

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS, PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction:

This chapter presents a summary of the conclusions, followed by a number of recommendations pertaining to the learning and teaching of the Arabic language as a second language, particularly in Malaysia. Grammar is a very crucial factor in learning a language, so it is quite difficult to give the actual meaning of the errors that differ at various levels. However, the concept of errors has been discussed at length. The present discussion begins with the findings of the study. Also, the chapter will report on the remedial planning and suggest some methods to improve the level of learning the Arabic language, particularly at IIUM.

6.1 Conclusions

There is enough evidence in the findings of this study for several conclusions to be drawn regarding the learning of syntax in Arabic by some Malay learners. These conclusions are: The Malay learners of Arabic experienced tremendous difficulty in tense form usage. Learners tended to lapse from one tense to another, for instances, from the past to the present and from the present to the past. The study reveals that students also had difficulty in many areas investigated by the study. Here are some explanations of the areas of difficulty the students encountered:

1. The Malay students experience difficulties, when using the Arabic verb. The main difficulty, besides tense usage, was agreement. The agreement errors were obvious in the use of gender, number and person.

2. Other types of difficulties, the Malay students were confronted in using the Arabic verb:
 - a. Verb negation: this is a very problematic area for Malay learners of Arabic. They lacked the skills of how to negate the Arabic verb.
 - b. The learners produced nouns in the place of verbs, and verbs in the place of nouns. Also, they used the root of the word only.
 - c. The use of the verb (to be) **كان** is another problem for Malay learners, omission of the verb when it should have been used and the addition of the verb when not necessary.
3. The subjects of this study made a total of 1062 errors, which were put into 14 categories, giving an average of 53.1 per subject (see table 5.2 *"Frequency of errors in the investigated area"*).
4. Students' interviews confirmed: mother tongue interference, inherent difficulty of the target language and insufficient mastery of syntax were the main sources in causing errors.
5. The grade of errors committed by the students is shown in the following table:

Table 6.1
Errors' Severity (categories of errors)

No.	CATEGORY	TOTAL	PERCENT
1	Past instead of present (TNS1)	416	39.17
2	Agreement gender (Agr G)	95	8.94
3	Agreement number (Agr N)	82	7.72
4	Agreement person (Agr P)	74	6.96
5	Future instead of present	70	6.59
6	Verb instead of noun (V//N)	70	6.59
7	Noun instead of verb (N//V)	63	5.93
8	Verb to be omission (Kana Om)	53	4.99
9	Present instead of past (TNS2)	48	4.51
10	Verb to be addition (Kana Ad)	41	3.86
11	Verb negation (V-Neg)	26	2.44
12	Present instead of future (TNS 4)	18	1.69
13	Past instead of future (TNS 3)	5	0.47
14	Future instead of past (TNS 5)	1	0.09

The table above shows:

- a. The most serious error encounter by Malay students was using the past instead of the present, i.e., (TNS1), making a total of 416 errors.
- b. The least serious error in this rank was using the future instead of the past, probably due to avoidance, or insufficient mastery of Arabic grammar. The same comments could be mentioned in using the past instead of the future.
- c. The rank of errors, using verbs instead of nouns (V//N) and using the future instead of the present tense were fifth and sixth.

The total number of errors committed by students in these two ranks are (70), a percentage of (6.59).

6.1.1 Tense Errors:

Errors in tense form usage are sub-categorized and can be categorized from tense one (TNS1) to tense six (TNS6) as stated in the table below:

Table 6.2

Errors in the Use of Tenses

CODE	CATEGORY	%
TNS 1	Past instead of present	39.17 %
TNS 2	Present instead of past	4.51 %
TNS 3	Past instead of future	0.47 %
TNS 4	Present instead of future	1.69 %
TNS 5	Future instead of past	0.09 %
TNS 6	Future instead of present	6.59 %

This table shows that the students faced difficulties in Arabic language tenses. The total amount of errors in tenses usage is 52.52 %, however, the most serious error, as shown by the table above, is the use of the present. The students committed errors by using the past instead of the present. The least serious error found in the analysis was using the present instead of the future. However, the errors not found in the analysis were the use of the past instead of the future and the future instead of the past. This is most likely due to the differentiation between the two tenses, and the tense marks for the future tense. Also, it could be due to insufficient mastery of syntax, Malay students are not familiar with future tense usage.

6.1.2 Agreement Errors:

Subjects' errors in subject verb agreement (SVA), are found in both the verbal sentence (VSO), plus in the nominal sentence (SVO) were categorized under the following headings:

1. Errors in gender (8.94 %)
2. Errors in number (7.72 %)
3. Errors in person (6.96 %).

The most serious category of errors in this area is gender errors, owing to the interference of the mother tongue BM because there is no inflection of the sentence for gender, however, the data shows Malay students face many difficulties in gender usage, both in the nominal sentence and the verbal sentence.

Verb (to be) errors are distributed as:

1. Verb (to be) (يكون) addition (3.86 %)
2. Verb (to be) (يكون) omission (4.99 %).

The negation of the Arabic verb formed 67 % of errors in tense .The study also shows errors in the use of the verb, instead of the noun, 6.67 %. And the use of the noun instead of the verb 3.75 %.

