

## **A Prolonged Dilemma: Traditional Curriculum of Arabic Rhetoric (Balaghah) in Malaysia**

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**Abstract:** One of the important components of Arabic language is rhetoric (balaghah). The purpose of Arabic rhetoric is to develop Arabic competence and foster literary appreciation. By mastering Arabic rhetoric, learners can produce correct, beautifully worded and appropriate sentences. The teaching of Arabic rhetoric officially started through the Islamic Education curriculum in Malaysia with the introduction of the madrasah system in the early 20th century. However, there are some obstacles and criticisms in its teaching in Malaysia. This study analysed five studies on the teaching of Arabic rhetoric conducted by local scholars supported by sixteen studies on the same issue conducted by Arab scholars. These works were selected because they represent authentic studies conducted by prominent practitioners and scholars of the subject. This study concludes that problems encountered in teaching Arabic rhetoric the selection of objectives, contents, examples, teaching methodology as well as assessment. Therefore, in order to ensure the efficient implementation of its teaching, the Arabic rhetoric should be re-assessed. This study also provides suggestions to ensure the implementation of teaching Arabic rhetoric in line with the language teaching theory and that the purpose and objectives are achieved.

**Key words:** Arabic rhetoric, Arabic competence, teaching Arabic, historical development, problems

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Language is a form of ability to communicate that is significant to human life. Humans get to communicate amidst themselves through learning either orally, using gestures with the hands or in writing with structured grammar. Language is used to exchange ideas and feelings among members of a society using different forms or styles. However, the impact of any certain communication depends a lot on a person's ability to use the language effectively. In other words, the effective use of language plays a very significant role in ensuring a successful communication. Hence for a long time, man had examined the system of language, its structure, style and meaning. This is in order to demonstrate coherent linguistic expressions effectively and to draw the attention of listeners or readers. One branch of language that plays a crucial role in examining and exploring the quality and aesthetic values of language is rhetoric.

Arabic rhetoric consists of three main aspects; al-Ma'ani, al-Bayan and al-Badi'. Al-Ma'ani deals with the use of correct and appropriate language according to a certain situation or context. The second, al-Bayan is the aspect of Arabic rhetoric that concentrates on the use of

various techniques in conveying a certain meaning implicitly or explicitly. At the same time, al-Badi' serves the purpose of beautifying words or meanings through various strategies. From here, one can understand that the major concern of Arabic rhetoric include correctness, fluency, appropriateness, the beauty of language form and meaning. By mastering this branch of Arabic, people can form an excellent quality of linguistic expression either written or spoken as well as explore, evaluate and appreciate its strengths and aesthetic values.

Referring to its focus and content, Arabic rhetoric is considered part of sociolinguistic competence concerned with sociological aspects of language. Sociolinguistics is a discipline that deals with how to use appropriate discourse in the sociocultural context. This requires a person to understand the social setting which the language is used, roles of the surrounding people, the shared information and the function of the interaction which occurs (Brown, 1994). Now, we have seen the similarities between rhetoric and sociolinguistics in the sense that both are concerned with the aspect of language which deals with the form of expression suitable to a certain sociocultural context involving three features; appropriateness, language form and meaning. Thus,

