

Teacher Trainee Strategies for Dealing with Students Who are Disinterested in the Arabic Language Subject in the State of Perak

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ABSTRACT

Student disengagement in Arabic language classes is a growing concern in Malaysian secondary schools, particularly in the state of Perak. Factors such as a non-conducive environment, limited relevance to daily life, unbalanced curricula and traditional teaching methods contribute to this issue. This study aims to examine the strategies employed by Arabic language teacher trainees during practicum to address student disinterest and evaluate their impact on learning outcomes and engagement. A qualitative research design was employed. Structured interviews were conducted with six teacher trainees in Perak who had completed their practicum. Thematic analysis was used to extract core themes and patterns from the transcribed responses. The findings identified seven key strategies: strengthening the DSKP, creative interactivity, authentic contextualization, gamification, audiovisual tools, collaborative learning and cooperative pedagogy. These approaches led to noticeable improvements in student motivation, confidence and classroom participation. Effective strategies included natural acquisition, positive interaction and melodic learning. Trainee teachers, supported by institutions like PuLaMI at UPSI, demonstrate that adaptive, student-centered approaches can significantly enhance Arabic language education. Embedding such strategies in teacher training curricula is vital to revitalizing Arabic learning and addressing student apathy in 21st-century classrooms.

Keywords: teacher trainee, disinterested, Arabic language, strategies, technique

INTRODUCTION

Arabic is one of the major languages in the world. According to Mohd Saifussaleh (2002), as cited in Siti Fatimah Mohd Saufi and Zamri Arifin (2023), the number of Arabic speakers globally is estimated to exceed 422 million people who use Arabic as a medium of daily communication. Arabic has long been recognized as the language of paradise and the language of the Qur'an and thus holds a highly esteemed status among the followers of Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Moreover, in the compilation of the Prophet's Hadiths, Arabic is accorded the highest status. The global spread of Islamic da'wah has demonstrated that Arabic has been the principal medium used by missionaries to introduce Islam. It has become a vital element in the life of a Muslim, enabling the meaningful experience and comprehension of every verse recited from the Qur'an. Therefore, it is cultivated not only through actions, speech, and intentions but also plays an essential role as the language of revelation, worship, and knowledge.

Additionally, Arabic language proficiency is not merely seen as a religious requirement, but also adds value in terms of students' intellectual, spiritual and social development. The methods employed by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH in spreading knowledge and Islam were remarkably beautiful, and thus, as Muslims particularly educators. The noble character of the Prophet should be emulated and admired to strengthen the field of education and the teaching profession. In the field of education, various challenges are inevitable. According to Ahmad Mohd Salleh (2011), changes in the national education system often occur in tandem with societal transformations. Therefore, the Prophet's exemplary character should serve as a model for teachers in facing

contemporary and future uncertainties. In Malaysia, Arabic is introduced as early as primary education through institutions such as Islamic primary schools, Al-Quran and Fardhu Ain Classes (KAFA) and Islamic Early Childhood Education Centre's (PASTI), among others, have been established and expanded to the secondary level across various streams, including Government-Aided Religious Schools (SABK), National Religious Secondary Schools (SMKA), and State Religious Secondary Schools (SMAN).

Furthermore, the teaching of foreign languages such as Arabic has been made a primary focus by teacher educators, whereby activities that can make the classroom teaching process as effective as possible need to be planned and implemented by teacher trainees (Zakaria et al., 2019). Arabic is offered as a subject of teaching and learning (T&L) within the Malaysian education system. The tradition of education has long been instilled in Malaysia alongside the arrival of Islam. In activities involving the T&L of the Arabic language, the four language skills are reading (Qira'ah), writing (Kitabah), listening (Istima') and speaking (Kalam) are included. The teaching of all four skills needs to be carried out comprehensively so that these language skills can be mastered by the students (Li et al., 2020). Undoubtedly, the religious texts studied have contained Arabic texts which have served as guidance and references for Muslims since ancient times (Marzuki, 1977). The use of Arabic was popularized historically through the study of classical religious texts. Arabic learning in schools has long involved these texts due to the prevalence of scholarly treatises written by renowned Muslim scholars, the majority of which were composed in Arabic. These scholars were highly esteemed for their knowledge and eloquence in Arabic, in addition to their deep insights into Islamic sciences (Osman Khalid, 1993).

Moreover, Sultan Idris University of Education (UPSI) serves as a leading teacher education institution in Malaysia. It established a center known as the Centre for Teaching Practice and Industry (PuLaMI). This center was founded in line with the university's vision to produce teachers who are not only theoretically competent but also excellent in actual teaching practice. PuLaMI functions as the primary entity in coordinating, managing and monitoring the implementation of Teaching Practice (TP), Industrial Training (IT) and other programs related to teacher professionalism development at UPSI (UPSI, 2024). Generally, PuLaMI has a significant role in bridging the university with external institutions such as schools, State Education Departments (JPN) and industry agencies. Through a variety of programs coordinated by PuLaMI, teacher trainees are given opportunities to undergo real classroom teaching experiences throughout the country, including international practicum placements such as in Brunei Darussalam (PuLaMI, 2012). In addition, PuLaMI is also responsible for managing technical aspects of practicum such as placement letters, practicum schedules, trainee assessments and coordination of practicum allowances.

