Learning Strategies in Arabic and English as Foreign Language: Study Perspective of Multilingual

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Abstract
A multilingual must have a special learning strategy to gain mastery of a new language. This study aims to find out the learning strategies used by Arabic teachers who are very proficient in English. This case study uses interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the processes, strategies, and challenges in mastering foreign languages, namely Arabic and English. The results show that multilinguals use social and cognitive strategies in the field of practice and social interaction. Meanwhile, multilinguals use auxiliary resources like YouTube, Instagram, TikTok social media, and others to keep up their foreign language proficiency. The difficulties a multilingual person has are primarily cognitive, such as the various word structures found in each foreign language. It is expected that language learners who wish to acquire a foreign language will use this case study as a reference.

Keyword: Learning Strategies, Arabic, English, Foreign Language, Bilingual

Introduction

Being multilingual is unusual on the island of Madura since most people exclusively speak their native tongues.[1] However, knowing someone is multilingual is not common. However, the reality is that multilingualism is commonplace globally. According to Annastassiou some people and communities speak one or two languages and some people or groups speak multiple languages.[2] In this context, the ability to speak more than two languages, or to be a polyglot, is a dream for many individuals,[3] as learning other languages becomes more and more crucial in the globalization and digital eras. Speaking another language fluently gives you advantages in the workplace and school, as well as more opportunities to engage with people from different cultural backgrounds.[4]

Speaking, writing, reading, and even teaching multiple languages is a polyglot's skill set. Additionally, it is crucial to learn different languages because using the fast-evolving information technology of today requires proficiency in foreign languages.[5] But because learning more than one language takes work, polyglots have different obstacles to overcome and methods for acquiring new ones. It is still uncommon to find studies on

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the methods and difficulties of learning more than one foreign language among individuals.

Different characteristics have been the focus of several prior studies in the realm of polyglots. In the first study, the association between polyglots' proficiency in foreign languages and their IQ and cognitive capacities was examined (Wen et al., 2022).[6] The second study (Nisa & Dzulfikri, 2023) examines the dynamics of multilingual mastery from a polyglot perspective. In the context of Islamic boarding schools.[7] the third study focuses on teaching techniques for Arabic and English language programs to increase alumni competitiveness in the period of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 (Husna et al., 2021).[8] The following study examines multilingual teaching techniques for Chinese EAL business students (Ashton-Hay, et al., 2021).[9] And the most recent study on polyglot approaches to language acquisition (Martiningsih & Mukarto, 2024).[10]

The present study focuses on the acquisition of numerous foreign languages by a polyglot, drawing on prior research findings. Comparable to earlier studies is this one. This study differs from the third and fifth studies because the third study talked about group discussions and the context of Islamic boarding schools, whereas the fifth study talked about individual strategies. However, each person has their own unique set of strategies and difficulties when learning a foreign language, and the languages they have mastered are undoubtedly dissimilar. This research examines the tactics and difficulties faced by polyglots, or Arabic-majoring instructors who are also fluent in English, and who have been teaching since 2008. Therefore, a clearer and deeper understanding of the methods, procedures, and difficulties faced by multilingual in learning Arabic and English as second languages will be provided by this study. It is anticipated that this study will stimulate and excite learners to become exceptional individuals capable of mastering multiple foreign languages.

Method

This study uses a qualitative technique and a case study. Through the use of WhatsApp, the researcher conducted interviews to gather data. Researchers also recorded audio interviews, transcripts of interviews, and semi-structured interviews. The research subject in this case is a 38-year-old multilingual who comes from Madura, East Java. He mastered two foreign languages, namely Arabic and English, apart from his local language, namely Madurese, and his national language, Indonesian. He is currently still actively teaching both languages. He began instructing Arabic students in 2011 and English in 2008. Though he is from the Arabic department, his teaching experience shows that he is also quite skilled in English. Therefore, the researcher is very motivated to use him as the study subject in this particular instance. The researcher's primary motivation for wanting to understand more about his learning technique is that he is her English instructor, having guided her through high school and beyond. This is why she is eager to continue exploring it and make sure it remains balanced and effective. But as a third foreign language, Mandarin is something he wants to study and has ambitions for.