The distribution of errors, per student, shows that all students confronted impediments in the area investigated. However, this distribution shows that student levels are different. Some students committed fewer errors. This indicates competence in the use of syntax. Students can be classified as good learners, however some students made a lot of errors indicating that these students lack competence in the use of Arabic syntax.

The distribution of errors, per topic, shows a high occurrence of errors in the past tense, 492 (46.3%), compared to the present tense and the future tense, 345 (32.4%), 225 (21.1%) respectively. Thus, Malay learners of Arabic, probably due to the avoidance strategy used the past tense more frequently than other tenses because

the future tense is the most difficult tense to use. This is why a low occurrence of errors is seen in the usage of the future tense.

6.1.3 Sources of the Errors:

With regards to the sources of errors, it is perplexing to ascribe an error to one single source alone. Therefore, the subjects' errors were traced to many sources, namely, mother-tongue interference, inherent difficulty of the Arabic language, overgeneralization and insufficient mastery of syntax. However, learning strategies, teaching techniques, methods of teaching, the model (teacher), and carelessness are considered as minor factors that caused errors in the areas investigated. presented, are some explanations for each category:

6.1.3 (a) Tense Usage:

This type of error is derive from to mother tongue interference, i.e., the influence of the BM on learning the Arabic language. Tense usage has been traced to the inefficient mastery of Arabic syntax because Malay learners cannot distinguish between tenses. The cause of these errors can refer to ineffective learning because the learners could not discern the different forms of the verb.

6.1.3 (b) Agreement Errors:

This type of error is mainly ascribed to the inherent difficulty of the target language. Immense changes must be undertaken to form the correct Arabic verb in a sentence, examine the verb سيكتبون "sayaktubawn," (They will write) the following are the results:

- a. This verb is inflected for the future tense by the prefix letter **س**, which indicates the future tense, as well as the word **سوف**.
- b. The root of the verb is **كتب**, the imperfect form, so one could say the verb is inflected for the present tense, and the letter **ي** 'yaa' shows this inflection.
- c. The inflection of the verb for the number is shown by the letter **واو** 'waaw' as Arab grammarians designate **واو الجماعة** "waaw aljamaa'ah" waaw, denoting union.
- d. The inflection for gender, as well as person, is shown by the required concord between the verb and the unattached, separated pronoun **هم** 'hum' they.

To conclude the verb inflection in Arabic is complex and one needs tremendous amount of exposure to acquire the language, besides superb teaching of Arabic forms of verbs with their inflections for tense, person, number, gender, and other related aspects. Since, BM is a language without any inflections of verbs.

6.1.3 (c) The Use of Verbs Instead of Nouns and Nouns Instead of Verbs:

These types of errors are caused by many reasons, such as carelessness because the Malay learners of Arabic use the root form, which they find easy to remember. Other reasons for these errors are, inadequate exposure to the target language, and insufficient mastery of syntax.

6.1.3 (d) Addition and Omission of Verbs:

These types of errors could be responsible to the insufficient mastery of Arabic syntax, along with inadequate exposure to the target language. The mother tongue influence is another potential cause of errors.

6.1.3 (e) Verb Negation:

Verb negation accompanies the inherent difficulty of the target language, insufficient mastery of the Arabic syntax and inadequate exposure to the target language.

6.2 Remedial Planning:

Prior to discussing the remedial planning arrangements for the treatment, and/or eradication of these grammatical errors which emerged from the written task of the Malay learners of Arabic language, it would be applicable to discuss more or less, crucial points in teaching second languages. Such discussions are to provide Arabic language teachers with important tools for improving their students' ability in writing, and to equip students with adequate tools to avoid errors, besides the objectives of the study stated in chapter one. Therefore, the discussion of this section includes the following:

1. Teaching grammar and errors;
2. Errors correction;
3. Steps in a syllabus design;
4. Pedagogical suggestions in teaching;

6.2. 1 Teaching Grammar and Errors:

Doubtlessly,⁴ there is a correlation between knowing grammar of a certain language and good performance of the target language though there has been a significant shift in foreign language teaching from preventing errors, to learning from errors. In his influential book '*Common Errors in language learning Insights from English*' Gorege (1972:189) says, "It is noteworthy that at the beginning of the sixties the word *error* was associated with *correction*, at the end of *learning*." Therefore, the results of this study may aid teachers and researchers interested in error analysis, or second language acquisition, to predict the types of errors usually committed by Malay learners' of the Arabic language, particularly when using the Arabic verb in verbal sentences, in addition nominal sentences with verbal predicates. On the other hand, there is a close correlation between grammar and language errors, as stated by Langendoen (1970:6) "The entire set of rules governing the properties of sentences in a language." Pooley (1957:104) also elaborates "When we look more closely, we shall find the term grammar covers two main types of language phenomena: changes which occur in the structure of words themselves, and changes which occur in the placing of words into meaningful groups." Nevertheless, this study is more concerned with the second definition of grammar, or as Langendoen (1970:7) puts it " In short, we say that grammar has three components: semantics, syntax, and phonology, and their interrelationship....," again the concern here is syntax. Obviously, grammar means the governing principles of the language; combined with the study and practice of these principles.

6.2.1 (a) Why should We Teach Grammar?

