

Phenomenology of Challenges in Creating Arabic Speaking Learning Environment from Students' Perspective

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Abstract:

Learning environment like other learning elements is a significant factor in improving the success of course planning and education progression. Due to the necessity of frequent usage of language in real environments, the significance of the environment in learning a foreign language is doubled. Although Arabic faculty groups have put promising efforts to enhance the environment of Arabic language speaking skill recently, it seems these environments are mostly in Persian language. In this paper, we investigate the obstacles which impede creating such environments. Therefore, we analyse experiences of Arabic language students via interviewing them. Finally, we propose solutions to tackle these obstacles. The results showed that challenges of Arabic learning environment include cases such as lack of learning group activities, anxiety, lack of encouragement to speak Arabic, use of Persian as the medium of instruction, lack of second language use by Arabic instructors in the class and lack of appropriate assignments.

Keywords: Phenomenology, Learning environments, Teaching and learning Arabic language

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1. Introduction

Concurrent with massive technological improvements and changes in methods of receiving and sending data, the topic of learning environments and their impact on the process of teaching-learning has become one of the main concerns of education and training researchers. To this end, the learning environment is not limited to the classroom. It can encompass different settings such as university, faculty, home, and society where learners aim for information, skills, abilities, and desired goals. As these environments get more dynamic and more related to the learner's goals and more aligned with educational content, learners play a more critical role in achieving the learning goals. Within the same direction, learning a foreign language requires an environment that language learners can utilise all their abilities to learn language skills. Although the importance of creating an appropriate Arabic environment and speaking Arabic in classrooms and educational spaces of university faculties is not hidden to anyone, one of the main problems of teaching this language in the last few decades is the lack of an appropriate environment for speaking the Arabic language. According to available data, the speaking environment in most Arabic groups inside and outside the classroom is Persian. Nonetheless, more efforts have been put toward enhancing Arabic language skills at universities in recent years. Some Arabic language teachers have encouraged their students to use this language in their natural environment and daily activities from the last decades until now. However, the main question is what challenges impede shaping such an environment and what constraints refrain students from using the Arabic language over the Persian language in classrooms and educational environments of universities. Accordingly, the Authors in this paper, who themselves are “teaching Arabic language” lecturers at university and encouraged their students to speak Arabic outside of speaking classes, aimed to search for challenges and constraints of achieving this goal by using students’ living experience. Therefore, the authors present practical suggestions based on student experiences for creating such university

environments. Two questions are proposed to achieve the goal of research:

1. What is the most critical challenge in forming an environment for learning Arabic speaking from the student's perspective?
2. What is the most practical solution to form an environment for learning Arabic speaking?

2. Literature Review

Considering the learning environment in learning language skills is of high importance. According to some of the learning views, such as communicational views of language teaching, enhancing the language skills of learners, especially their speaking skills, requires them to be in the real speaking environment. Based on the view, learners should be in the in real scenarios of speaking be part of presenting information which others don't know, and in addition, they should speak about real topics in real conditions. They also should create concepts along with language and should practice exercises that are related to their needs (Tilver 1983 & Savignon 1983 equated to Chastain, 2011: 175). In an educational curriculum based on language skills, learners should be taught to use the language outside the classroom environment independent of educational exercises of each term. The learner should use whatever they have learned in the classroom, outside the classroom as well and be able to improve their language capabilities; they should be able to transfer his knowledge from language-living step, which is considering social and cultural language issues while using language, to practical knowledge which is the skill of using language (Bahrambeygi, 2020: 16). Therefore, since the primary goal of the educational curriculum of language teaching is improving the language capabilities of language learners to interact with other people, all aspects of the academic curriculum of language skills courses should be designed based on the most impactful learning environment, which is natural environments. Since the most crucial benefit of teaching in a natural environment is "consistent learning due to

being sensible and incorporating the direct emotional experience of issues and events, not imposing the dull atmosphere in formal classes, creating motivation for learning and precise observation, which make the content of learning schedules more practical due to the connecting the education and living (Fallahian, et al, 2011: 11).

3. Research method

The research utilises a form qualitative research method and is conducted based on phenomenology. The goal of phenomenological studies is to study the world that can represent its individuals, especially when they are in the state of awareness that is expressive of an endeavour to become free of common prejudice and beliefs. Therefore, current research using this approach tries to extract students' living experiences around challenges of the Arabic speaking environment and presents theoretical and practical solutions to form an appropriate Arabic speaking environment. To collect information, semi-structured conversations are utilized. According to phenomenological research, individuals were chosen in conversation if they have experienced the event of interest; in other words, students who have some experience in the learning environment of Arabic speaking. Students were chosen to form three groups of weak, intermediate, and advanced speaking cohorts to increase data validity. During the interview, the focal topic was the following quest; what are the most challenging and impediments to the impactful environment in learning Arabic? Interviewees were selected based on targeted sampling, and sampling continued until "information saturation". Information saturations were established by interviewing 220 students in terms four, five, six and seven of their bachelors in Arabic language and literature. To assure the validity of the finding, the "investigation using under-study individual" approach was used. Moreover, to investigate the confirmability of elements, two more analysers who were familiar with qualitative research revised the details. It was determined that they concurred with the first analyser in 90% of

topics. Moreover, to evaluate the transferability criteria, the elements were provided to students out of the interviewee's group, and they also found these elements similar to their experiences.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Due to the importance of language skills at educational and university centres in Iran, the living experience of Iranian Arabic learners shows that they are faced with different challenges in the learning environment of the Arabic language, such as inside classroom and outside classroom environments. And these challenges impede speaking the Arabic language. Based on the Arabic learners feedbacks, the most critical challenge is "not being coerced to speak Arabic by teacher", "shyness and nervousness", "low vocabulary range", inappropriate arrangements of seats in classroom", "no interactive environment", "not using the classroom space optimally", "teacher-oriented classes and lack of discussion among student". In other classes also the most critical impediments of forming environment of Arabic language speaking are "very low usage of Arabic speaking by teachers", "Dominant Persian language speaking in classes", "speaking Arabic is not compulsory among student". Among teachers the most critical challenges are "low range vocabulary and not being able to make sentences" "incapability to request" and "speaking of Persian". Moreover, according to living experience of student "existence of no tranquil and dedicated to speaking Arabic" and "being afraid of ridicule" are the most critical challenges for not speaking Arabic. Along side the abovementioned challenges, challenges such as "negative view of public to Arabic language", "No proper Arabic exercises", "No cooperation for friend to speak Arabic" result in lack of experience in speaking Arabic in environment outside of universities such as home, dormitory etc. Therefore, these challenges can be categorized into three groups; Contend and approach of teaching, which is mainly related to inside class and is in control of teachers, the domain of environments outside classrooms which is related to faculties;

and the domain of outside faculties such schools, universities, home and student residential spaces.