Hence, the role of PuLaMI is vital both nationally and internationally in the field of education. This is because it serves as the foundation for practical teaching experience for teacher trainees, whose instructional strategies warrant exploration. Trainees under PuLaMI's supervision are not only applying learning theories but are also tested in their ability to face real pedagogical challenges, including the issue of students' lack of interest in specific subjects such as Arabic. Through teaching practice coordinated by PuLaMI, trainees could adapt their instructional strategies based on student backgrounds, learning styles and classroom needs. Therefore, the involvement of teacher trainees in practicum through PuLaMI not only strengthens their professional competencies but also provides a crucial platform to evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional strategies used in addressing issues such as students' lack of interest in Arabic. Thus, understanding the role and function of PuLaMI is important as a foundational context for this study.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

In this era of globalization, teachers face various challenges in their daily professional lives. Therefore, education must be given serious attention as a crucial aspect in producing knowledgeable and civilized individuals for a better future. However, numerous past studies have indicated a declining level of student interest in the Arabic language subject over time. A study by Ahmad and Zulkifli (2020) found that nearly 55% of students did not show deep interest in the subject, particularly in regular public schools. Among the identified factors were inappropriate teaching approaches, the use of high-level language that students could not comprehend and the lack of engaging and student-centered learning activities.

This concern is also emphasized by Husin and Nor (2021), who asserted that the lack of innovative teaching strategies is a primary reason for the failure to attract students' interest. Additionally, teacher-centered approaches and the limited integration of digital technology in T&L have hindered students from relating Arabic language learning to their real-world experiences (Yusoff & Abdullah, 2019). If left unaddressed, such circumstances may adversely affect the quality of instruction, leading to declining academic performance and long-term learning disengagement.

In this regard, trainee teachers are considered individuals in a critical phase of forming their professional identity. As practitioners implementing pedagogical methods during school practicums, trainee teachers are afforded the opportunity to try, adapt and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching strategies aligned with students' needs. Therefore, the strategies employed by trainee teachers in addressing students' lack of interest in Arabic constitute an important aspect that merits investigation in this study. This research not only aims to assess the practicability of trainee teachers' approaches but also contributes to the enhancement of teacher training programs in the field of Arabic language education.

Despite the various initiatives introduced by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (KPM) to elevate the status of Arabic, such as the provision of suitable textbooks and the organization of language competitions. Students' interest levels remain unsatisfactory. Many students perceive Arabic as a difficult subject and irrelevant to their daily lives, especially among those who do not have a religious educational background. This challenge is further intensified when trainee teachers, who are still in the process of professional learning, are expected to shift students' perceptions within a short practicum period. However, there is still a lack of research focusing on the actual strategies used by trainee teachers to address this issue in real classroom settings. Therefore, this study is conducted to explore in-depth the teaching and learning strategies employed by trainee teachers to increase student interest in the Arabic language subject.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of trainee teachers' T&L strategies in enhancing students' interest. This is because trainee teachers play a crucial role as implementers of real classroom teaching practices. The practicum experience not only provides them with opportunities to apply pedagogical knowledge and theories acquired during their training but also serves as a platform to test their ability to handle various student-related challenges at the grassroots level, including the issue of low interest in the Arabic language subject. Therefore, student interest is a critical element in driving the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. A study by Zaini, Rahman and Musa (2021) revealed that trainee teachers need to be reflective and adaptive in selecting appropriate T&L strategies based on students' needs. Those with strong pedagogical awareness often experiment with various methods, including communicative approaches, the use of digital teaching aids and student-centered activities to attract students' interest.

This study holds significant importance in the context of trainee teacher education, particularly in strengthening the effectiveness of Arabic language instruction. Firstly, it provides practical insights into the actual approaches employed by trainee teachers when facing disinterested students in real classroom environments. According to Zaini, Rahman and Musa (2021), a survey-based study on the implementation of T&L strategies by trainee teachers yields valuable information that can be used to assess the strengths and weaknesses of current teacher training programs.

Moreover, this study has the potential to contribute to the enhancement of existing teacher training modules, especially those related to effective teaching strategies for the Arabic language subject. Teacher training modules should be aligned with the actual challenges encountered in schools, including issues of student apathy and lack of engagement (Kamal & Nordin, 2022). The findings of this study can serve as a foundation for enriching practicum training curricula so that they become more responsive to classroom realities. Furthermore, the study allows trainee teachers to propose best practices based on real field experiences, which can be utilized by themselves, supervising lecturers and curriculum developers. Ahmad and Zulkifli (2020) emphasized that contextual and student-centered teaching approaches are more effective in increasing students' interest in Arabic and such practices should be documented through practicum-based research.

