learn the language.

- Provisions of basic amenities to aid the learning of the language; the school makes sure to provide everything needed to make learning of the language easier.

- Making Arabic language the vision and motive of the school. Among the vision of the school is to produce students who are well learned in Arabic and to be ambassadors of Arabic language speakers.

- Full support to the teacher and students.

- Motivation to the teachers and students to do more.

- Enlighten the students on the importance of the language and how it impacts one's life.

7.3 Nurul Haqq Basic School

The school starts teaching the pupils Arabic as early as pre nursery down till Senior secondary School 3 (SS 3) Detailed teaching starts from primary 6 till junior secondary School 3 (JSS3) and the subject is an elective for students in senior secondary school who wishes to continue offering it.

Notable among the school's numerous contributions to Arabic language are:

- i. Organizing Arabic lessons and quizzes for the pupils and students.

- ii. Making sure they find an Arabic instructor by all means to tutor the pupils and students on Arabic language.

- iii. Ensuring to provide a comprehensive and essential text book for the students and pupils to aid learning and easy assimilation of the language.

8. CHALLENGE OF ARABIC LANGUAGE IN MODERN ISLAMIC SCHOOL

Every sector of life has one or two challenge that erupted during the process of making an impact or traversing on an achievable journey. Modern Islamic school in the adventure of making a remarkable contribution would have encountered slow process of disseminating the Arabic knowledge or obstruction on the path.

Marketability of the language and the loss of Social play: The assertions that, studying Arabic at the post-secondary level would not provide them lucrative Job that will break the bottleneck of impoverish. This has shifted the mind of the students from concentrating on the western education, due to the intuition that studying any course western education will open more routes to success. More so, one of the challenges is the stereotyping of the Arabic language learners by their fellow students in the pure conventional school contributed to a somewhat lukewarm attitude towards the learning of the language. The general believe is that the graduate of Arabic has little or nothing to offer the society. Relatively, Yahuza (2022) affirmed that one of the major problems facing the study of Arabic is the misconception by some people that Arabic is a language of Islamic religion. This in return, leads to direct victimization of the language and sometimes those who teach it. They are mostly reduced to societal functions such as naming ceremony, burial rites, wedding etc. According to Mahmud (2012), people look down on the Arabic specialists because our society is dominated by western values. This is the reason why pupils are not given adequate encouragement and support to study Arabic. He posited further that some parents believe that the study of Arabic language does not lead beyond conducting naming, wedding, burial and house warming ceremonies. They do not know that there are many Doctors and Professors of Arabic language and literature.

Lack of qualified and stable teacher: Getting qualified and stable teachers to teach Arabic can prove to be a difficult task. Adam and AbdulWahid (2012) noted that the most major obstacle to effective teaching of Arabic is the gaps which exist in the training of the manpower expected to ensure that teaching Arabic is effective. The lack of qualified professional educators with specialization in *teaching Arabic as a foreign language* is a critical challenge. Adeyemi (2016) also decried the non-availability of qualified teachers as one of the major challenges facing the development of Arabic language learning in Nigeria. He opined that a great number of the few available ones lack linguistic background. More so, the instability of teachers has affected the effective learning of Arabic in some schools. According to a respondent, it is affirmed that, when a teacher is taking a class and the students are getting to his culture of teaching. Some months later, he will leave the school, and the students

will have to face another challenge of adaptation due to instability of teachers.

Government policy on Arabic affecting the intellectual background in Arabic: According to Yahuza, Federal Government of Nigeria in 1996 relegated Arabic language to the third position, while making French as second language to English. This policy has given those that are not interested in Arabic the chance to exploit that situation to the best of their ability. More so, Onireti and Aliyu (2019) identified as part of the challenges facing Arabic learning, the lackadaisical attitude of the government towards Arabic language and the absence of notable encouragement towards the language. This has greatly affected the interest for the language thereby creating a fragile foundation for the learners. A respondent submitted that most students who gained admission into the school without having start the school from nursery or primary section finds it difficult to comprehend and understand the subject easily as there was no existing foundation for them to build upon.

Orthography complexity of the language: As known already, the writing of the language is very different from the normal English language everyone is already familiar with and this make it difficult for them to copy notes and read them correctly. Since the language is not a frequently used language among the students and society at large it makes it difficult for teachers to explain the different ways of usage of words in communicating and writing distinctively. More discouraging lackadaisical attitude of the students towards breaking these challenges. In the opinion of Adeyemi (2016), as soon as they are confronted by some difficulties the language itself presents, their response is either boycotting the language or to display a lukewarm response towards it.

Parental upbringing and ill-conviction: Most of the parents today emphasizes on their children becoming medical personnel, lawyers, engineers to mention but a few, thereby stressing the need and importance of student learning English language, mathematics and other western or circular subjects. In this sense it builds a notion in their minds that since their parents are not emphasizing on Arabic, it holds little or no importance to them between modern and classical Arabic. A respondent also mentioned that Parents do not value the language and sees no value of the language. So also their children and this makes students reluctant to learn the language.