Needless to say, there is an incessant continuous debate in the field of second language learning in teaching grammar principally and teaching grammar to second language learners particularly. Hence, some arguments: Which kind of grammar teaching is best? Harmer (1987:4) says, "Should we just practice using the language and hope that the grammar 'rubs off' on the students...Should we teach grammar at all?" it is quite noticeable that in recent years the emphasis has transferred from the teaching of grammar, some educators think that second language learners shouldn't study grammar; some feel that teaching the grammar of the language does not necessarily help to use the language, Harmer (*ibid.*), and others believe that second language learners should study grammar. In his book '*Teaching English Grammar*' Pooley (1957:103) says "The confusions as to what grammar is and what it may be expected to do have much to do with current dissatisfactions with the teaching of grammar." Grammar will always continue to be the center of our concentration, Alexander (1991:48) delineates "No area of language arouses more passion and debate than grammar." However, the researcher is in support of the latter contention, the teaching of grammar to second language learners because teaching grammar is not for its own sake, as proposed by Alexander (1991). In addition, the acquisition of foreign languages is not in accordance with mother tongue experience there are divers considerations to consider. However, on one hand, there is no conflict between acquisition and learning, and on the other hand, teaching for communication means, as stated by Alexander (1991:49) " Teaching students to do things through language and (I would add!) *Mastering the grammatical structure necessary to achieve that end,*" to echo what Alexander says: (1991:49) "The reason we still have to teach grammar is that we simply cannot avoid it" because it is not an end in itself, it is the

by-product of communication, Alexander (1991). Therefore, in order to improve the teaching and learning of the Arabic language at IIUM Matriculation Center, grammar should be taught.

6.2.1 (b) The Presentation of Grammar in Arabic Courses:

In presenting grammar, Arabic textbooks follow modern foreign language courses in their eagerness to cause students to communicate. In doing so, teaching grammar is negated. Similarly, this is happen in present-day language courses; putting grammar into boxes, as Alexander (1991:51) says:

"Boxes like this, which often pass for 'explanation' in communication-based courses, create more problems than they solve because what is lacking is *information*: their authors erroneously assume that teachers and students can provide what is missing."

6.2.1 (c) Covert and Overt Grammar:

It is a given, that errors are associated with competence in grammar, that is to say grammar-less teaching, will produce difficulty in the target language, conversely, the university students are not comfortable when aware of making mistakes, Alexander (1991). Hence, teaching grammar, not through *explanation* only, as Alexander (1991) sees because this could be useful when the language taught has a strong base in the society. This is definitely not the case for the Arabic language in Malaysia. It is true, teachers observe that different students react differently to various kinds of methodology and techniques (Harmer 1987). Teachers should use many types of methods and techniques because teachers are aware that abundant activities are useful in assorted areas of teaching. However, the terms overt and covert are taken from Harmer (1987). Covert grammar teaching means teaching grammatical facts that are hidden from students, whereas overt grammar teaching means the teacher actually

provides the students with grammatical rules, i.e., the grammatical rules are openly presented.

Harmer (1987:7) says "It is enough to say that grammar teaching of both the overt and the covert kind has a real and an important place in the classroom." Therefore, teaching grammar is something unavoidable in second language learning.

6.3 Correcting Students' Errors:

In the previous section the importance of the grammar teaching in second language learning has been highlighted. Furthermore, in this section another controversial issue will be discussed, with its significant place in second language learning, i.e., the correction of student errors. Needless to say, making errors is an inevitable and necessary part of language learning. Furthermore, correcting students' errors is an important task helping students to discover the system of the language they are learning. Only through the making of errors, and knowing the correct forms of usage, students can develop an understanding of the target language. Hence, many educators believe that if teachers do not correct students' errors, the errors will fossilize and become part of the learners' language. Therefore, in order to present a unmistakable picture of this contradictory area, the following headings are discussed:

1. Errors and usage;
2. What errors to correct?
3. When to correct and when not to?
4. How to correct errors?
5. Effective error correction.

6.3.1 Errors and Usage:

Under the heading of usage and use, as one of the aspects of performance, Widdowson (1978) discusses the production of correct sentences by second language learners. He states, (1978:2) "The learning of a language, then, involves acquiring the ability to compose correct sentences." Also, he makes a distinction between usage and use in the language. According to Widdowson (1978) the ability to compose correct sentences depends upon knowledge of the grammatical rules of the language being learned. Widdowson (1978) further elaborates the process of acquiring the second language, "Knowing a language is often taken to mean having a knowledge of correct usage," but according to Widdowson this knowledge is of slight value of its own, it has to be complemented by knowledge of appropriate use. These two conditions: to know the grammatical principles, and to know the appropriate use, makes the task of the learner difficult and committing errors, i.e., performance correct sentences, is inevitable. Therefore, most linguists agree that making errors is part of learning, as mentioned by Edge (1989). However, the formula, as Edge (1989:1) states, "Most people agree that correction is a part of teaching, and making errors is inevitable it is part of learning." The question as proposed by Edge (1989:1) is "How do the two, of them go together? In other words, teachers should accept errors from students and teachers should correct errors as language teachers, and for the researcher, there is no contradiction between these two tasks.