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[6] Wen, Yang, & han. "Do Polyglots have exceptional Language Aptitudes?". Language Teaching Research Quarterly, 31(1), 1-12.

[7] Ihda Khairun Nisa& Dzulfikri. "The Dynamics of Mastering Multiforeigng Languages: a polyglots perspective". English franca: Academic Journal of English and education, 7(2), 269-276.

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[9] Aston-Hay et al. "Bilingual learning strategies to support chienese EAL business studet". Journal of International Education in Business, 15(2),290-310.

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To help the researcher understand the subject's methods, procedures, and difficulties in learning and mastering the two languages up to this point, the first step of the research was to draft an interview schedule and carefully crafted questions to be asked the subject.

Subsequently, the investigator performed an audio interview over the WhatsApp app. Since the researcher was still studying outside of Madura, the method was used to obtain the data and information the researcher needed despite the great distance between the subject and the researcher. Additionally, because online interviews like these ignore time and distance, the method was used to ensure that the data was collected. The interviews were conducted four times to find more valid information from the research subjects.

The researcher then transcribed the voice notes from the interviews for additional analysis. Data analysis is done when the data has been gathered. Power collecting and data analysis are done concurrently in qualitative research to allow the study to proceed concurrently with data collection and analysis. After reading over the interview transcripts, the researcher made a note of the main themes that appeared.

These themes then helped the researcher in making conclusions. After analyzing the data, the researcher writes the results in a narrative and incorporates them into the research. This whole process is integral to qualitative research methods, which help researchers understand social phenomena, such as strategies, processes, and challenges in mastering a foreign language from the perspective of the research subject.

Result
The Multilingual Process of Learning Foreign Languages

The purpose of this study is to ascertain how multilingual learners acquire Arabic and English, two foreign languages. Multilingual started learning foreign languages when they were still in primary school, according to data that was gathered and examined. This is consistent with the findings from the respondent interviews:

> I have been learning Arabic since I was in elementary school, so I go to school in the morning for elementary school in general and every afternoon I go to Diniah school, where in this Diniah school I started learning Arabic, because the material taught is all in Arabic, starting from reading, writing, and speaking. (Q-S).

Because language acquisition should begin as soon as possible, while the memory is still intact, and because direct instruction is used to teach students, vocabulary acquisition is also part of this process. Vocabulary is, as we all know, a crucial component of language acquisition. Furthermore, learning a foreign language is a procedure that is goal-focused and takes time to master. The following interview responses verify this:

> I learned Arabic first, from elementary school after entering junior high school and living in a boarding school, I began to focus on studying the language, then when I was proficient in Arabic, I began to study English when I entered high school, in grade 3 MA I took a course in Pare in 2005, from 2006 to 2007 I took a course at IPB Teja Barat Pamekasan and only in 2008 I began to actively teach English and in 2011 I also began to actively teach Arabic. (S-Q2)

Since the environment provides support for language learners, it also has an impact on the process of language acquisition. Since all of the learning materials are taken directly from Arabic books, we may conclude that boarding schools are exactly like Arabic. This will help students become proficient in the language. However, even in language courses such as Pare Kediri, which is famous for its English village, it is not

surprising that all those who have taken courses there must have much better language skills than before the course there, one of the factors that cause it is a supportive environment and practice done by learners.

