

The Effectiveness of Gadget in Speaking Arabic as a Foreign Language During the Covid 19

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 **Mohd Ieruwan Mohamed Mokhtar**

*Assistant Director, Ministry of Education Malaysia, Malaysia.
Email: ierwan83@gmail.com Tel: +601111217737*

ABSTRACT

In the 4th Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0) era, learning a foreign language including Arabic has continued to become challenging for non-native speakers besides it has been identified as one of the difficult foreign languages around the world, according to the UNESCO report. To overcome this, the contemporary Arabic language students are practically being engaged with different technological gadgets in mastering the language. Nevertheless, the story is different for students facing connectivity and technological barriers. In general, the advancement of technology in line with IR 4.0 has undoubtedly helped in making the learning process more resourceful than usual. The technology equipment has been helping educators to communicate knowledge effectively. The use of technological tools is essential in facilitating learning processes, especially in languages which is a productive skill. However, many parties have been facing challenges of coping with the frequent changes and advancements in technology as it moves fast. Likewise, ethics in education while using these gadgets during the learning process must be observed. As the objectives of this study is to investigate and identify the effects that contribute to the difficulties in learning Arabic, the implementation of technological gadgets in learning a language is significant. It empowers the learners to practice throughout the learning process while addressing their needs. This helps educators change their negative perceptions of teaching the Arabic language as a foreign language by using any technological gadget. This paper is a theoretical study (conceptual) and not a research paper. The methodology used was the descriptive qualitative method.

Keywords: *Technological gadget, Industrial Revolution (IR) 4.0, Speaking, Arabic Language, Foreign language, COVID-19.*

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Highlights of this paper

- The use of gadgets in education able to improving the learning Arabic language as a foreign language during the Pandemic COVID-19.
- It also facilitates the educators in delivering the skills in language and the learners during the process of learning.
- Therefore, the 4th IR technologies approach such as gadgets very significant in the face of the era of Pandemic COVID-19.

1. INTRODUCTION

CoronaVirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic has contributed to the increased significant demand in the use of gadgets for teaching and learning purposes among learners and educators. Many sectors of society have been seriously affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the educational sectors. Technological gadgets have become a crucial tool and platform in learning the language for the non-native, such as the Arabic language. Besides, the implementation of the new normal standard operating procedure (SOP), in managing the risk of transmission during the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown has makes the Ministry of Education in Malaysia recommends the use of technological gadgets and online material for teaching and learning to adapt to the new norms of the social distancing (Zahiid, 2020).

According to some previous studies, many researchers have reported that the leading methodology for teaching foreign language has involved the use of the Internet because of its rich and vast resources across the globe and in the form of e-mail, electronic encyclopedias, telecommunication projects, Web 2.0 technologies, video conferences, podcasts, chat sessions, forums, blogs, and much more have contributed to the progress of learners in learning a foreign language in terms of learning acquisition (Prykhodko, Rezvan, Volkova, & Tolmachev, 2019). Hence, the use of technological gadgets as a platform in learning a foreign language has become the best way for learners. It is easy for them to self-taught by themselves and even to practise the language more especially during the pandemic COVID-19.

Besides, Arabic is one of the most popular Semitic languages used by people worldwide, consisting of substantial culture and heritage (Mohd, Mohd Adnan, Yusof, Ahmad, & Mohd Kamal, 2019). It is the common language used by the Muslim communities who come from multi diversity cultures, nations across the globe. They used the Arabic language during their ritual worship or specific *ibadah* such as praying (calling for praying or azan and performing the praying or solat), reading the Quran or holy book, pilgrimage to Makkah including greeting and communicating with each other for dealings, education, and social. The Arabic language makes Muslim communities united and robust, even though they are coming from multiracial and multi nations.