6.3.2 What Errors to Correct?

The process of absorbing a new language structure takes considerable time. Therefore, teachers cannot, on one hand, expect that simply correcting an error will produce immediate result. Moreover, Broughton et al. (1978) says, the teacher must

treat learners' errors very cautiously. Although, students themselves expect to be corrected, and they would be upset if they were not given feedback (Walz1982). Nonetheless, teachers must be careful in correcting students' errors. In supporting the previous contention, Broughton et al. (1978:139) says:

"Everyone knows the feeling when a piece of written work comes back covered with red ink, and many students complain bitterly of their teacher correcting their speech so often that they no longer dare open their mouth".

This shows the effectiveness of the correction of errors on the students' performance. Teachers need to decide how serious an error is it is a crucial one? Hence, the researcher agrees with Broughton et al (1978:137) that "The more serious the mistake, the higher priority it should have in remedial work." To determine which error is most serious is another difficult task. According to Broughton et al. (1978) an obvious approach is to look at an error in linguistic terms and ascertain what principles are violated. In responding to what errors to be corrected? There seems to be no general agreement among linguists about the error scale of gravity according (Broughton et al. 1978). Moreover, Zarina (1996) tries to specify the areas which should corrected in student production, Zarina (1996:66) says: "There appears to be a consensus among many language educators that correcting three types of errors can be quite useful to second language students." Hendrickson 1978, Haja 1992, and Zarina 1996 agree on three types of errors that should be corrected, these errors are:

1. Errors that significantly impair communication.
2. Errors that posses highly stigmatizing effects on the listener,
3. Errors that occur frequently in students' speech and writing.

The researcher fully agrees with the previously mentioned opinion. Edge (1989:5) elaborates, "It is more important to correct mistakes which affect the meaning of several sentences than to correct small grammatical points inside one sentence." Therefore, one can say, that errors, which are related to overall sentence organization, are more serious ones, as Broughton et al (1978:137) claims, "As a general principal, errors in the overall structure of sentences are more important than errors affecting parts of sentences." In relation to this study, the errors have been classified, "tense errors, disagreement errors, verb-noun misplacement errors, verb to be errors, and verb negation errors," are recurring errors. These errors are found in most of the sentences; therefore, teachers should pay more attention, while dealing with these types of errors.

6.3.3 When to Correct and When Not To?

Opinions vary according to the type of error identified. Some educators believe that teachers should correct students when concentrating on form and not on content. Others, state that teachers should correct content only because accordingly the correction of grammatical errors does not help student avoidance Dulay et al. (1982) et al. For the researcher in addressing the question, When we should deal with the situation? In general, teachers should be careful in correcting students when the emphasis of the activity is on the communication, i.e. during group tasks, pair work, or opinion discussions. If teachers correct students in such activities, teachers devastate student desire in speaking the target language. Hence, teachers correct errors when the communication is affected, so as to develop students' fluency. Consequently, there is no risk in correcting students' written task. However, teachers

should pay attention to encouragement which is just as important as correction, and maybe more.

6.3.4 How to Correct Errors?

Language teachers often emphasize that the correction of errors is important and is inevitable in making teaching effective. Otherwise, errors will fossilize and their reconstruction tends to become a real problem. However, before answering the question "How learners' errors should be corrected?" teachers should discern, as Edge (1989:33) says, "Correction means helping students to become more accurate in their use of the language." Also, it is important to note that not all written work should be corrected, the teacher should encourage students to write because the desire to communicate in the target language is an important issue in second language learning. However, in answering the previous question Edge (1989:64) suggests a few points:

1. Concentrate on the main points of an exercise, one or two types of mistakes in less controlled writing.
2. Give time for self-correction and peer correction and help the students by showing where the mistakes are, and what kind mistakes are made.
3. Collect serious mistakes for correction with the whole class.
4. Respond to the ideas that the students write and use them as a way of encouraging rewriting.

In addition, a teacher can note errors students make and review them at the end of the lesson. In monolingual grouped classes, such as Malay students learning Arabic in this study, most students make the same errors, so it is easy to list of these errors.

6.3.5 Types of Error Corrections:

According to the suggestions in 6.3.4, there are three methods for error correction, the corrections might come from the teacher, the student, or the group i.e., peer correction. Hence, the types of error correction can be classified as:

- a. **Self-correction:** In this type of correction, the teacher does not correct the mistake, but points out the mistake and gives the student the chance to correct.
- b. **Peer correction:** Students may better understand from each other than the teacher, so one can use this in error correction, Broughton et al. (1978:141) explain "It is possible, for instance, for the better students to work with the weaker ones in pairs, and for them to suggest improvement and corrections." Thus, the teacher indicates a mistake made and asks students about the correct answer. However, as Edge (1989:27) says, "The more the students are involved in correction, the more they have to think about the language used in the classroom."
- c. **Teacher correction:** In this type of correction process the teacher provides, or models, the correct form and may ask students to repeat what is uttered by the instructor.

6.3.6 Correction Techniques:

When correcting students errors, or helping students to self correct, there are certain techniques suggested by some educators. Haja (1993:8) in his paper *Towards Effective Error Correction of Written Grammatical Errors* discusses the correction of errors and mentions some techniques how to correct errors. The most important suggestions of his paper are:

1. Indicate in the margin, using codes, the area of error according to its gravity and the extent of the miscommunication.
2. At the end of the student's written work, three items are mentioned:
 - a. The strength of the work is highlighted and praised.
 - b. Areas where improvement and practice are identified.
 - c. Reference is made to suitable books for better understanding, practice, and remedial treatment.