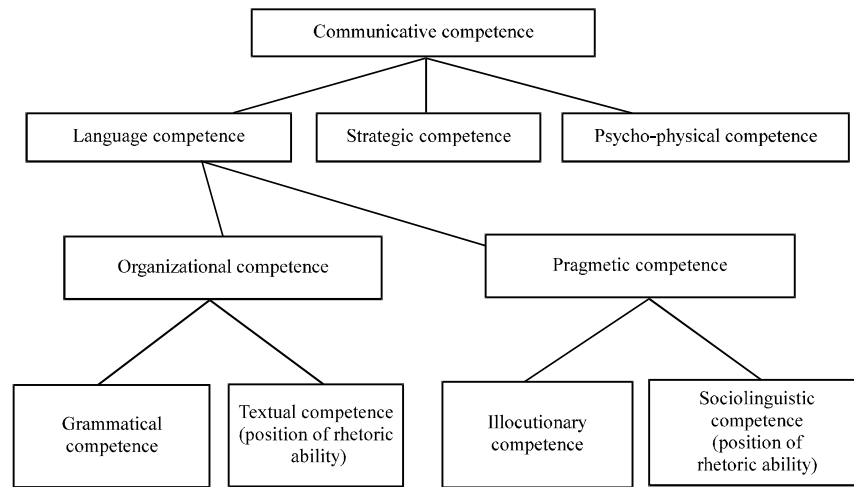


Fig. 1: The main components of communicative competence (Bachman 1989, 1990)

without Arabic rhetoric, one cannot master Arabic competence. A diagram which shows the position of rhetoric in the communicative competence hierarchy: Fig. 1.

**Arabic rhetoric: origin and development:** Discussion on rhetoric had already existed during the ancient time of Greeks, Romans, Persians and Indians. It was believed that the Greeks were the pioneers in the study on rhetoric. In the 4th century BC, Plato (D. 347 BC) had elaborated the art of oration, the most popular prose in Greek society during that time. His discussions on rhetoric were similar to Arabic rhetoric discussion especially about the appropriateness theory. He emphasised that a speaker must put serious concern on the audience and the context in order to produce attractive and effective speech. Plato's effort was continued by his famous student, Aristotle (D. 321 BC) who had shown deep interest in oratory, poetry and rhetoric. In exploring rhetoric features, Aristotle had discussed on the art of words arrangement, ideas presentation and language style. Some of his popular books translated into Arabic are al-Shi'r (poetry) and al-Khattabah (oratory). The Greek exploration in rhetoric is believed as the origin of this knowledge in the Arab and western world. However, the Arabs had done more detailed and comprehensive study on rhetoric which had never happened before, especially after the advent of Islam and the revelation of the Qur'an. During that time, no other society in the world exhibited such enthusiastic interest and admiration for literary expression and production as the Arabs.

The historical development of Arabic rhetoric began in the late 5th century known in Arabic as al-*asr al-jahiliyy* (the period of ignorance) which was the

foundation of Arabic rhetoric. During that period, the Arabs were famous for their fluency and eloquence as they took great pride in their language. They exhibited this through the production of literary works which portrayed a good quality of rhetoric elements such as *isti'arah*, *tashbih*, *majaz* and *andkinayah*. Ibrahim al-Samira'i described the precision and eloquence found in Arabic literary works as reaching a level of perfection where word were properly organized and well-suited to present beautiful meaning complete with strong authentic vocabulary, harmonious rhymes and rhythms.

Once again, Arabic rhetoric experienced a new development phase with the advent of Islam and the revelation of the Qur'an. The inimitable quality of the Qur'an is not only limited to its message but also its language. It presents the highest degree and finest form of Arabic language. The perfect choice and arrangement of words, meaning and style makes the language of the Qur'an suitable for any time and place. This encouraged the Arabs to analyse and explore Arabic rhetoric not only for literary purposes but also for religious reasons in order to understand, explore and discover the secret of its linguistic miracles. Muhammad 'Id stated that the earliest Arab scholar who studied rhetoric for the purpose of eliciting the linguistic beauty of the Qur'an was Abu 'Ubaydah Ma'mar Ibn al-Muthanna (D. 211H), in his research titled *Majaz al-Qur'an* (Miracles of the Qur'an). Other writings in Arabic rhetoric for similar purpose are *Ta'wil Mashakil al-Qur'an* by Ibn Qutaybah (D. 276H), *al-Nuqat fi I'jaz al-Qur'an* by al-Rummani (D. 384H) and *I'jaz al-Qur'an* by al-Baqilani (D. 403H).