Finally, this study also aims to serve as a source of inspiration for other trainee teachers in implementing innovative, creative and student-appropriate strategies. By sharing strategies that have been proven effective in enhancing student interest, this study can help shape a community of trainee teachers who are reflective, adaptive and prepared to become effective educators in the context of 21st-century learning (Yusoff & Abdullah, 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Interactive Approaches and Digital Technology

The use of interactive approaches in Arabic language teaching has become increasingly relevant in the context of 21st-century education. A study conducted at UniSHAMS highlights that strategies such as group activities and role-play can enhance speaking skills and positively influence students' attitudes particularly among those initially disinterested due to the challenging grammar structure (Kamaruddin et al., 2025). The integration of digital technologies such as Kahoot, Quizizz and integrated learning platforms has been shown to effectively stimulate student motivation through competitive and game-based elements (Febrian et al., 2017; Maita & Adawiyah, 2018). These findings align with Rezi, Noor and Nicholas (2024), who assert that gamification clearly enhances student engagement and achievement in Arabic language learning. Therefore, interactive digital strategies are categorized as high impact approaches capable of assisting trainee teachers in addressing students' lack of interest in Arabic lessons.

Gamification in Arabic Language Learning

Gamification has emerged as a vital approach to increasing student interest and engagement in Arabic language learning. Systematic studies indicate that elements such as badges, points and leaderboards in gamified applications can stimulate students' intrinsic motivation (Kamaruddin et al., 2025). Rezi, Noor, and Nicholas (2024) also demonstrate that gamification, particularly in the context of vocabulary acquisition and Arabic grammar mastery, leads to significant improvements in student motivation and performance. However, these studies also warn that the "novelty effect" may reduce long-term interest if game elements are not supported by continuous and relevant narratives. Therefore, trainee teachers must carefully select and design gamification elements, ensuring a balance between initial excitement and sustained student interest and achievement over time.

Student-Centered and Contextual Approaches

Research shows that student-centered teaching approaches such as the jigsaw technique, role-play and cooperative learning are effective in increasing student engagement in Arabic classrooms (Yusoff & Zakaria, 2024). Yusoff and Abdullah (2019) also found that communicative approaches that link learning to real-life contexts bring about positive changes in students' interest (Kamaruddin et al., 2025; Mustari et al., 2012). By focusing on student-oriented activities and contextual experiences, trainee teachers can reduce monotonous and make a challenging subject more comprehensible and meaningful. This helps address boredom and passive attitudes that often arise among disinterested learners.

Adapting Strategies for Diverse Learners

Students possess diverse learning preferences and needs, including special education students such as those with dyslexia. Thus, individually tailored strategies are required. Ramli and Abdul Ghani (2025) emphasize the importance of using flashcards and repetitive exercises for dyslexic learners in the context of Arabic language learning. Such approaches demonstrate that trainee teachers must be sensitive to student needs and capable of utilizing specialized learning aids to foster interest and enhance the effectiveness of the T&L process. This also underscores the importance of reflective practice and individual adaptation by trainee teachers when working with students of diverse backgrounds, positioning the practicum experience as a platform for learning more inclusive and effective pedagogical strategies.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design to achieve the stated objectives. For data collection purposes, the study adopts a structured interview method to its fullest extent. Structured interviews are widely used in qualitative research, particularly when researchers aim to obtain consistent information from all study participants. In this method, a predetermined set of questions is prepared and posed to all respondents in the same order and format. This approach ensures a more systematic data collection process and enables consistent comparison across participants' responses (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This method was selected as allowing consistent and systematic data collection from all participants, particularly in understanding the strategies used by Arabic language trainee teachers to address students' lack of interest in the subject.

Study Participants

The interviews were conducted face-to-face with trainee teachers who had completed their practicum in schools across the state of Perak. This location was chosen based on the active involvement of institutions in training Arabic language teacher trainees sponsored by public universities (IPTAs) such as UPSI. The researcher used a structured interview protocol and recorded all sessions with participants' consent. To uphold research ethics, each participant was given a written consent form and assured of the confidentiality of their identity. All recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This approach enabled the researcher to identify patterns, themes, and relationships among the strategies used by the trainee teachers. The use of structured interviews in this context is appropriate as it ensures consistency in gathering information from participants who may differ in terms of school placement and pedagogical competency. It also allows the researcher to organize findings systematically according to major themes related to Arabic language instruction, student interest and trainee teachers' pedagogical skills.

Interviews

The primary advantage of structured interviews is their ability to maintain objectivity and consistency, especially when involving many participants. They are also useful in studies that examine specific themes or issues requiring direct and focused feedback from participants (Bryman, 2016). Due to the fixed structure of questions, the risk of researcher influence through unplanned reactions or follow-up questions is minimized. However, a limitation of structured interviews is the restriction in exploring more in-depth information. Participant responses may be limited to the scope of the questions asked and the researcher may find it difficult to delve into participants' actual experiences or emotions beyond the set framework. Therefore, in qualitative research that seeks rich, meaningful data and nuanced individual experiences, researchers often consider combining structured interviews with other methods such as semi-structured interviews or observation (Patton, 2015).