Explaining the mistakes by using the board is part of the techniques, the teacher writes the phrase being practiced, and corrects it on the board.

One can say that there is an agreement about certain opinions, such as should teachers not correct more than necessary? Should the emphasis be on making the students aware of what errors have been committed, what are the causes, and how students can improve their work?

6.3.7 Effective Correction:

Second language teachers and educators are almost of the same opinion about the importance of correcting student errors. However, they do not have the same opinion on the effects of correction on learners' errors. Dulay et al. (1982:263) puts it very clearly "*correction* of grammatical errors does *not* help students avoid them." In contrast, from the researcher own experience in teaching Arabic to university students for ten years, the researchers' found that the corrected errors persist and are repeated regularly. This is one of the reasons for conducting this study. Therefore, one would say, correcting errors will encourage students and motivate them in learning the language. In supporting this statement, research findings, as reported by Dulay et al. (1982), have produced a rather discouraging view of the

effects of correction of learners' errors. Dulay et al. (1982:36) concludes, "...They all come to the conclusion that correction is not a very reliable tool in helping students overcoming errors." Hence, a language teacher should distinguish between correcting errors and the effect of the correction has on overcoming errors. Thus, this study suggests practical steps in designing a syllabus because correcting errors is an applicable tool in dealing with language learning, not with language errors.

6.4 Steps in Syllabus Design:

As mentioned earlier, the classification of errors is based on the linguistic category, thus enabling one to look at the language from students' point of view, Alexander (1991:52) says: "...the information we give about grammar is *informed* by common errors made by learners." Several studies have documented this point; Dulay et al. (1982:147) says, "Curriculum developers have long used the linguistic category to organize language lessons." In this study as many researchers use the linguistics category taxonomy as a reporting tool which organizes the errors collected (Dulay et al. 1982) in order to provide steps in syllabus design. The discussion involves the following points:

1. Syllabus, course, and curriculum.
2. Elements in syllabus design.
3. IIUM language-teaching syllabus.
4. Choosing an integrated syllabus.

6.4.1 Syllabus, Course, and Curriculum:

Usually, the terms *syllabus*, *course*, and *curriculum* have been assigned meanings by users that often overlap (Graves 1996) and intermingle. In language teaching, these

terms refer to the development of a language programme as a course design, whereas, syllabus design generally refers to the procedures, deciding what will be taught in a language programme, Richards et al. (1985). Curriculum refers to an educational programme, which states the purpose, content, and some means of assessing, Richards et al. (1985:94) states, it is "Another term for syllabus." O'Neill (1984) makes a difference between syllabus and curriculum. According to O'Neill, syllabus is the content of the course, the main areas to be covered, whereas, curriculum is the sequence, order and priority the content is arranged. For the researcher, this distinction is clearly acceptable. Meanwhile, in this study curriculum and syllabus are interchangeable.

6.4.2 Elements in Syllabus Design:

Choosing a syllabus, for second language learning, is not an easy task. One needs to consider many alternatives, including the general objectives of teaching the language, the language environment, and the learners' needs. It is well known that a selection of good curriculum materials is an important part of the total instructional process. Increasingly, educators are realizing that the content and quality of curriculum materials influence, not only what students learn, but how well they learn, Gall (1981). According to Littlewood (1991), the discussion about curriculum design may include discussions about:

- a. Aims, objectives,
- b. Content,
- c. Methods, learning activities,
- d. Books, materials,
- e. Assessment and evaluation.

This is in response to the following questions, respectively, Why do we learn and why do we teach? What do we learn and what do we teach? How do we learn and how do we teach? With what resources do we learn and teach? How well do we learn and teach? These points explain the basic elements of curriculum design; the diagram below, *taken from Littelwood (1991) with some modifications* explains these elements:

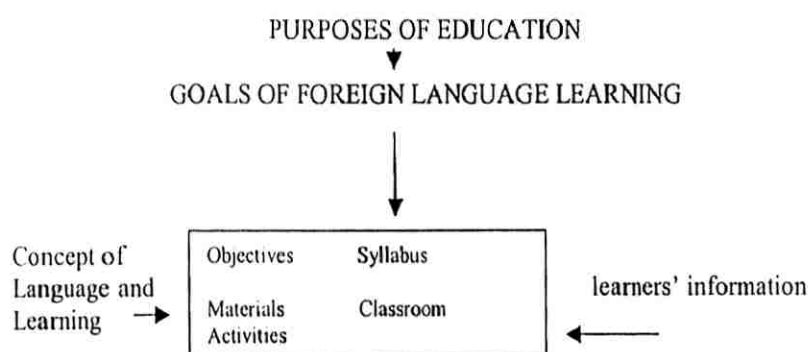


Figure 6.1 *Elements in Syllabus Design*

The figure (6.1) indicates that the starting point in designing a syllabus is the conception of what purposes the teaching should serve. Next, the major task of the curriculum design, is to utilize the four elements in the central box i.e.,

1. Syllabus,
2. Objectives,
3. Materials,
4. Classroom activities.

Being consistent with the goals of learning and what are the learner needs. Obviously, a language-teaching syllabus involves the integration of subject matter

(What to talk about?) and linguistics matters (How to talk about it?); i.e., What makes up teaching? (Tarey, 1988).