Thereafter, the interest to study Arabic rhetoric grew to the point of realising the aim of literature and its criticisms which involved choosing the word, presenting

the meaning, organising the ideas, applying the figurative expressions and choosing the precise literary purpose. This is the flourishing period of Arabic rhetoric since the study on it became more comprehensive. Rhetoric was used to assist people in producing beautiful expressions besides appreciating literary works. In the 5th century of hijrah<sup>6</sup>Abd al-Qahir al Jurjani (D. 474) who was proclaimed by most researchers of Arabic rhetoric as the real founder of Arabic rhetoric. He founded al-Ma<sup>7</sup>ani theory through his book *Dala'il al-I'jaz* beside substantiating al-Bayan theory through another book entitled *Asrar al-Balaghah*. Through both books, al-Jurjani had tried to elucidate the beauty of Arabic language and its literature as a platform for mastering Arabic rhetoric and instilling literary appreciation. Among the writings on Arabic rhetoric for this purpose include al-Bayan wa l-Tabyin by al-Jahiz (D. 255H), al-Kamil fi al-Lughah wa al-Adab by al-Mubarrid (D. 337H), Mi<sup>8</sup>yar al-Shi<sup>9</sup>r by Ibn Tabataba (D. 322), Naqd-al-Shi<sup>9</sup>r by Qudamah Ibn Ja<sup>10</sup>far (D. 337H), *Dala'il al-I'jaz* and *Asrar al-Balaghah* by al Jurjani (D. 474H).

Later in the 7th century of Hijrah, the field of Arabic rhetoric once again witnessed a new era with the emergence of al-Sakkaki (D. 626H) who had separated Arabic rhetoric into three main components, al-Ma<sup>7</sup>ani, al-Bayan and al-Badi<sup>11</sup>. In his book titled *Miftah al-<sup>12</sup>Ulum* (The key to knowledge), al-Sakkaki formulated some definitions, rules and their scope (<sup>13</sup>Abd al-<sup>14</sup>Aziz<sup>15</sup>Atiq, 1985; Badawi<sup>16</sup>Tabanah, 1958). Al-Sakkaki's definition was more logical and philosophical compared to similar efforts made by earlier scholars.

The complex approach that consists of definitions and rules has caused the decline of Arabic rhetoric contribution and separation between Arabic rhetoric, literature and literary appreciation. This was supported by <sup>17</sup>Abd al-<sup>18</sup>Aziz<sup>19</sup>Atiq who considered al-Sakkaki's era as the starting point for the amalgamation of Arabic rhetoric. Al-Sakkaki's approach was then followed by most of the scholars of Arabic rhetoric until today. Thus, based on the above discussion, it could be summarized that Arabic rhetoric had undergone through four periods as follows:

- The foundation level beginning from the era of ignorance until the early Islamic era
- The development level that focused on understanding the beauty of the Qur<sup>20</sup>anic language and to elicit the secrets of its miracles. This began from the early Islamic era until the 2nd century of Hijrah
- The flourishing level that focused on literary elements and literary criticism beginning from the 2nd century hijrah until the 7th century of Hijrah
- The amalgamation level which began from the 7th century of Hijrah until present

**History of teaching arabic rhetoric in malaysia:** There is no clear evidence when Arabic rhetoric was first taught in Malaysia. In the beginning, it was not taught independently as a subject. This field of knowledge was generally touched upon by teachers during religious lessons like Tafsir, Hadith and Arabic grammar. A study conducted by Abdul Hakim Abdullah found that the teaching of Arabic rhetoric was first taught officially in the Malay Peninsular when Syed Sheikh al-Hadi formed Madrasah al-Iqbal in 1907 in Singapore. When he moved to Penang in 1914, he founded Madrasah al-Mashoor. In the Madrasah's curriculum, Arabic rhetoric became one of the core courses for the students.

**Madrasah al-Mashoor's curriculum:** Before World War I: Tauhid, Tawjid, Fiqh, Insha', Adab, Sarf, Hisab, Tafsir, Mutalakah, Funun, al-Khat, Akhlak, Imla', Qasidah, Tarikh, Tarjumah and Hadith. After World War I: Maclumat<sup>21</sup>ammah, Geography, Tabaqat al-Ard, Sihhah, Mantiq, al-Nafs, Philosophy, Hayawan, <sup>22</sup>Ulum al-Tabicah, Rasm, Mahfuzah, Balaghah, Fara'id, <sup>23</sup>Arabiyyah and Mustalah Hadith.