Research Approach

In the context of education, the use of structured interviews is highly suitable for evaluating teachers' or students' perceptions of a particular program or pedagogical approach, such as in assessing specific T&L strategies. Predetermined questions allow researchers to obtain direct answers to the research objectives, especially when emphasis is placed on specific themes identified from the literature review or previous studies. Overall, structured interviews offer advantages in terms of data consistency and comparability, although their use must be considered based on the study's goals, contextual needs and the nature of the data sought.

Interview Questions

1. What are the factors contributing to students' lack of interest in the Arabic language subject?
2. What teaching strategies and classroom approaches can help increase students' interest in learning Arabic?

3. How do students perceive the teaching strategies used by Arabic language teachers in increasing their interest?

Data Analysis

The interview recordings were transcribed manually using Microsoft Word. The researcher repeatedly read through the transcripts to understand the meaning embedded in each statement. Coding was conducted after identifying key themes, and several significant excerpts were selected for inclusion in the research report.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings from the interviews revealed three main themes: identifying the factors that contribute to students' lack of interest in the Arabic language subject, analyzing the strategies employed by trainee teachers during their practicum to address student disinterest, and evaluating the effectiveness of the implemented T&L strategies in changing students' attitudes. These themes reflect a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced in Arabic language education and highlight the proactive measures taken by teacher trainees. Notably, the study also underscores the importance of aligning instructional strategies with students' learning preferences, cultural relevance, and engagement levels. Furthermore, it emphasizes that the incorporation of innovative and student-centered approaches plays a critical role in fostering motivation and improving learning outcomes.

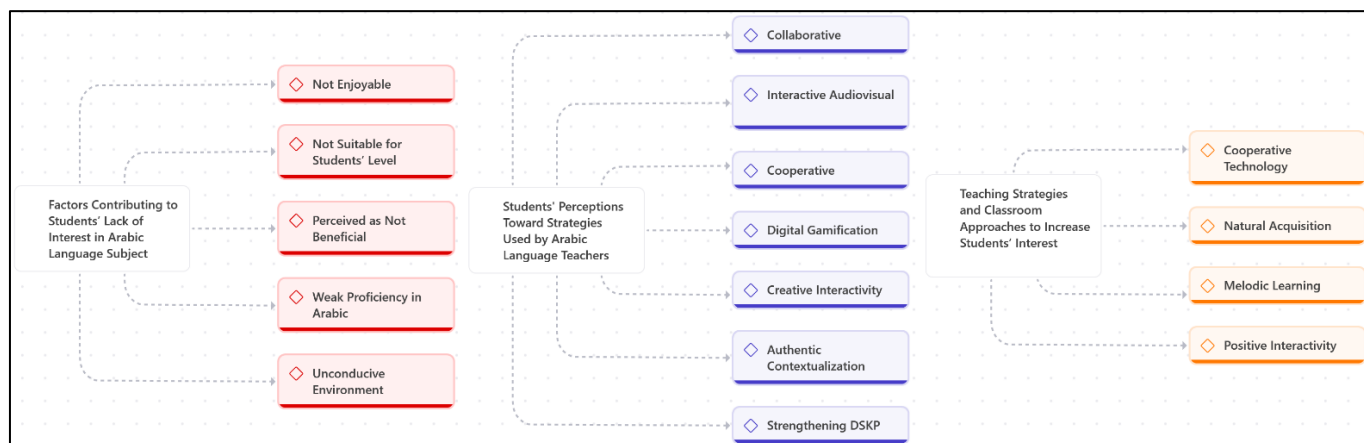


Diagram 1: Strategies for Disinterested Arabic Learners

This diagram illustrates the factors contributing to students' lack of interest in the Arabic language subject, along with teaching strategies and student perceptions. Five main factors are identified: lack of enjoyment, inappropriate level, perceived lack of benefit, weak Arabic language proficiency, and unconducive environment. In response, trainee teachers employed various strategies such as collaborative learning, interactive audiovisuals, gamification, and contextual and creative approaches. Students showed positive perceptions toward strategies like cooperative technology, natural acquisition, and melodic learning. These student-centered approaches have the potential to increase interest if systematically integrated into the Arabic language classroom. Each theme and subtheme are summarized and discussed as follows:

Theme 1: Identifying Factors Contributing to Students' Lack of Interest in the Arabic Language Subject

Based on interviews with six informants, the researcher identified five subthemes contributing to students' lack of interest in Arabic: an unconducive environment, the perception that the subject is not beneficial, content misaligned with student level, weak foundational proficiency and the absence of enjoyable elements in the teaching and learning process.

1: Learning Environment

The interview findings indicate that an unsupportive environment, especially concerning the use of Arabic in daily life, contributes to students' disinterest in the subject.

