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Arabic Teaching and Learning: A Model From Indonesian Muslim Minority

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Abstract

Pesantren (Islamic boarding school) has a long history on the development of national education system in Indonesia. This initiative is expanded through Indonesia, include to the muslim minority area. Therefore, this paper will explore how *pesantren* engage on their activity in teaching and learning of foreign language. Those foreign languages are Arabic and English. This study will focus only on Arabic as a main source of Islamic understanding. Research was accomplished in Pesantren Nurul Yaqin, West Papua, Indonesia. Qualitative approach was employed during study cycles. In-depth interview and non-participant observation were conducted to collect data. Data collection was performed from February to May. Research findings show that pesantren preserve traditional Arabic teaching and learning processes. They still carry out *badongan* (individual) and *sorogan* (classical). In addition to these performs they proceed other strategies and method to enhance students' language skill. There are seventeen practices that *pesantren* conducted. Those programs were linkage through 24 hours living environment line up. Finally, techniques and activities were implemented to extend students' language achievement.

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1. Introduction

There are several issues that are the main focus of this study, namely the relationship between (i) Arabic education, (ii) pesantren, and (iii) culture. Language is instrumental part as the media in which human communicate with each other. However, Arabic is not only used for human communication but it is also the chosen language for worship in Islam. Therefore, Arabic holds a special place and importance as a language that is used in religious

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activities. Baring (2011) stated religion and culture (including the Arabic language) as a union of principles that cannot be separated on the learning. Islam is the main essence Arab of culture. Then, the culture is Arab, which has a special place in Islam. Arab culture influences various Islamic cultures. In regards to this, we must avoid understanding that the two is one of the same or go together exclusively. The Arabic language is an important language for the Muslim community everywhere because it is the language of worship, a language frequently used by Muslims and a language that is believed by all as the language chosen by Allah (Boudelaa & Marslen-Wilson (2013). This can be observed in the use of Arabic during worship rituals in Islam, whereby in prayers, hajj and all sorts of other activities of worship Muslims must be performed in Arabic. Religion sought to fashion individual in maintaining activities during his life. This phenomenon processes to conceptualize social world and the place (Pace, 2011). Finally, there is a need to examine the teaching and learning of Arabic. Pesantren was chosen as the location of study, where Arabic is taught intensively. This article will explore how pesantren in West Papua, Indonesia implement teaching and learning on Arabic language.

2. Previous Research

In Islamic civilization literature, there are accounts on Arabic being in line with various imperial or development of civilization (Wolfe, 2012), whereby Islam cannot be separated from literature and Arab culture growth. This includes linguistics, poetry and history. In the early stages, observations were made by urban society of the Arab world on the Arabic language, encouraged by an urge to learn the Qur'an as absolute. Understanding the Qur'an depend on skills of understanding Arabic, as part of the culture related to Arabic. In addition, Arab literature are updated to reflect, explain and to be parallel with the Qur'an. The main key to appreciate the Quran itself is through understanding the language. Language to a philologist is one of the most important elements of a civilization, and they limit a civilization to a single language, or from a group of related single languages through acculturation. This definition was presented by Uhlmann (2012). Specifically, Arabic in Indonesia has been circulated through learning in pesantrens. In addition, pesantren is a special institution that aims to strengthen understanding of Islam as a religion from various aspects including deep understanding of Arabic as a tool to know about Islam. Pesantren is a specific educational institution that has roots in the long history of education in Indonesia. Islamic education institution began to develop around 1831, after its separation from the palace. With an important role left open, the pesantren took the role that is most important in the community. The pesantren cares deeply in empowering the public especially in the field of education (Lawson, 2010; Scott, 2011). The role is played independently and consistently. After a long process, the pesantren was finally given the responsibility and trust by the community as a centre of Islamic education excellence. Furthermore, when a member of the community had a problem related to education and religion, the pesantren became the first and main point of reference. This shows how highly valued the pesantren instrumental part of Indonesia society. Before the Indonesian independent, pesantren already exist. The adaptation pesantren in supporting teaching and learning shows that the institutions implement information communication technology as a part of teaching (Wekke and Hamid, 2013). This adjustment is an initiative to allow teacher and students in acquiring modern perspective. On the other hand, religion is about tradition and culture, but this practice in maintaining attainment on high feature of scholarship. Another perspective was presented Wekke and Lubis (2008) in exploring multicultural background on creating instruction in pesantren milieu. Those research as a conclusion that pesantren did not separate their activity from recently development on the world. They tried to extend the organization as part of modern improvement. Pesantren is well known of development from inside initiative. It is a peaceful place to participate through the growth of the nation. The history shows that started from religious activities, recently the organization supply educational progress, environment involvement, and political contribution. The institutions hold a special place for the society, since they join in many ways of live.

3. Research Method

The use of a research plan in this study refers to several matters. The purpose of the study is to find the method for learning Arabic and for that, it utilized a qualitative research plan with a phenomenological approach. Due to the type of research being grounded theory, and features qualitative characteristics, it is a given that the study aims to understand the object of research by following the process that leads to a behaviour. Then, a phenomenological

approach based on the empirically unlimited object, which does not mean speculative thinking, instead to gear toward the use of human capacity to think reflectively using logic. Grounded Theory here means that the study intended to develop a concept from the data gathered. The main data collection technique in the study is through observation and interview. Firstly, the observation technique used was non-participant observation. This way, the researcher's presence at the study location did not influence interaction activities, such that the data collected are clean without external influences. Observations were done for 9 (nine) months. Data collection began December 2012 until September 2013. Secondly, data that were not obtained by observation were gathered from interviews. The interviews were carried out to gather data on teachers' view on the implementation of teaching-learning Arabic.