Today, students of religious or Arabic stream in Malaysia secondary schools are exposed to balaghah. However, at the beginning, they are only exposed to the simple rules of Arabic rhetoric as the curriculum is aimed at enabling the students to master the simple Arabic rhetoric rules and be able to use them. Meanwhile, at the upper secondary level, Arabic rhetoric is learned in-depth by the students and it comprises almost all the topics discussed in this discipline. Students are required to understand all the topics and be able to analyse rhetoric rules from the selected texts commonly taken from the Qur'an, Hadith, poetry and prose. Arabic rhetoric has also become a compulsory subject in Malaysian higher education for those studying in religious stream either at diploma or degree level.

**Issues in teaching and learning Arabic rhetoric:** The teaching of Arabic rhetoric in Malaysia began to attract the attention of Malaysian researchers when the Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia organised a seminar called Seminar Balaghah (Retorika) Arab-Melayu in 1999. Later, more detailed research on teaching Arabic rhetoric became fast increasing at both secondary schools and institutions of higher learning. Since then, we found that there were a number of criticisms on the teaching of Arabic rhetoric. Abdullah Tahmim who was not satisfied with the teaching of Arabic rhetoric in Malaysia felt that there were some deficiencies in its teaching in schools and institutions of higher learning. Ab. Rahim Hj. Isma'il also felt that the teaching

orientation emphasised too much on rhetoric rules and did not contribute much towards instilling literary appreciation or in developing Arabic competence among students. Abdul Hakim Abdullah and Idris Abdullah also expressed their views that teaching Arabic rhetoric in Malaysia did not conform to the actual aims and objectives of the lesson and they were far from what has been suggested by language teaching theories and principles.

The discussion on this issue was not only limited to local researchers. Some Arab scholars had also questioned the implementation of teaching Arabic rhetoric in their countries. Fathi Farid had criticised the teaching of Arabic rhetoric. He classified it as being ineffective and stagnant and that it failed to guide students in producing words that contain high value of Arabic rhetoric. A prominent scholar in the field of Arabic rhetoric, Muhammad 'Id, said: Indeed, I have felt when learning Arabic rhetoric as what most of the students have felt so, whereby learning Arabic rhetoric does not benefit us much neither intellectually nor emotionally. It also does not invigorate our knowledge or feeling and verily all discussion on the topics focusing on the mental operation and far from the present needs and souls of literature.

Hassan Shahatah also added that the exercises given only help students to answer examination questions and to analyse the Arabic rhetoric rules in a logical fashion without relating it to improve Arabic competence and literary appreciation. This stereotyped and traditional pattern will undoubtedly lead to ineffective teaching process of the subject as well as neglecting students' appreciation toward language and ignoring the language skill that could be obtained when learning literary texts (Littlewood, 1981). Criticisms and views on the teaching of Arabic rhetoric involve aspects related to selecting the objectives, contents of the lessons, choosing the examples, separation between Arabic rhetoric and other components of the Arabic language, teaching approach and assessment method. The details about these elements are as follows.

**Setting the objectives:** It is agreed upon that language teaching must stress on language acquisition and developing communicative competence. As pointed out by Widdowson (1978), Cunningsworth and Tomlinson (1984), Littlewood (1981), Oxford *et al.* (1989) and Rollmann (1994), the actual need for learning a particular language is to develop communicative competence. This is to say that language and communication are two inseparable elements. In the context of teaching Arabic rhetoric, the selected objectives need to be clear to enable students not only master the linguistic items but also strategies of using them in real situations.

According to Ab. Rahim Ismail, one of the problems encountered in teaching Arabic rhetoric in Malaysia is the inappropriate objectives that focused only on the cognitive domain. This fails to comprehensively develop Arabic competence among students. For him, the teaching of Arabic rhetoric should also emphasise on speaking, writing, comprehending texts as well as instilling literary appreciation. Besides the problem of choosing the correct objectives, students' knowledge concerning the aim of learning Arabic rhetoric was also questioned. Abdullah Tahmim found that students' knowledge about the aim of learning Arabic rhetoric was weak. Approximately, 80% of the respondents were unsure of the ideas behind learning Arabic rhetoric. This was in line with similar findings from studies conducted by Abdul Hakim Abdullah and Anuar Sopian and co-authors.