Learning Strategies and Maintaining Foreign Language Acquisition

Language mastery certainly requires a long process and certain strategies to maintain foreign language skills in a person. Like a knife that has not been sharpened for a long time, it will be dull and rusty, as well as someone learns something, but if it is not practiced and does not have a learning strategy for achieving goals, it will not produce the desired results. Based on the results of this study, a multilingual uses several strategies to master Arabic and English including, reading and memorizing vocabulary, because as we know vocabulary is the main key in mastering a language besides that multilingual also watch films in English subtitles but films are in Arabic and vice versa, as well as practice speaking in the two languages. The research respondents correctly explained this:

> I write down Arabic and English vocabulary at the same time, meaning that when I learn a new Arabic vocabulary, I must know the English vocabulary as well, and I watch movies in English with Arabic subtitles, and vice versa. And when I went to campus, I practiced Arabic with friends from the same department, and when I was at home, I practiced English with friends who were also studying English. (S-Q3).

After discussing thoroughly about multilingual strategies in the process of acquiring foreign languages, then a multilingual also explains the strategy of maintaining his Arabic and English language skills by utilizing modern technology, such as utilizing social media such as TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram as a supporting medium to improve and maintain his foreign language skills. In addition, a multilingual also uses his activities by teaching Arabic and English, according to his opinion, which also says that by teaching, he can maintain and improve the ability to master the two languages, because by teaching a multilingual can practice all aspects needed in mastering the language, including writing, speaking and listening. A multilingual person is also involved in the creation of instructional books for beginners in Arabic and English, including daily grammar exercises and advice on how to tackle simple TOEFL questions. The following interview findings support this:

> Now I utilize social media such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube to increase my knowledge of foreign languages and train my listening skills by listening to Arabic and English songs. But when I was in college in 2009, things like this did not exist, so I only used my teaching activities to improve and maintain my Arabic and English language skills. (S-Q4)

Based on these findings, mastering a foreign language requires a systematic learning strategy and perseverance. Motivation also plays an important role in achieving one's goals. In addition, from a multilingual point of view in the context of improving foreign language skills, social media also plays an important role and provides its advantages for learners today. With social media, a multilingual can increase knowledge in vocabulary, train to imitate pronunciation, and train listening skills. Teaching is also an option for multilingual to maintain their foreign language skills. To explore his Arabic language skills further, he continues his studies at an international university specializing in Arabic language in Pasuruan, East Java. He plans to study Mandarin as his third foreign language at his age.

Challenges of Multilingualism

There are obstacles in everything, and learning is no different. When learning a foreign language, a multilingual person must deal with a variety of issues. There are many various types of problems, encompassing cognitive, psychological, and social elements. From a social aspect is an unsuitable environment, if you are in an environment that is used to using foreign languages such as the English environment in Pare and an environment that often uses Arabic in Islamic boarding schools, it will support the success and improvement of the ability to master foreign languages, but on the other hand if the environment is not supportive, such as the lack of friends to practice and no longer accustomed to hearing foreign languages, it will also decrease the ability possessed. A multilingual person is encouraged to use learning materials from digital media, such as social media, nonetheless, because the current era is sophisticated. Interviews with respondents yielded the following results:

One of the challenges faced by a foreign language learner is an unsupportive environment so that I do not have friends to practice in foreign languages both Arabic and English. (S-Q5)

Naturally, a multilingual person faces difficulties with grammatical structures in the cognitive context because there are major distinctions between each language, beginning with the letters and how to read and write them. The respondent also expressed this in the following way in his statement:

In learning a foreign language, it is impossible to master both languages 100%, there must be one language that is mastered more than the other, I mastered English faster than Arabic because the word structure in Arabic is very complicated in my opinion. (S-Q6).

From a psychological point of view, a bilingual person should be highly motivated to learn, confident and conscientious in learning and maintaining their foreign language. In addition, a lack of confidence in acquiring new skills can also be triggered by criticism from others who are jealous of other people's skills. The results of the interviews with the respondents are as follows in line with this:

Because Arabic and English are international languages, I study them both. In addition, being an individual must have its own uniqueness, such as mastering many languages, and learning has no limits, anytime and anywhere and never listen to what other people say to focus on your main goal. (S-Q7)

All things considered, this realization offers a fresh perspective on the different obstacles that multilingual learners encounter along the way, encompassing social, psychological, and cognitive elements. However, a multilingual person also needs to be able to overcome these obstacles and find solutions to issues. In summary, it is imperative to overcome every obstacle encountered rather than give up on the circumstances. This is because reaching objectives and succeeding in doing so involves a multifaceted process that involves learning from mistakes and moving forward as long as it is useful.