"...Students think that Arabic is rarely practiced in Malaysia. Even in Arab countries, we can see that Fus-ha Arabic is not prioritized. In fact, those who learn Fus-ha Arabic often cannot apply it there, because they use dialect or colloquial Arabic instead..." (R1)

"...Lack of exposure to Arabic in daily life also leads to students being less interested in the language..." (R2)

"...There is little exposure outside the classroom. Students rarely could use Arabic beyond lesson time, so they find it hard to apply in everyday life..." (R3)

"... Arabic is not the main language used in families..." (R4)

"...My students are from national secondary schools that don't emphasize Arabic in their daily lives..." (R5)

"... Students said Arabic is rarely used at home..." (R6)

These findings clearly show that the students' environment does not sufficiently support the development of interest in Arabic. Informants reported that students are not exposed to the use of Arabic outside the classroom, at home or in the community (R1, R2, R3), causing Arabic to feel foreign and inaccessible. Furthermore, even in Arab countries, the limited use of Fus-ha Arabic affects students' perception of its importance (R1).

Most students do not use Arabic at home or in everyday social interactions (R4, R5, R6), making them hesitant and unconfident in speaking it. This uncondusive environment impedes language acquisition and weakens students' motivation (Ibrahim & Ismail, 2021; Zakaria, 2022). Therefore, the learning environment plays a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes and interest in foreign language acquisition.

2: Perceived Lack of Benefit

Findings also revealed that students perceive Arabic as lacking clear benefits for their lives and future, particularly in a non-native Arabic-speaking country like Malaysia.

"... Students are not well exposed to the importance of learning Arabic in Malaysia..." (R1)

"... They find it hard to see how Arabic can be useful in life or a career. This makes them less actively involved in T&L..." (R2)

These findings demonstrate that many students do not recognize the relevance of Arabic to their daily lives or professional aspirations (R1, R2). The lack of exposure to its practical applications in fields like education, diplomacy, Islamic banking, and tourism causes students to view it as irrelevant (Ahmad & Rahman, 2020).

Furthermore, when students cannot relate Arabic learning to real-life needs, they become passive and disengaged during lessons (R2). The lack of teaching approaches that emphasize Arabic's practical value also weakens motivation. Therefore, teaching strategies should include explanations of the long-term benefits of learning Arabic to help students appreciate its value (Hassan & Zainal, 2021).

3: Misalignment with Learning Level

The study found that the misalignment between lower and upper secondary Arabic curricula negatively affects student interest.

"...The syllabus for Forms 1, 2, and 3 is not aligned with the Form 4 and 5 syllabuses. In Forms 4 and 5, students begin to learn Nahu and Sarf, but in the lower forms, they don't even touch on it. So, when they reach Form 4, it's a shock. They thought Arabic was easy, but now they find it difficult and burdensome..." (R1)

This finding indicates that students experience a “shock” when progressing to upper secondary levels due to the sudden complexity of Arabic content compared to their previous learning (R1). In Forms 1–3, foundational aspects such as Nahu and Sarf are not emphasized, leaving students unprepared when faced with more advanced material in Forms 4 and 5 (Jamil & Zahari, 2019).

The lack of curricular continuity results in students feeling overwhelmed and demotivated. Consequently, they begin to view Arabic as a difficult and tedious subject and distance themselves from it (Rahim & Hassan, 2022).

4: Weak Arabic Language Proficiency

The findings revealed that weak mastery of basic Arabic skills, such as vocabulary, sentence construction, pronunciation, and grammar, contributed significantly to disinterest in the subject.

"...Many students struggle with basic vocabulary and sentence construction, making Arabic feel like a difficult subject..." (R2)

"...Difficulty understanding vocabulary and sentence structure. Arabic is considered difficult due to its script and grammar, which differ from Malay and English..." (R3)

"...Students find it hard to pronounce Arabic letters, especially due to the Makhraj (articulation points), and they don't understand Arabic..." (R4)

"... Arabic is foreign to them. As a result, they feel they cannot master or understand it..." (R5)

"...Most students think Arabic is difficult to understand... they don't get the words..." (R6)

These responses indicate that many students lack foundational Arabic skills, making comprehension and participation difficult (R2, R3). Arabic differs significantly from Malay and English in terms of script, grammar and phonology, making students feel awkward and insecure (R4, R5). This aligns with Ismail and Rahman (2020), who found that linguistic weakness directly affects motivation and academic performance in Arabic.

Additionally, students face challenges in pronunciation due to the need for precise articulation (Makhraj) and Tajweed rules (R4), which leads to frustration and discouragement. As Arabic is seen as a foreign and complex language, students may feel it is impossible to master (R5, R6). The lack of early foundational reinforcement contributes to this negative perception. Thus, phased teaching approaches and linguistic support must be emphasized (Zulkifli & Ahmad, 2021).

5: Lack of Enjoyment

Findings indicate that unengaging and unexciting teaching approaches have diminished students' willingness to actively and effectively learn Arabic.