**Contents of the lesson:** As found by Abdul Hakim Abdullah, the syllabus for Arabic rhetoric in Malaysian schools was more form-focused. Almost, all parts of the textbooks and exercises were mainly structural with the inclusion of rhetoric-rules explanations. Teachers became more formal according to the contents and designs of the textbooks. This kind of contents only promoted the learning of the properties of Arabic rhetoric. They failed to emphasise on the implementation of knowledge in order to enhance students' Arabic competence. Conversely, language teaching theories and principles have indicated that functional items and skills should be actively promoted by the teachers during learning process in order to fulfil the language needs of the students (Cunningsworth and Tomlinson, 1984; Yalden, 1987; Swan, 1990).

Another problem related to the content of Arabic rhetoric is the influence of other disciplines like mantiq (science of logic), jadal (argument) or philosophy on it. Thus, the students encounter numerous problems when trying to comprehend the details about Arabic rhetoric from textbooks. Al-Sakkaki's model was said to have caused the stagnation of Arabic rhetoric. His method had actually separated Arabic rhetoric from literature and literary appreciation.

Ali al-Jumbulati and Abu-al Futuh al-Tawasini said that the complex trend such as definition and division of learning topics of Arabic rhetoric had not contributed much in instilling a sense of literary appreciation. For example, in the lesson called al-Tashbih, students should not be burdened with so many terms such as mufrad, mujmal, tamthil, ghaytamthil, mufassal and mu'akkad.

Unfortunately, quite a number of schools still use al-Sakkaki's method and even his examples for rhetoric rules with little or no much change made. Consequently,

Arabic rhetoric had failed to develop students' language competence, appreciation and interest thereby causing the students to face difficulties in commanding and practicing the learned Arabic rhetoric rules. As put by Moody, it is not a good excuse to spend too much time on works of literature that are not related to the actual world of the students.

**Arabic rhetoric separated from other components of Arabic:**

Arabic rhetoric is an aspect of Arabic language. However, separating it from other components of Arabic such as grammar, morphology, literature, writing, reading and conversation is necessary in order to facilitate a focus on its teaching and learning. Nevertheless, the effect of this separation had caused students' misconception of the association between Arabic rhetoric and other branches of Arabic language. This had brought about negative implications on the students such as the inability to get a clear picture of the association between Arabic rhetoric and literature.

Although, many students were exposed to a literary text either in the form of poem or prose, this effort contributes less towards the integration of Arabic rhetoric and literature. According to Muhammad 'Id, this problem arises because the research on Arabic rhetoric is not concomitant with the developments in literature but rather, it is continuously being separated from it. While actually, during lessons, we have a very good opportunity to capture students' minds and draw their interest towards Arabic and Arabic rhetoric at once, since the presented literary input provides variety of vocabulary, language structures and styles.

**Method of teaching and assessment:** According to Ab. Rahim Hj. Ismail, the present implementation of teaching Arabic rhetoric in Malaysia is still examination-oriented. It does not stress on efforts to comprehensively develop the potential of students' Arabic performance and competence. Instead, a lot of attention has been given to understanding the rules of Arabic rhetoric and memorising the given examples.

Abdullah Tahmim stated that the teaching of Arabic rhetoric in Malaysia still puts more focus on definitions and rules rather than emphasising on exploring the beauty of Arabic language, application of the learned rules or understanding the implied meanings. This method causes students to memorise a lot with less benefit and frequently, they were unable to answer questions on unfamiliar texts. Abdul Hakim Abdullah supported this in his study where he found out that the most prevalent method of teaching Arabic rhetoric was lecturing. He also asserted that 95.5% of Arabic rhetoric teachers agreed

that the method they frequently practiced was lecturing. The common practice in teaching Arabic rhetoric in Malaysia, according to this study begins with presenting the definition, providing examples, identifying the rules of Arabic rhetoric or formulating the rules according to a given text. This method is not suitable for language appreciation. The texts or literary expressions portrayed during lessons should become tools for applying new vocabulary using new language styles as well as appreciating literature.