Discussion

In foreign language learning, of course, it cannot be separated from the things that support and hinder the learning process of an individual. From the perspective of a multilingual who masters two foreign languages, namely Arabic and English. The results show that a multilingual person is motivated by willingness, self-confidence, and how to

overcome the challenges faced. This is also consistent with studies by Kenneth Hyltenstam,[11] who found that multilingual people are highly motivated to acquire new languages. combined with awareness and skill in metalinguistics. In other words, an ability of special talent that individuals possess motivates them to spend a lot of time and energy focusing on that area of talent. So, the combination of ability and motivation drives their development further.

The second component focuses on the methods multilingual people employ to acquire and preserve their foreign language proficiency. One way to get a wide range of language input is to use a variety of media, including songs, movies, and videos.[12] This is compatible with how multilingual people learn, using a variety of tools to support their language acquisition and help them keep up their proficiency in other languages.

The environment has a significant impact on a multilingual learner's process in addition to supporting materials. Foreign language learners have explained that a person's environment has a significant impact on their language proficiency. This is consistent with behavioristic theory, which holds that language proficiency can be attained through repeated habituation activities and environmental engineering in the language acquisition process.[13] Additionally, studies by A'yun et al. have shown that a language's environment has a significant impact on how successful a learner is in mastering the language. Another viewpoint holds that the environment can either help or hinder the process of learning Arabic because, for example, a foreign language learner in an environment where people speak the language will find it easier to understand the language and vice versa.[14]

The next aspect is teaching, which is one of the strategies for maintaining foreign language skills that can be done over a long period. This strategy is very effective for multilinguals in maintaining their skills. According to research by Nisa & Dzulfikri,[15]a multilingual person uses their activities to teach foreign languages as a kind of virtual supervision as a learning strategy. Additionally, a multilingual teacher fosters and advance their knowledge while indirectly imparting their foreign language proficiency to their students. This is consistent with the multilingual person's claim that learning Arabic and English helps him preserve and advance his language skills.

In the context of this research, a multilingual has a long process of acquiring a foreign language both from the strategies used to master and maintain a foreign language to the challenges faced. Every language learner must have their own challenges and have different strategies in the learning process and facing the challenges they experience. Thus, foreign language acquisition involves a complex interaction between personal motivation, learning strategies, and external factors such as the environment and so on.[16] Through understanding foreign language teaching strategies, a multilingual person can maximize their potential and succeed in strengthening and overcoming obstacles in their multilingual journey. With an emphasis on a multilingual perspective, this study makes a significant contribution to our understanding of how individuals might acquire other languages through strategies and challenges encountered during the language learning process.

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Conclusion

The research draws the conclusion that internal elements like drive, self-assurance, constancy, and resolve have a role in multilinguals' ability to acquire a new language. The employment of supplemental materials and practice are two other essential methods for acquiring and preserving foreign language proficiency. The social, psychological, and cognitive elements of multilingualism provide several challenges. Multilingual people, however, handle these difficulties in different ways. We know that each person must have their own unique approach to learning and retaining a foreign language, therefore this discovery is anticipated to serve as a reference for future research on the method, process, and maintenance of multilingualism in foreign language acquisition. Moreover, the current study faced difficulties in obtaining data and information regarding multilingual, therefore, it is highly recommended that future studies take a more thorough and expansive look at multilinguals. Additionally, it is hoped that this study will deepen our knowledge of the strategies, obstacles, and challenges faced by multilingual individuals in their pursuit of second language acquisition.

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