6.4.3 IIUM Language-Teaching Syllabus:

Choosing a syllabus is not an easy task, to decide what syllabus to use is another arduous task. However, if one looks at the syllabus of the IIUM Arabic language programme, one will find that the purpose of teaching the Arabic language at IIUM according to the Students' Handbook (1999), is to equip the students with the necessary ability to read Arabic. It is a course geared towards the skills of reading and writing objectively, with more concentration upon the reading skill. The IIUM curriculum aims at enabling students to have easy access to Arabic language references, especially in Islamic studies and Arabic language resources. A skill in which the students are required to extensively develop, to be able to read the heritage source books in the library. Therefore, the objective of this curriculum is to focus on reading and writing skills. In the Matriculation Centre Student Handbook (1998/1999:105), under course description, it is stated "the linguistics systems of the language are presented within an Islamic context in order to familiarise the students with the vocabulary, structures and modes of expression used in Islamic sources and reference books, especially the holy Qur'an and the Hadith." The handbook also highlights the importance of the reading skill *ibid* "although the objective of the course is to enable students to read Islamic sources and reference books, the other skills of the language namely, comprehension of oral Arabic, and writing are also considered important."

The suitable teaching method for these curriculum objectives is the reading approach, or as it is called, the reading method, meaning, "The foreign language is

generally introduced through short passages written with simple vocabulary and structures," Richards et al (1985:307). Unfortunately, the approach adopted by the IIUM in teaching of the Arabic language is neither the structural syllabus, nor the reading approach. It is the communicative approach. This approach emphasizes that the goal of language learning is communicative competence and teaching the language needed to express and understand different kinds of functions, such as requesting, describing, expressing likes and dislikes, etc. Richards et al. (1985). The communicative approach is suitable for a language that contains a suitable language environment, or a language that has a strong basis i.e., strong second language, but not the teaching of the Arabic language with its current status at IIUM. Moreover, this approach has no uniformity with the above curriculum objectives. Therefore, it is plausible to attribute the students' weakness in learning Arabic language to the gap between the university objectives and the teaching approach adopted. The purpose of teaching the Arabic language in IIUM is clear, it is to enable the students to understand the Qur'an, and the Hadith (the prophet Muhammad traditional sayings) and other sources of Islam and religious sciences. In order to achieve these goals, focus must be on language grammar, along with the reading skill, is needed. Needless to say, the approaches of teaching should suit the objectives. Therefore, in order to develop the IIUM Arabic language curriculum, a new design for teaching the Arabic language should be implemented. There are a variety of language teaching syllabus models, which can serve to develop the teaching of the Arabic language in Malaysia.

6.4.4 Choosing an Integrating Syllabus

As mentioned before, choosing a syllabus for second language learning is not an easy task. The choice of a syllabus is a major decision in second language learning

and teaching, and should be made with as much information as possible, Tarey (1988) explains "To design a syllabus is to decide what gets taught and in what order." In response to the above-mentioned facts, this study provides steps in designing a language-teaching syllabus. The study does not claim that these are the only the steps in syllabus design, hence the discussion includes:

- a. Which Syllabus Should be Chosen?
- b. Focus On the Learner,
- c. Syllabus Content,
- d. Sequencing and Grading

6.4.4 (a) Which Syllabus Should We Choose?

The development of a language programme and/or sets of teaching materials and the selection of teaching approaches should be based on the selection of grammatical items and structures. As Richards et al. (1985:358) elaborates, "The order of introducing grammatical items and structures in a structural syllabus may be based on such factors as frequency, difficulty, usefulness, or a combination of these." However, the development of a language-teaching programme could be based on other factors and ideas. This is why there are many language syllabuses, viz. a structural (formal) syllabus, a notional/ functional syllabus, a situational syllabus, and a task-based/ learner-based syllabus...etc. However, though these types of syllabuses are treated differently in education books, in practice these types rarely occur independently of each other (Tarey 1988). Furthermore, these types of the syllabuses are not entirely distinct from each other because language is a relationship between form and meaning, and most instruction emphasizes one, or the other side of this relationship (Tarey 1988). Therefore, in discussion syllabus choice and design, it

should be heeded that the issue is not which type to choose, but which types to choose, and how to relate these types to each other (Tarey 1988). Hence, there is no certain syllabus we should choose.

Nevertheless, definitely teachers should not concentrate on the communication approach only: this is based on the objectives of teaching the Arabic language at the IIUM. However, one may suggest what O'Neill (1984) suggests, the *core syllabus*, which, O'Neill describes (1984:107) as a "minimum 'core' of language which almost all learners should be in touch with, regardless of their different motivations and needs." The contents of a core syllabus, according to O'Neill, includes:

- a. **Key notions**, such as space, time, quality, quantity, moral and ethical concepts, etc.
- b. **Key functions** such as asking for items, expressing opinions, making suggestions, etc.
- c. **Key relations of notions and functions**, usually involving decisions in regards to grammar and syntax.

However, besides the core syllabus, teachers should always remember the objectives of teaching Arabic at the IIUM, meaning teachers should teach grammar and concentrate on vocabulary bases.