The methodology for teaching Arabic rhetoric has also gained a lot of attention from Arab scholars. The teaching activities were said to place greater emphasis on memorising definitions and rules without appropriately exploring and evaluating the characteristics of beauty in a text. It has failed to realise the actual objective of learning Arabic rhetoric. Hassan Shahatah iterated that it would be a grave error in judgement if it were assumed that Arabic rhetoric is similar to other fields of Arabic such as grammar, sarf or spelling.

'Ali al-Jumbulati and Abu al-Futuh al-Tawasini opined that teaching Arabic rhetoric should not over-emphasise on memorising definitions and rules. Extra attention needs to be given to activities which can enable students to apply the learned rules of Arabic rhetoric and to determine how much knowledge the students obtain from the lessons. To them, memorising definitions and rules do not contribute much towards producing expressions with high aesthetic values of language. This is in line with Hoekje and Williams (1992) who stated that focusing on the cognitive domain only is not enough in language teaching. For example, to master a language, students must master two elements; knowledge concerning the rules and the skills to use these rules appropriately.

As a conclusion, there are numerous complaints and criticisms by researchers about teaching Arabic rhetoric. Among the raised issues were incorrect choice of objectives and contents which are influenced by mantiq, jadal and philosophy, applying stagnant incomprehensive examples, separating Arabic rhetoric from other components of the Arabic language as well as the teaching and assessing methods that do not emphasise on the application of the learned rules and instilling a sense of literary appreciation.

## DISCUSSION

Early criticisms on teaching Arabic rhetoric recognised the existence of problems in the syllabus. Hence, researchers had suggested that these aspects of

the syllabus could be restructured and improved. As a starting point, the initiatives should encompass all aspects of the syllabus so that a comprehensive and effective action could be carried out.

The importance of choosing the objective of teaching cannot be overemphasised considering the fact that it immensely influences the implementation of a syllabus and its teaching. However, if the objective of the syllabus were to develop aspects of speech like reading, writing or translating a Foreign language then the method used in teaching and assessing would be in tandem with the aim that has been stated earlier. The objective of the syllabus would then be explained clearly to the students so that they could understand why they are studying a particular subject. According to Nunan (1989), teachers need to explain the objective of lessons to students in order to be sure that the priority accorded by students is similar to the priority accorded by teachers. If this were not done, it would cause disharmony between the curriculum and its implementation.

The objective of teaching Arabic rhetoric should lay importance on efforts to form and develop language performance, competence and literary appreciation. This would enable students to express the intended meaning to be conveyed and consider its appropriateness in the given situation beside focusing on the ability to understand, appreciate and evaluate the various forms of literature. The objective should also enable students to enjoy literature as well as train them to produce beautiful expressions without focusing too much on definitions and terms and without only extracting the rules of Arabic rhetoric from a specific learned text. Divisions such as the sections on *isti'arah*, *tashbih* (as in *mufrad*, *tamthil*, *mujmal* or *mu'akkad*) or *kinayah* (as in *kinayah an sifah*, *mawsuf* or *nisbah*) do not need to be elaborated in detail but rather, attention should be focused on the introduction and application of *isti'arah*, *tashbih* and *kinayah*. During the early era, students of Arabic rhetoric succeeded in commanding this field due to the fact that its teaching had focused on instilling a sense of affinity towards literature through literary analysis and criticism. This enabled them to identify the strengths of a poet or writer and explain the form of beauty and weaknesses of an expression without associating it with any definition or complicated term.