4. Findings and Discussion

The Pesantren Nurul Yaqin is a modern institution that employs professional standards and it is actively involved in educational (mental and spiritual) development with a vision to become a partner of the community that actively helps, educates and generates a generation with a soul of Qur'an, kind and visionary. The main mission of Pesantren Nurul Yaqin is to form the next generation that is *sholeh* (pious), that always defend *Aqidah* (faith), behave as instructed by the Qur'an, kind, dutiful toward parents and elders, useful to religion, community and nation. This foundation not only becomes the mould for mastering religious knowledge but also others subject. For that, learning of Arabic has become an important requirement. The culture that influences learning-teaching Arabic at the Pesantren Nurul Yaqin involves matters of everyday life in the surrounding environment, seeing that a language needs to be practiced and made into a daily habit. At the same time, the environment also affects language learning, and the same goes for learning Arabic. Students of the *pesantren* are not exempted from cultural discussion in the district where the *pesantren* is located. Therefore, it is not a surprise that it would affect the teaching-learning system of Arabic there, specifically, the thinking pattern of the students. Students are of various background and culture, and so their backgrounds influence a little, if not a lot, the teaching-learning of Arabic. For example, students at the Pesantren Nurul Yaqin came from different districts, some are from Papua and some are from outside. The characteristics of people in Papua is different than others, be it in terms of how they greet each other, conduct activities and so on. Moreover, a learning plan for the *pesantren* needs to assist the process of learning-teaching. The finding above shows the need to know and understand other cultures because in a sense, interaction experience between the different cultures is still relatively lacking. Likewise in formal education, the curriculum for social and cultural education is very minimal. Diversity in the Indonesian population will become more interesting when it undergoes acculturation, which will act as a mechanism of social adaptation. There is also a need to establish a learning environment that enables a student to learn in a supported atmosphere. Spirit of Islam provides students to learn in the maximum opportunity to acquire the language. They would like to think that through mastering the language as starting point in understanding the religion. Without this consideration, it will not help in maintaining their affiliation to comprehend pray, and other component of religion activities. Therefore, it is a need to do the effort on finding in many ways to support the education and language. They create many activities through 24 hours in residing dormitory and school time. The objective is to expand the limit and maximize the students' potential gaining the language. The main part of Islam is to understand Arabic language as the language of religious communication. When they perform many activities in pray, recite holy Quran, understand Hadith (Prophet saying), all the material are available in Arabic. Moreover, there is a need to have the meaningful understanding to the language. As a part of curriculum, school provide many subject and training in presenting opportunity to learn.

5. Findings and Discussion

The culture of education is an important element in continuing traditions. The study findings are in line with the education culture theory of Frempong, Reddy & Kanjee (2011) that said it was through culture that a student gets experience and human development. Therefore, the teacher must observe the student's behaviour because every student is different. This was also mentioned in a theory presented by Albert (2010). By defending the education culture, students will continuously respond (Felderhof, 2010). For that, teachers must observe the differences in students' background (Yong, 2011) because each student requires different treatment (Boudreau, 2011) also to

observe the difference in age (Caron & Ahlgrim, 2012). The differences in culture and country make our lives diverse and our lifestyle different from one another. Be it in terms of language, religion, taste and so on. These ultimately show that the guidance we need ought to be accurate, directed and suitable with our local environment. However, we must still hold fast to rules, ways and true knowledge in our guidance. As a teacher, it is a must to be able in conditioning their selves, and in order to reach students, they should be able to differentiate and know the strategies to be taken and the strategies that can be taken (Murphy, 2011). Davis (2010) and Caron & Ahlgrim (2012) conducted a study that focussed on some countries, such United States, England, and Sweden. Meanwhile, a research focussed to find similarities and differences between the students of two campuses by looking at their relationship with friends. Between the two countries, discernable differences were found. Clearly, Rossiter (2010) study findings were surprising for there were many differences found in term of social behaviour between the two countries. Possibly, what's more interesting is that the students in Brunei Darussalam were reported to interact more and that they have more free time for social interaction with their friends (Lubis and Wekke, 2009; Paugh & Dudley-Marling, 2011). This shows that interaction and time to socialize can support efforts to achieve learning goals. As stated by Dehqan (2009) and Moore (2001), quality human resource involves three dimensions, namely first, economic dimension, second, cultural dimension, and third, spiritual dimension (*iman* and *taqwa* or faith and piety). Efforts to enhance the quality of human resource through education also need to refer to adding values to the third dimension. Enhancement can be done through processes such as acculturation, development of faith, and development of knowledge and technology. The acculturation process is the transformation process of cultural values that includes ethics, aesthetics and culture, as well as national vision in a plan to develop civilized human beings.

6. Conclusion

The culture that is apparent in *pesantren* provides meaning to the development of learning Arabic, especially in the environment for where it is developed. According to this study, which differs from other previous studies where they only focussed on a few implementation systems, the performance system for learning Arabic are suggested in favour of developing the environment to support teaching-learning process at the *pesantren*. Therefore, the implementation process of learning Arabic can be more intensive. This model on *pesantren* where muslim are minority reflect that the environment on teaching is part of education. Indeed, the environment could be created to support the process of learning. Pesantren Nurul Yaqin where muslim minority in the context Indonesia are majority, they preserve their own culture to support the objective of Islamic education. The condition of minority muslim was not the variable to eliminate the spirit in learning Arabic. Their conceptions of a need to the language offer the effort to construct as a model of training. Those approaches, strategies and methods that implemented in other school were adopted and adapted to the local condition.

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