6.4.4 (b) Focus on the Learner

This is the second step in preparing a practical language-teaching syllabus. Usually, the main agent in the design procedure is the teacher, or course-writer, but according to Littlewood (1991) this assumption is currently being questioned in several quarters. A recurrent theme in syllabus design discussions is the need to develop the autonomy of the learner (Littlewood 1991). An example of such a conception being put into

practice is the work of Dam (1988), quoted in Littlewood (1991:21), "Who leaves the learners themselves to make decisions about the various elements of the learning process... while the teacher's role is to be involved in the learners' learning process..." However, what is meant by focus on the learner, here, is to define what the students should be able to do as a result of the instruction (Tarey 1988). Alternately, to be open to learners' ideas and suggestions in designing a syllabus according to their needs and to encourage further activities are also considered focusing on the learner. However, the researcher is not in rapport with Dam's approach in designing language syllabuses.

6.4.4 (c) Syllabus Content

In syllabus content, one encounters the question: Which forms of the language should be taught? The answer to this will suggest the course content (Bell 1981). The language forms, which one should include in the syllabus as content, can be determined by various methods, the language performance of the learners, or in other words, the difficulties that learners experience in acquiring the target language, are ways which lead to choosing the contents of a syllabus. The placement of grammar in second language learning is another alternative in building the content, Wilkins (1976:1) states, "Since the learning of a language is most commonly identified with acquiring mastery of its grammatical system and it is not surprising that most courses have a grammatical (or 'structural') pedagogic organization." However, in this study the suggestion is made to organize the content according to linguistic category. Therefore, the common areas of confusion and difficulty investigated in this study forms the basis of the course content, viz. tense errors, disagreement errors, verb-noun misplacement errors, verb to be errors, and verb negation errors.

a. Tense form Errors:

The course should include tense usage, tense shifting, with emphasis in the use of the past instead of the present and the present instead of the past. Arabic verbs should be clearly marked for form tense, so students can easily learn.

The curriculum should expose students extensively to the tense form usage, and several different tasks should be given, to allow the students to practice the language.

b. Disagreement Errors:

Students should learn verb inflection for gender, person, and number, in the verbal sentence, as well as the nominal sentence. The syllabus at each language level should include the inflection of the verb for the agreement. Without teaching the subject-verb agreement there's a great chance students may fail to master the Arabic language.

c. Verb-Noun Misplacement Errors:

Students should learn to distinguish between the verb and the noun as Chapter three "The Arabic Verb" explains in detail. Without knowing the differences between these two important parts of speech, students will encounter difficulties in learning the Arabic language, let alone mastering form tenses. Extensive drills should be mapped out for students, especially in the elementary stages of learning the language.

d. Verb To Be Errors:

Using the verb, to be, with other verbs to show tense form is a complicated area teachers should explain to the students clearly in the syllabus content. Teachers should not expect students to know the elements of the language without illumination from the teacher. The verb, to be, is not used at all in the syllabus to indicate tense; only in the nominal sentence. Therefore, the syllabus content should include the teaching of the verb, to be, with its various functions.

e. Verb Negation Errors:

Students should be taught to negate the verbs of different types of sentences, affirmative, as well as negative. To negate a sentence is a very important language skill, and it is very difficult for IIUM students because the syllabus does not deal with this concept explicitly. Verb negation has a strong relationship with tense form usage, simply shifting the tense as seen before, لم يكتب "He did not write", is the same as كتب "He wrote" in tense. Both sentences are in the past tense, although the verb form is different. However, IIUM students interchange the verb form. Therefore, inclusion of this in the syllabus is highly important.

6.4.4 (d) Sequencing and Grading:

This is the last step in designing a language-teaching programme. As proposed by Bell (1981:53) in his question "Which order should the chosen forms be presented in? This suggests decisions on the *sequencing* and *grading* of the course content." However, sequencing and grading of the syllabus content, for the researcher, is not an easy task. One needs to consider many factors, not only the frequency of the linguistic

category. Therefore, one can say this is not the final grading for the syllabus content.

Hence, one can view grading as:

a. Beginner and Elementary Levels:

Teachers can teach the distinction between verbs and nouns *-(verb-noun misplacement errors)-* as basic groundwork for students in language structure, Harmer (1987:7) explains, "At the beginner level, we would expect to do quite a lot of structure (and function) teaching and practice and less free communicative activities..."

b. Intermediate Levels:

At this level, it is better to teach the *agreement* of verbs with the 'person', i.e., teaching pronouns with inflection for gender. This is in addition to *tense form usage*, with focus on the past tense and the present tense. Here, students should become acquainted with the *verb to be* usage.

c. Advance Levels:

Besides teaching agreement (person, number, and gender), tense form usage (past, present, and future), verb to be usage (addition, and omission), students should know, at this level, the *negation of the verb*.

6.5 Implications of the Study

The findings of this study, as viewed by the researcher, can be implemented in several manners:

1. The illumination given in the teaching of grammar.
2. Strategies for correcting students' errors.
3. Designing of Arabic courses dependant upon the results of this study.

The study proves the occurrence of various errors, with assumed causes, for Malay learners of the Arabic language. These errors, and causes, need the attention of Arabic teachers besides course designers.

The use of tense forms, as shown in the analysis of the study, signals the most frequent category of misuse, as such there should be more concentration on teaching and learning in a suitable context.