"...There's no encouragement for students to communicate in Arabic, so they lack vocabulary and grammar... If the teacher uses traditional methods that aren't very engaging, students don't understand or pay full attention in class..." (R5)

Students feel bored when teachers rely heavily on traditional, teacher-centered methods that limit opportunities for active communication (R5). The absence of fun, interactive, and game-based activities makes students less enthusiastic and hinders vocabulary and grammar acquisition (Ishak & Latif, 2021).

Moreover, when lessons lack entertainment or creativity, students fail to stay focused, affecting their understanding (R5). An uninteresting learning experience negatively influences students' attitudes and motivation. Therefore, incorporating more enjoyable strategies, such as communicative approaches, technology use and game-based learning is crucial (Hassan & Salleh, 2022).

Theme 2: Analyzing the Strategies Used by Trainee Teachers During Practicum to Address Student Disinterest

Based on interviews with six informants, the researcher identified seven strategies employed by trainee teachers during their practicum to address students' lack of interest. These strategies include strengthening the implementation of the Standard Curriculum and Assessment Document (DSKP), applying creative interactive methods, authentic contextual approaches, digital gamification, interactive audiovisual tools and both collaborative and cooperative learning techniques in the Arabic language T&L process.

1: Strengthening the DSKP in Schools

Interview findings show the need to strengthen the implementation of the Standard Curriculum and Assessment Document (DSKP) to ensure balanced emphasis on all four Arabic language skills listening (Istima'), speaking (Kalam), reading (Qira'ah) and writing (Kitabah).

"...I noticed that the syllabus or DSKP intends to focus on listening, speaking, reading and writing... Listening and speaking are actually very important, because the outcome is evident when students can speak... But at school, reading and writing are the priorities. They think that by just reading and writing, students will automatically be able to listen and speak... We need to emphasize listening and speaking, asking students to listen and repeat frequently, using basic sentences from Form One up to Form Five..." (R1)

This finding shows that although the DSKP outlines all four skills, in practice the focus is often limited to reading and writing (R1). Students are rarely given opportunities to practice listening and speaking, which are fundamental for communication. According to Rahman and Ahmad (2020), time constraints and limited resources cause teachers to focus primarily on written assessments.

Moreover, listening and speaking cannot be acquired passively through reading and writing alone; they require consistent and structured oral practice according to students' proficiency levels (R1). Thus, the DSKP must be implemented holistically, with support and guidance for teachers to integrate oral skills effectively in Arabic T&L (Zainuddin & Mohd Yusoff, 2021).

2: Creative Interactivity

The findings reveal that the use of interactive and creative teaching techniques significantly enhances students' interest and engagement in Arabic learning.

"...I use a more interactive and fun approach, like singing techniques, language games, and simple role-play..." (R2)

This indicates that methods such as songs, language games and short dramatizations successfully create an engaging and lively learning environment (R2). These techniques not only make learning more enjoyable but also help students retain vocabulary and language structures more effectively. Khalid and Rahim (2021) support this, noting that interactive elements stimulate intrinsic motivation in foreign language learning.

Creative activities also encourage students to actively communicate, allowing them to use Arabic in authentic contexts. Teaching that incorporates entertainment, visuals and kinesthetic elements has been shown to be more effective than conventional passive methods. Therefore, creative and interactive approaches should be promoted in Arabic instruction to improve both engagement and effectiveness (Ishak & Mohamed, 2022).

3: Authentic Contextualization

The study found that contextual and authentic Arabic instruction enhances students' comprehension and ability to use the language meaningfully in everyday life.

"...I relate lesson content to real-life situations so that students are exposed to Arabic and can apply it in their daily lives..." (R2)

"...I use examples close to students' experiences from the classroom, around school. That's what I emphasize, and I've seen improvement..." (R4)

These findings indicate that when teachers relate lessons to students' real-life situations, such as home, school or daily surroundings, students understand how to use Arabic practically (R2, R4). This approach makes Arabic more relevant and easier to apply spontaneously. Baharuddin and Latip (2021) also found that contextual learning helps students build meaning through real-life experiences.

Using relatable examples from students' daily environment makes learning more accessible and enjoyable (R4). This method also strengthens the connection between language input and real-world application. Therefore, authentic contextual strategies are highly encouraged in Arabic T&L to improve student mastery (Nasir & Yusof, 2020).

4: Digital Gamification

Findings show that incorporating digital gamification elements into Arabic teaching significantly boosts student motivation, engagement and enjoyment.

"...Quizzes like Kahoot and Quizizz help attract students' interest in Arabic learning..." (R2)

"...They enjoy it when I use technology during lessons like Quizizz, Kahoot, Smart Wall..." (R3)

"...Activities like Dark Race, random name pickers using fun animations to grab students' attention..." (R4)

"...I've used WorldWall and Educaplay on the web..." (R5)

"...I used Quizizz in Paper Mode, with QR code worksheets and scanning answers with a phone. I've also used Educandy, especially for spelling Arabic words, and Name Picker Ninja to encourage student participation before the end of class..." (R6)

These findings show that teachers using platforms such as Kahoot, Quizizz, WorldWall, Educaplay and Educandy successfully attract students through fun, interactive game elements (R2, R3, R5, R6). Students show high interest when learning is delivered in the form of quizzes, random name draws and animations (R4, R6). Mohamad and Harun (2022) also confirmed that gamification boosts student motivation and fosters a more conducive learning environment.