Selecting appropriate contents and examples is another important aspect to be implemented effectively and efficiently in the teaching of Arabic rhetoric. The contents should correspond with the current developments of the Arabic language and literature so that it does not deviate much from the current needs of the students. This could help to overcome the problems of using stagnant and non-comprehensive examples which are among the main factors that cause the failure of this field of knowledge in developing a sense of affinity

and thinking in students. Ibn Athir suggested that students need to explore Arabic literature, read more literary work, verses from the Qur'an and Hadith texts in order to master Arabic rhetoric. This does not mean that attention should only be on classical literary texts. Modern literature should also play a part when learning Arabic rhetoric in order for students' skills on language study to be in line with the development of Arabic language and literature. Fathullah Ahmad Sulayman suggested that the contents of lessons in Arabic rhetoric should also involve the use of examples that contain ordinary communicative language text. Preparation of such contents would make learners more realistic and practical. This is in line with Brown who said that it is rare for language to be fully analysed if the given examples are only in the form of sentences.

The teaching-learning process greatly influences students' ability of a lesson. Nunan (1989) is of the view that the teaching-learning process is more important than the contents of the lesson. Hence, in order to ensure a successful teaching-learning of Arabic rhetoric, activities that are more conducive should be implemented. Regarding suitable activities, several researchers had made several suggestions. <sup>o</sup>Abd al-<sup>o</sup>Aziz<sup>o</sup>Atiq, Ab. Rahim Hj. Ismail, Abdullah Tahmim, Abdul Hakim Abdullah and Idris Abdullah and co-authors jointly agreed that such activities that emphasise on the usage of learned rules should be considered when teaching-learning Arabic rhetoric. As a component of language, the teaching of Arabic rhetoric is part of teaching language. Therefore, the general principles of teaching language should be considered when teaching Arabic rhetoric. Thus, as suggested earlier, the aspect of knowledge application should become an important principle when teaching Arabic rhetoric.

Littlewood (1975) emphasised that the students' need is not only to obtain knowledge on linguistic items but also the strategic use of language in a particular situation. Klauer (1985) supported this view where he said that teaching language is an effort that allows students to apply the learned rules, principles or procedures besides being able to differentiate between new knowledge and the existing one. Brumfit (1987) on this matter also emphasised that the major aim of any study on literature in schools is to utilize items that have been learned and not just to provide knowledge about them. Ibn Khaldun was of the opinion that Arabic acquisition is possible through repeating expressions, listening and understanding the characteristics of its arrangement. According to him, the command of a language is not obtained only through rules. For him, these rules only contribute toward knowledge and not language command.

## CONCLUSION

Arabic rhetoric is a branch of Arabic language which plays an important role in developing Arabic performance, competence and literary appreciation among students. A command of Arabic rhetoric would enable students to use Arabic with high quality in term of correctness and appropriateness as well as to enable them understand, evaluate and appreciate aesthetic values from Arabic texts. The method of teaching and assessing should not overly emphasise on memorising definitions or methods. These factors impede the achievement of the actual aim and objective of teaching Arabic rhetoric. Method of teaching and assessing must lend priority to the application of methods and an increase in activities that could truly develop language ability as well as being able to instil a sense of affinity towards literature amongst students.

Therefore, the traditional curriculum that is still implemented in teaching Arabic rhetoric in Malaysia should be re-visited to ensure its successful teaching and learning. Teachers on the other hand, have to re-assess their teaching process. The centrality of rhetoric rules in teaching and learning process is inadequate and was argued upon since language ability is much more than structural. Where rules are given too much priority, the students do not learn Arabic, rather, they learn rules. They will know the rules and they can pass the tests but when it comes to using the language in practice, students will discover that they lack vocabulary, language style and fluency. They are unable to use the rules especially in speaking fluently and writing accurately. This approach has also made students nervous about making mistakes, hence, undermining their confidence and destroying their motivation.

It should be a central discussion among policy makers and practitioners of Arabic rhetoric teaching particularly for non-Arabic native speakers, to seek and explore a new curriculum design and practice for the subject either at school or university level. Some efforts and changes must be done to overcome the prolonged preoccupation with inefficient, unproductive and misguided implementation of the teaching process. Hopefully, this can move away from the teacher covering Arabic rhetoric to the learner discovering Arabic rhetoric.

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