Disagreement errors were also found to be one of the difficult areas that learners had in their learning. Hence, greater attention should be paid to the phenomenon of subject –verb agreement in both nominal sentences, as well as verbal sentences, and teachers should teach both the nominal sentence, as well as the verbal sentence.

These various agreements (VSO) for verbal sentences and (SVO) for nominal sentences and their agreement of gender, person, number, as shown in the previous analysis, needs to be practiced and taught in relevant contexts and situations. The study also discloses other various verbs confusion such as:

- a. Verb negation.
- b. Verb, to be, addition.
- c. Verb, to be, omission.
- d. Usage of the verb instead of the noun and vice versa.

Hence, teacher, and course designers on one hand, should note these areas of complexity and give learners appropriate drills to eradicate, or lessen the causes of these errors and by planning remedial courses that focus on the treatment of these errors.

Furthermore, the students require proper practice on the above- mentioned areas of learning difficulties, in order to be well exposed to the target language.

Needless to say, there is important need on the part of language teachers, as well as course designers, to take into account these errors in teaching activities and in designing courses for Malay learners of the Arabic language.

In light of the above-mentioned remarks and taking into account the steps of designing a syllabus given in this study, there maybe a need for a total re-design of the Arabic language curriculum at IIUM in terms of:

- a. Materials, and methodology adopted by the IIUM teachers.
- b. Strategies of the learners.
- c. Error correction, and grammar teaching.
- d. Other matters relating to teaching of the Arabic language.

Knowledge obtained from this study, in addition form other studies completed in the field, one can say that overcoming the difficulties of learning the Arabic language can be accomplished.

Hence, the designing of suitable courses to deal with Arabic syntactic errors, and difficulties Malay learners encounter in the Arabic language, i.e., Arabic verb inflections, has been revealed in the study. Moreover, the specification of goals and objectives of the course has helped in determining the contents of the course. Subsequently, the requirements of course contents, for the framework of the present

study, have been determined in student difficulties in tense form usage, subject –verb agreement and verb negation, etc. represents the course contents.

6.6 Pedagogical Suggestions in Teaching the Arabic Language

If teachers, of the Arabic language, are aware of these types of errors commonly committed by the Malay language learners, teachers should use innovative teaching techniques and assign more class work, aiming at solving student language problems with syntax usage.

The suggestions in this study, if taken seriously, would enable teachers to plan their activities in such a way that the causes of these syntactic errors to be eliminated. Therefore, teachers must look into these problematic areas to reduce undesirable results.

The learners' recognition of the causes of their errors can help to overcome these errors because of the insight for self-correction and automatically avoid these errors. According to learners', the following opinions help in overcoming problematic areas:

1. If teachers speak slowly in the classroom.
2. If teachers choose suitable words.
3. If teachers adhere to the language rules.

The uses of these techniques facilitate easiness for students to master the Arabic grammar.

The need for more diffusion in syntax and grammar should be introduced in the in-service and pre-service teacher training programmes, to sufficiently train Arabic language teachers to gain command of syntax and reduce the numbers of possible errors because a well trained, and well skilled teacher, is better than one not well trained.

Contrastive analysis is very useful at the explanatory stage of error analysis. Therefore, one cannot ignore learners' errors, which stem from the use of L1. Also, teachers should find ways in obtaining use from the contrastive analysis approach. Statistics show, there is a percentage value of different errors, which shows an insight into the relative significance of a given error. Hence, a course based on the frequency of errors will help the teacher emphasize those areas where errors frequently occur. Needless to say, errors in this study show some *systematicity* as Corder (1973) claims. Therefore, teachers should teach the items of syntax where learners have the most difficulty.

In the error classification process, some errors were found to be systematic and therefore significant, while others could not be classified at all. Some grammatical items, such as the use of the past instead of the present, and agreement gender errors are bound to occur in all linguistics statements, while others, such as the use of the future instead of the past, rarely appeared. Thus, this study makes no claim to completeness of this problem.

6.7 Recommendations for Further Research

To conclude, the findings of this study conclusively show that studies and research in teaching and learning the Arabic language by Malay learners is vital. Therefore, the opportunity of further research is unlimited. Here, the researcher recommends the following points to pursue:

1. Knowledge that the explanation of the causes of errors is a complex phenomenon in second language learning and more approaches should be combined to counter the difficulties of such causes.

2. A contrastive study between BM and Arabic language is needed in several aspects of language differences.
3. Arabic syntactic errors, as analyzed in this study, call for maximum attention from teachers, educators and courses designers.
4. Research, on other aspects of Arabic syntactic categories should be employed, in order to broaden the areas of possible learning difficulties that impede the learning and teaching of Arabic and to design appropriate syllabi and test constructions for the treatment of those learning difficulties.
5. The study of the theories of second language writing should be carried out to find the most suitable approaches that may improve the teaching and writing as a process and relate these approaches to the scope of the Arabic language.
6. The present study is a cross-sectional type, there should be longitudinal research in the Arabic syntax to confirm to the regularities of these errors in order to ascertain whether these errors will persist in the writings of Malay learners of Arabic.
7. A study of Arabic as second language textbook particularly used in Malaysia should be implemented to determine the major syntactic categories used in designing textbooks. Those recognized syntactic categories should be used as constructions to evaluate their learning complexities.

Hopefully, these recommendations may enhance the learning of the Arabic language based on the findings of this study and other studies conducted in this field of learning.