Gamification encourages active, collaborative and competitive learning, helping students master spelling, vocabulary and text comprehension more effectively (R5, R6). It also provides immediate rewards and feedback, which supports student achievement. Therefore, integrating gamified technology should be fully leveraged in Arabic T&L to sustain student engagement and interest (Zaki & Mansor, 2021).

5: Interactive Audiovisual Tools

The use of interactive audiovisual materials such as short videos and Arabic songs was found to increase students' interest and vocabulary retention.

"... We play short videos or Arabic songs. Those can attract student attention..." (R3)

"... I play YouTube songs in class for word syllables and vocabulary. Students follow the lyrics, memorize and sing along..." (R5)

These findings show that using Arabic-language songs and videos creates an enjoyable and accessible learning environment (R3, R5). Platforms like YouTube help capture attention while supporting natural acquisition of pronunciation and intonation. Rahim and Fauzi (2021) also noted that audiovisual media stimulate multiple senses, enhancing focus and memory.

Additionally, activities like singing and memorizing lyrics reinforce vocabulary, pronunciation and sentence structure through enjoyable, indirect repetition (R5). This approach benefits visual and auditory learners and

makes learning more interactive. Hence, audiovisual materials hold strong potential as teaching aids to boost student participation in Arabic classes (Jalil & Hashim, 2020).

6: Collaborative Learning

The findings indicate that collaborative activities such as group work and team-based games increase student interaction and support shared language skill development.

"...Encourage group work through activities like vocabulary competitions or sentence-building tasks..." (R3)

"...One example is the broken telephone game, which tracks listening and speaking skills..." (R4)

"...In the broken telephone game, each group memorizes a sentence in Arabic, then passes it down the line among group members..." (R6)

These activities, including vocabulary competitions and the "broken telephone" game, promote student engagement and oral practice in a relaxed setting (R3, R4, R6). Karim and Halim (2021) noted that collaborative learning builds confidence, especially in foreign language communication.

These group activities allow students to work together, practice Arabic spontaneously, and learn through peer interaction. They also foster social skills, teamwork, and healthy competition. Thus, collaborative teaching strategies should be promoted as comprehensive and effective approaches to Arabic language mastery (Yasin & Abd Wahab, 2022).

7: Cooperative Learning

The study found that cooperative learning, which emphasizes student-centered education, boosts student engagement and responsibility in Arabic language learning.

"...This teaching is student-centered. Students must play an active role in learning, not just the teacher..." (R5)

When students are given ownership in the learning process, they become more independent and responsible (R5). Cooperative learning enables them to support one another, exchange ideas and complete tasks collaboratively, enhancing language proficiency through two-way interaction. Abdullah and Zain (2021) found that cooperative learning strengthens communication skills and builds student confidence in using Arabic.

In this model, the teacher acts more as a facilitator, guiding students as they explore lesson content together. This creates a dynamic, interactive classroom environment where students feel valued and encouraged to voice their opinions. The approach aligns with 21st-century learning principles emphasizing autonomy, collaboration and critical thinking (Hasan & Musa, 2020).

Theme 3: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Trainee Teachers' Teaching and Learning (T&L) Strategies in Enhancing Student Interest

Based on interviews with six informants, the researcher identified four T&L strategies as effective in increasing student interest. These include the natural acquisition approach, positive interactivity, cooperative technology integration and melodic learning. These strategies helped students become more active, engaged and confident in learning Arabic.

1: Natural Language Acquisition

Interview findings revealed that the natural acquisition approach in Arabic learning, especially through listening (Istima') and speaking (Kalam) skills, helps students develop language proficiency in a spontaneous and informal way.

“...Listening and speaking may feel boring because we’re training students, not memorizing but helping them practice speaking and listening. Eventually, Arabic sentences will naturally come to mind... They’ll become accustomed to producing correct sentences without needing to study Nahu and Sarf grammar formally...” (R1)

These findings indicate that consistent exposure to listening and speaking activities enables students to acquire Arabic without relying solely on formal grammar instruction (R1). This approach emphasizes language acquisition through repetition, active listening and oral engagement. It aligns with Krashen’s (1982) Natural Approach theory, which states that language is best acquired when learners are exposed to comprehensible input in a meaningful, low-stress environment.

Furthermore, students regularly engaged in Arabic conversation are more likely to intuitively construct grammatically correct sentences. This process enhances fluency, confidence, and communicative competence without dependence on rote grammar memorization. Teachers are therefore encouraged to provide frequent opportunities for oral communication to support natural language development (Hamid & Yunus, 2021).

2: Positive Interactivity

Findings show that interactive and supportive teaching approaches can significantly improve student engagement and build their confidence to communicate in Arabic.