This argument has been supported by the researcher conducted by Testen (2020), where he reported that the Arabic language has a vast number of speakers in term of Semitic language because Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is spoken as a first language by more than 200 million people. They live from the Atlantic coast of northern Africa to Western Iran, and another 250 million people in the region speak MSA as a secondary language. Malaysia is one of the South East Asia countries that also adopted the Arabic language as a foreign language in most of its schools as an elective subject, from the level of pre-school to higher education, and sees the Arabic language as essential for the Muslim community (Wan Ab Aziz et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the study conducted by Mohamed and Haron (2019), also reported that speaking skill has been considered one of the challenging skills in learning a foreign language such as the Arabic language. Speaking skill is a productive skill that also requires high skill in responding immediately during communication. The Arabic language has been considered one of the demanding languages in the world reported by UNESCO, this was declared in 2012 that the 18 days of December every year would be announced as the "World Arabic Language

Day” (UNESCO, 2021). This is because the date is related to the day in 1973 when the United Nations accepted and approved the Arabic language as the sixth official language in the organization by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study has focused on issues related to the effectiveness of using the gadgets in speaking Arabic as a foreign language, most especially during the COVID 19 pandemic. Many researchers have been published in the area and this section will present some literature review on that. Previous studies from [Khairul Ahmad et al. \(2019\)](#); [Ramelan, Novianti, and Kurnia \(2019\)](#); [Robandi, Kurniati, and Puspita Sari \(2019\)](#) has reported that technological gadgets have contributed to learning foreign languages, especially Arabic. The remaining review has been focused on the following subheadings to achieve the objectives of this study.

2.1. Education Style During Covid-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected many sectors of society, including the educational sector. During this phenomenon, many countries have been implementing the Standard Operation Procedure (SOP), which was also supported by UNESCO, to reduce the spread of the virus. This is because the virus is too sensitive in transmission and has caused the death of millions of people around the world. Thus, new norm such as online classes and virtual learning in terms of teaching and learning has been adopted worldwide, hence using technological gadgets to ensure the act of social distancing between the educators and the learners are in place.

According to [Pragholapati \(2020\)](#), many of our educational activities in schools could not be carried out as normal or business as usual, because of the social distance procedure. Moreover, the virus quickly spread either by touching or through water droplets from the human body such as sweating, sneezing, and crowded space. Likewise, [Dwivedi et al. \(2020\)](#) stated that, because of this pandemic, many educational sectors have been transformed into a digital e-learning society as every town is being locked down and social distancing is being practised, with the closing of university campuses. This is all to reduce the spread of the virus all around the world.

Furthermore, according to the UNESCO report, *“the organization has been monitoring education responses to COVID-19 globally, collecting and analyzing information and facilitating policy dialogue and experience-sharing. Key policy issues include the timing, the conditions, and the processes for school reopening. The effectiveness of these policy decisions and reopening strategies will depend on the level of preparedness of the education system in terms of infrastructure (health and sanitary measures); teaching staff (ability to provide both psychosocial and academic support); pedagogical preparedness (offering remedial action and alternative modalities to meet learning objectives); learners, families, and communities (ability and willingness to return to school and readiness to continue learning).”*

Generally, the pandemic has changed our learning style and transformed all academic society into a digital e-learning community, worldwide to prevent the virus from spread widely. The new norm of adopting social distancing and avoiding crowded places such as the classroom has led to having an alternative, which is using technological gadgets and virtual learning is a good platform in the process of teaching and learning.

2.2. Technological Gadgets as Platform

According to [Merriam-Webster \(1828\)](#) the gadget was defined as *any small mechanical or electronic device with a practical use but often thought of as a novelty*. It could be considered as a smartphone, mini Ipad, tablets, and many more. The present study shows that virtual or online learning activities can improve children’s language skills. Children are naturally stimulated to speak through videos they made. In a recent study, WhatsApp and Zoom

Cloud Meeting were used as the main media during the learning process (Saugi, Robingatin, & Susan, 2021). However, this study discusses more specific items such as smartphones and tablets related to the issues in terms of education gadgets. Besides, the previous study researcher (Mansooji, Mohseni, & Ameri, 2020) reported that these gadgets contribute to many benefits for learning foreign languages such as Arabic.