Difficulty in finding good Arabic text books: According to a respondent, Arabic textbooks are one of the hardest to get in our local library and markets today and the absence of the textbook makes learning boring for the pupils and students. In the submission of Mahmud (2012), Lack of suitable textbooks also contributes hindrance to teaching and learning of Arabic language in Nigeria. In other words, very good textbooks are needed in learning process to facilitate quick understanding of the Arabic language

because they are links between the teacher and his teaching. In a similar opinion, Yahuza (2022), expressed the problems on how to improve on the learning materials for Arabic. Such problems include lack of unified textbooks which will be accepted by all those concerned in teaching and learning of Arabic. More so, Adeyemi (2016), decried that most of the textbooks used in our institutions are those written for learners in environments outside Nigeria. Thus the content of the books is usually not within the students' experience. Therefore, it is explicit from the above that the unavailability of a suitable textbooks for the smooth learning of Arabic language, and that which will improve the teacher-students learning experience is a major impediment to the development of Arabic language in these schools.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS.

It has been established that the Arabic language plays a pivotal role in the concrete understanding of the Islamic religion. Besides, the abounding opportunities in Arabic Language proficiency are self-evident and cannot be taken for granted. Therefore, it is pertinent that any effort to stimulate and aggravate the learning of the language should not be treated with levity. By so doing, the following is recommended to ensure the development of Arabic language learning in Lokoja and Nigeria in general.

- Increase awareness to the benefit of Arabic Language: As discovered in this research, some schools sensitize their students as to the benefit of Arabic language. While this appreciable, it will be of immense benefit to increase such awareness among students so as to boost their interest in the language. As viewed by Adeyemi (2016), The need to learn Arabic language as a second language in Nigeria is apparent like other international languages such as English and French. Learning. It does not change one's religious believe to Islam unless he/she wishes to do so for other reasons. According to Mustafa T.A et al (2024), schools must overcome all obstacles that emerged in the study or at least reduce their effects. It also follows in this regard that parent be sensitized on the importance of the language. Adeyemi (2016) recommended that Parents should know that Arabic is a lucrative course, if one reads it up to a tertiary level and that anybody can learn it irrespective of his religion or tribe.

- Developing curriculum that commensurate with the student's level: Curriculum issue has been identified as one of the challenges facing the Arabic education in Nigeria. It is therefore advisable that Arabic teachers in Lokoja should develop personified curriculum that address the educational levels of learners in the language. Yahuza (2022) emphasizes on the importance of curriculum stressing that there is need to have a new curriculum which takes into consideration various differences in this regard.

- Incorporating ICT into the teaching process: Technology has aided and continue to aid the teaching and learning process in Nigeria. The use of technology in teaching the subject will produce a tremendous result and further arouse the interest of the student in learning the language. According to Isiaka (2017), the use of ICT will make Arabic teaching easier for teachers, more interesting to the learners and both the teachers and learners will be able to communicate and have an insight into the culture of the native speakers. More so, in the opinion of Mustafa T. A et. Al (2024), utilising educational technology resources has several advantages, including their capacity to enhance and support both spoken and visual communication. The response to the items of the study shows that students are more profoundly engaged with this multi-sensory approach, which also accommodates a range of learning preferences and styles

- Transliterating the Arabic text: It has been affirmed that writing in Arabic has discouraged some students in learning the language. Therefore, this research will like to recommend that teachers should incorporate transliteration into their lesson notes. This will sufficiently rekindle their interest in the language and further concretize their understanding of the language and serves as pronunciation guide. However, care must be taken as not to allow that serve as a replacement for the original Arabic text.

- Emphasis on the practical aspect of the language: Most of the learning concept in Arabic focuses more on the translational mode with little or no regard to the practical aspect. Adam and AbdulWahid (2012) pointed out that we find that in teaching Arabic at the secondary school level in the *Ilmiyyah* schools also identified as the *madaris*, there is an over-concentration on the grammar-translation method which stresses language learning with little or no consideration for the subsequent use of the language. Priority is thus given to ability to read and translate grammatical rules and comprehension passages while the skills of listening and speaking are ignored. Therefore, it should be allowed in the various modern Islamic schools that the speak and converse in Arabic from the little they were being taught the same way they converse in English language.

10. CONCLUSION

Modern Islamic Schools, is a significant factor that has contributed immensely to Arabic language in Lokoja and beyond the outskirts of the metropolitan. Institute of Arabic and Islamic primary and Secondary, Al-Azhar, Bahrain and Nurul Haqq are Secondary Schools whom in their efforts and tenacities are making the children to be cognizant with the knowledge of Arabic and the purpose of learning the language. This has been done by unraveling its richness in communication gap of this universe and the religion value. It is to be noted that Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies has accomplished

some great feet in producing human resources in the field of Arabic language. However, these accomplishments have not been without some identified challenges which has volume down the expected results among students. Meanwhile, this research has recommended various means through which the Arabic language learning can be heightened and more impactful among the modern Islamic schools in Lokoja.

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