“...They showed improvements in class participation and group involvement. This more open and confidence-building approach made students more comfortable asking questions, answering and interacting in class... Previously passive students began showing consistent interest in learning...” (R2)

“... I noticed that students were more active and enjoyed class. It didn’t feel burdensome for them...” (R4)

“... I saw their interest in Arabic increase and their engagement improved...They collaborated on tasks and enhanced their communication skills in Arabic...” (R5)

These findings show that when teachers create an open, comfortable and encouraging environment, students become more active, willing to participate and confident in asking questions or interacting during lessons (R2, R4). Students who were previously passive began to enjoy lessons and show consistent interest (R4). Mahmud and Zakaria (2021) state that positive teacher-student interaction fosters student trust and motivation in foreign language learning.

This interactive approach also strengthens student collaboration in group assignments and improves their spoken Arabic (R5). When students are allowed to communicate without pressure, they can develop oral skills and self-confidence more easily. Thus, a supportive and interactive learning atmosphere is crucial in promoting active participation and enhancing language mastery (Ismail & Yunus, 2022).

3: Cooperative Technology Integration

The findings indicate that cooperative use of technology, through group work and digital interaction, enhances students’ interest, engagement and understanding in Arabic learning.

“...When the teacher uses technology, assigning group tasks, this cooperative use of technology makes students more active and less easily bored...Showing videos, audio clips, songs...I noticed students paid more attention. It helped them understand, especially in sentence construction...” (R3)

“...Using communication games or online tools got students to pay more attention and boosted their interest...” (R5)

“...Students enjoyed learning Arabic more. Especially when using apps like EduCandy and games like ‘broken telephone’ through Quizizz and Paper Mode...” (R6)

These findings reveal that combining technology with group activities, such as videos, songs, educational apps (EduCandy, Quizizz, Paper Mode) and collaborative games, successfully captures student attention and keeps them focused (R3, R5, R6). Technology is not just a teaching aid, but also a medium for student interaction and collaboration. Roslan and Halim (2021) affirm that tech-based cooperative learning creates a dynamic T&L environment and reduces boredom.

Additionally, this approach makes learning more enjoyable and motivating, especially when students are assigned group tasks involving digital tools (R3). Cooperative technology fosters communication skills and teamwork, both essential for Arabic proficiency. Thus, integrating collaborative technology into T&L should be expanded as an effective 21st-century teaching strategy (Hassan & Jalil, 2022).

4: Melodic Learning

Interview findings show that using songs or melodic-based approaches in Arabic teaching can increase student engagement and make vocabulary memorization easier.

“...When I play songs or get students to sing together, they feel happy and excited to join in. Songs make it easier for them to activate and memorize the vocabulary they’ve learned...” (R5)

This suggests that students feel joyful, energetic and more active when lessons involve singing, especially when they can participate as a group (R5). Songs not only brighten the learning atmosphere but also aid memory retention through rhythm and repetition. Ahmad and Zahari (2021) found that melodic learning strengthens memory, especially in pronunciation and vocabulary acquisition in foreign languages.

This approach also benefits students with auditory and kinesthetic learning preferences, helping them stay focused and enthusiastic. Group singing activities promote emotional and social engagement, making the learning process more meaningful. Therefore, melodic learning is an effective strategy for making Arabic more enjoyable, accessible and student-friendly (Latif & Hassan, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the issue of students’ lack of interest in the Arabic language subject is a major challenge in language education in Malaysia, particularly at the secondary level. Students face various constraints, including an uncondusive learning environment, perceptions of Arabic as irrelevant, imbalanced curriculum content, weak linguistic foundations and uninspiring T&L experiences. These issues not only diminish students' motivation but also negatively affect their performance and the continuity of language mastery in daily life contexts.

Hence, trainee teachers play a critical role in addressing this problem through reflective, responsive and creative approaches in the classroom. The findings of the study indicate that a variety of strategies were implemented by trainee teachers during their practicum. These include strengthening the implementation of the DSKP with a focus on listening (Istima’) and Kalam skills, applying interactive and creative teaching methods, employing authentic contextual instruction, integrating gamified technology, using audiovisual materials and adopting collaborative and cooperative approaches that emphasize student-centered learning. These strategies have been proven to enhance student engagement, promote oral communication and make learning more enjoyable and meaningful.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of these T&L strategies was evaluated based on students’ responses, which showed consistent increases in interest, active participation in activities and progress in Arabic language proficiency. Approaches such as natural language acquisition, positive interactivity, cooperative technology use and melodic learning had a significant impact on building students’ confidence and fluency in communication.

Therefore, this study underscores the need to strengthen teacher training programs that equip trainee teachers with flexible, contextual and learner-oriented pedagogical skills to ensure sustained excellence in Arabic language education. The role of institutions such as the PuLaMI at UPSI must continue to be enhanced as a

training platform that encourages pedagogical innovation, remains sensitive to classroom realities, and contributes to the development of a more effective, engaging and inclusive Arabic language learning ecosystem.

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