Nevertheless, Fauzi (2018) claimed that technology using gadgets also affects communication ways to become more easily and quickly, whether inside or outside of the country. Much application contributed to communication effectiveness and multifunction like voice calls, texting, chatting, web browsing, multimedia, and translation. This facility in the gadgets stimulates the learners' speaking skills to understand and practice adequately without anxiety. Hence, using gadgets as the platform is the best way during this pandemic for the learners to keep advancing their skills in many areas, such as in speaking foreign languages. It is because technology makes the process of learning more comfortable and quicker.

2.3. Speaking the Arabic Language as a Foreign Language

The Arabic language is one of the most challenging languages worldwide to learn, understand, and practice speaking as a foreign language. It is because Arabic is a complicated language and rich with the vocabulary and meaning for the words. The tactic of using grammar during speaking is also complicated and very detailed. In Malaysian schools, the Arabic language has been identified as one of the elective subjects for every level, from pre-school to higher education. Likewise, the different cultures in Malaysia, including the Indians and Chinese learners also learn the Arabic language as a second foreign language.

Even though Malaysia is a non-Arab speaking country, but the Arabic language is seen as a very vital language in the country, because most of the citizens are Muslim and Islam is also seen as a formal religion (Mohd et al., 2019). However, the Arabic language currently not only for the Muslim community but people around the world because of many opportunities in *muamalat* such as business, law, banking, nursing, etc using the Arabic language as a platform in communication (Mustafa & Al Muhsin, 2021). Generally, the 1996 Education Act introduced the Arabic language as a foreign language in the education system which can be learned as elective subjects at secondary schools in Malaysia (Al-Muhsin, Mohd, Subri, & Ishak, 2021). Besides, as the process of learning and teaching becomes more manageable and significant by the use of technological gadgets today, the learners also have been exploring something new such as vocabulary and grammar technically and reason while seeking knowledge and ensuring their survival for the future. Besides, learning acquisition for speaking skills in a foreign language such as Arabic very reasonable to adopt the technology.

According to Al-Huri (2015) the Arabic language is the most widely spoken, with over 330 million speakers according to the CIA report in 2008. It also plays the role of the Holy language for a billion Muslim communities around the world. According to the United Nations, Arabic is the sixth most widely spoken in the world which from 330 million speakers can be explained, billion native speakers of Arabic, many million are Christians, and a few are Jews. Hence, Arabic very crucial to learn and understand because it is worldwide.

Furthermore, it can be seen on the web page (Hammarskjold Library, 2019), which mentioned, "*There are six UN's official languages. These are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish. The correct interpretation and translation of these six languages, in both spoken and written form, is very important to the work of the Organization, because this enables clear and concise communication on issues of global importance.*"

Lastly, according to Ismail et al. (2017) contemporarily, the lifestyle influence by technology among the educators and learners such as computers, the Internet, e-mail, voice mail, application on the smartphone such as *Telegram, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApps* and many more, which produce meaningful and relevant contexts

for learning the language. It produces a positive impact among the learners to empower the skill in a foreign language.

2.4. Research Question

There following two research questions has been developed for this study:

1. What is the effectiveness of speaking Arabic as a foreign language using technological gadgets in learning?
2. What are the causal factors influencing the non-native learners of the Arabic language using technology and related gadgets?

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in conducting this study on the investigation of the effectiveness of gadgets in speaking Arabic as a foreign language during the COVID-19 is library research, which is qualitative research. Moreover, the research process itself is associated with identifying and locating relevant information, analyzing data, and developing and expressing ideas. In this paper, the researcher has used the review method that examines recent papers of proceedings, articles, journals, conferences, and seminars that discussed, using the gadgets technology in learning and speaking Arabic as a foreign language.

4. FINDINGS

Based on the two research questions mentioned earlier, the findings of this study discoursed as follows:

4.1. The Effectiveness of Learning and Speaking Arabic as a Foreign Language using the Technological Gadgets

Five items were identified for increasing the effectiveness of speaking Arabic as a foreign language among the learners:

4.1.1. Intensive

This has to do with some language performances that were designed for practising the phonological and grammatical aspects of any language. For example, Speech Recognition Software or Application such as Arabic Voice Typing Keyboard is specifically designed for those Arabic speakers who want to type in Arabic without a touch keyboard. By just tapping a button on their gadgets and starting to speak without any limit, all the spoken words will be written in Arabic, hence we can enjoy this fantastic FREE Arabic voice typing keyboard.

4.1.2. Responsive

This consists of short replies to educators or learners in the learning process, which are initiated questions or comments on the instant messenger platforms such as Skype, MSN Messenger, Google Meet, Google Classroom, Quizzes, and Zoom. The response in communication between them is essential because it is effective and gives positive feedback to learners.

4.1.3. Responsive Transactional (Dialogue)

Transactional language is carried out to convey or exchange specific information, is an extended form of responsive language such as *Busuu, Drops: Learn Arabic, Duolingo, Google Translate, Hello Talk, Memrise, Mondly, Rosetta Stone, Simply Learn Arabic* and *Tandem* starting January 2020.

4.1.4. Interpersonal (Dialogue)

They are maintaining social relationships able to enhance the level of confidence during communication in a foreign language than for the transmission of a fact and information on platforms such as *WhatsApp, Telegram, Tweeter, Facebook, and Instagram*. These platforms were also known as social media, and are contributing to forcing and stimulating learners to keep speaking with each other.

4.1.5. Extensive

It is a speaking skill that can understand as extensive inter monologues for formal or non-formal learners, these can also be carried out on technological platforms such as *Arabic Dictionary and Translator; English Arabic Translator; Google Translate; Reverso Translation Dictionary; Simply Learn Arabic; Bonus: Arabic* learning apps starting April 2020. The applications help the learners improve speaking by self-learning without stress because it is free, and some applications have a price but are very reasonable.

4.2. Causal Factors to Influence the Non-Native Learners of Arabic Language with the Assistance of the Technology Using the Gadgets

Three main factors could influence the non-native learners to speak Arabic using technology and gadgets as a platform at the process of their learning;

4.2.1. Learners Depend on Gadgets

A study recently released by the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP) titled “The use of media is becoming dominant in the lives of today’s learners.” proves that, the commonly used media for learners today are technological gadgets. The number of learners using gadgets has almost doubled from 38% to 72% within a period (Ramelan et al., 2019).

4.2.2. Perception of the Learners and Educators on the Usage of Gadgets

An empirical study conducted by Fauzi (2018), finds out that, almost 77% of the students in their study assume that the mobile gadgets can help them improve their speaking skills, while another 80% of the students believed that they need not learn foreign language spelling, because they can always use their mobile gadget whenever the need arises. The educators who also participated in the study believed that mobile gadgets can enhance their students’ communication skills and can also make them independent learners (Fauzi, 2018).

4.2.3. Gadgets as an Easy Tool in Language Learning

According to some learners, the use of technological gadgets in their learning process could allow them to work harder and also enable them to get more learning materials simultaneously. The technological gadgets were now very acquainted to most students, and these groups of learners were now called the digital learners in this technological era. The use of gadgets is also beneficial to the teachers as a learning media to facilitate learning and teaching of the Arabic language, especially in speaking skills (Muharom Albantani, Madkur, & Rozak, 2020).

5. FINDINGS

In conclusion, the researcher has indicated that there are three main points related to this study that can be concluded on, which are as follows:

5.1. Easy, Free, Fast, Hands-on, and Flexible Time

Using gadgets as a platform during learning and teaching speaking skills such as Arabic for a foreign language makes the learning process easier and faster for learners, especially for non-native speakers. Many applications can help the learners understand and practice, such as online dictionaries for Arabic and translation applications, which can also be used at their flexible time, fast responding, and hands-on.

5.2. Easy Reduce the Level of Anxiety among the Learners

Using technological gadgets during the speaking skill class for foreign languages, including Arabic can reduce anxiety among learners. Gadgets can help learners in the process of learning in the classroom or outside the classroom. According to Mohamed and Haron (2019), the anxiety phenomenon likely exists among the learners while learning a foreign language including the Arabic language.

5.3. Unlimited Skills

There are four important skills in learning any language; these are: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. However, using technological gadgets in the process of learning a language would enable the learner to practice all these skills simultaneously and with ease. This is because the gadgets can encapsulate all these skills in one application and can make the learning process become unlimited and make learners learn many skills altogether.

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