The relationship between social adjustment and practice of second language among non-native speakers of Arabic

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Abstract— The Malaysian government is keen to follow up their students learning within the academic and social conditions of the country of their studies and provide help to these students to face the challenges and stresses of overseas study. This paper aims at identifying some of the variables and the difficulties faced by those students that affect their adjustment and stand in the way of achieving success and academic achievement. It also aims at examining the relationship between social adjustment and practice of Arabic language among Malaysian students at Jordanian universities. The researcher has selected a random sample of 386 Malaysian students who are studying at Jordanian public universities. The results show that Malaysian students do not enjoy a high level of social adjustment; they also achieved a medium level of practice in Arabic language. Furthermore, there is a positive correlation between the social adjustment and practice of Arabic language.

Keywords— Social and academic adjustment, practice, second language

I. Introduction

Malaysia is one of the countries paying most attention to the study and preservation of Arabic language, so it sends a large number of students to study abroad in various fields related to the study of Arabic [14]. It also provides students with the necessary services to adapt and face the challenges and stresses in a different culture, and in a new academic and social climate. The level of students' social adjustment differs according to their personality, social, cultural, demographic, and academic characteristics [22] [16] [28]. A study revealed that the degree of proficiency and practice of language and the academic achievement was the most important predictor of social adjustment level, and both had a strong relationship with the personality of the individual [29]. The scientific study of deliberate practice will enhance our knowledge about how experts optimize performance improvement and motivation through a high level of daily practice they can sustain for days, months, and years [12] [13].

Therefore several researchers proposed the development of social skills, and educating new students on how to establish positive relationships and to communicate with the local community; one way to develop positive relationships is to practice, learn and master the new language [8] [6]. It is also a common mistake for new learners of the second language usually avoid language practice in order to avoid grammatical errors, which results in little benefit of language. Thorndike indicated to trial-and-error method of learning which emphasizes the importance of exercise as a way for learners to master the language and consolidate their language acquisition. [15]

Also Skinner's theory referred to four characteristics of behaviorism: 1) imitation, 2) practice, 3) reinforcement, 4) habit formation, as the most effective methods of learning English for students. The practice enabled them to learn collocations and sequences, to borrow these sequences for productive use, to improve pronunciation, and to develop the habit of attending to details of language in the context of language input. [34]

Based on Skinner's theory of language development, people begin to repeat/practice actions that lead to pleasure and avoid actions that lead to pain. This is called "conditioning." [31]

According to the social learning theory [5] the process of language acquisition is not conscious or organized, but it is a tradition and simulation. For example the children acquire language through exposure to many opportunities to practicing the language with the community around them, and then start learning the origins of language and rules. [1]

So, the practice of Arabic language learners does not depend on the academic side and the atmosphere of learning and teaching in the field of education only, but they are heading to and extend the practices of many and various areas - is exposure to randomly, involvement in the social community, culture and customs, and to participate in different clubs, activities, and follow-up of the media or television. [3]

Thus, Dekeyser [23] emphasizes that practice has a central importance in educational and cognitive psychology. And viewed in terms of second language learning, practice is essential and a driving force to skill acquisition.

Adjustment is an important factor that helps university students to be successful in their studies, particularly those who study overseas. Further explanation of adjustment is a prerequisite for students' progress and academic excellence [29]. Some study [4] [27] [25] revealed that the degree of language proficiency was the most important predictor of

social adjustment level, followed by knowledge of norms and values of the community, and the marital status of students. If the students succeed in getting some knowledge of the language and begin to get around by themselves, they are beginning to open the way into the new cultural environment. Other studies [9] [32] [21] showed that the academic achievement had predicted a good level of adjustment (academic, personal, and

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emotional) and both had a strong relationship with the personality of the individual.

Arthur [17] and Neuliep [18] have emphasized the importance and the necessity of creating a set of procedures, activities and exercise efforts to change daily habits of students, and their attitude towards dealing with other people and adjustment to the new environment. It has been suggested by many researchers [2] [35] that the new intakes arriving in the country of study need some familiarization programs to enable them to adjust to the emerging conditions, as well as intervention of social media, which aims to strengthen relations between the university students, increase their feelings toward the university, and their perceptions about future success at the university.

Furnham [8] and Lin shu [6] also suggested establishing training programs for developing social skills, and educating new students to establish positive relationships and how to communicate with others. These studies are also recommended intensifying these programs for females because they are less involved in social activities than males.

II.   Research design
A. *Participants and sampling*

The population of the study is composed of Malaysian students who are studying in the Jordanian universities. The researchers distributed the questionnaire of social adjustment and questionnaire of practice (second language) to a random sample of 386 students (170 males and 216 females) from the population of the study.

B. *Study's Instrument*

To answer the questions in this study, the researchers used the scale of social adjustment which consists of 23 items. The researcher used the scale of practice of language and distributed both questionnaires in Malay language, the first language in Malaysia.

III.   Results and discussion

The study answers the following three research questions

A. *The first question*

What level of adjustment achieved by Malaysian students in Jordanian universities?

To answer this question, the means and standard deviations of the study sample responses were calculated. See Table I

TABLE I. MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS SCORES ON THE ADJUSTMENT ITEM

rank	no	Item status	Item Content of Social Adjustment Scale due to Domain	M	SD
1	20		I strive to visit tourist spots / historic sites that can make me know Jordan better	4.23	0.87
2	15		I have no problems eating with local friends	4.10	0.80
3	5	Neg.	I feel peaceful when I am with my fellow countrymen	4.04	0.88
4	18		I strive to know the culture and way of life of the local community by visiting areas outside my home base	3.84	0.86
5	22		I attend the activity on religious studies held by the masjid or university	3.65	0.95
6	21		I follow the program of study/activity memorize al Quran	3.62	1.03
7	3		I have a good relationship with my neighbours among the local community	3.61	0.84
8	19		I would like to stay in the same house as my local friends if given the opportunity	3.58	1.09
9	14	Neg.	I find it difficult to find food ingredients here that are standard menu items in my own country	3.56	1.13
10	1		I make an effort to join the local community in whatever conditions they face	3.55	0.89
11	12		I prefer to spend my free time with friends from the local community to increase my life experiences	3.51	0.86
12	4		I achieve satisfaction when participating in activities with local friends/community	3.48	0.93
13	16	Neg.	I prefer spending my free time at my own home rather than outside the house	3.48	1.05
14	2		I find it easy to build friendships with the local people in the area where I live	3.46	0.88
15	13		I have the social freedom allowing me to carry out whatever activities I desire here	3.33	1.06
16	17	Neg.	I find it difficult to find a restaurant that meets my taste	3.23	1.20
17	6	Neg.	I do not participate in part of the social events of the local community because some are not suited to the customs of my country	3.17	1.01
18	7	Neg.	I feel disturbed and unsettled with the neighbours where I stay	3.13	1.11
19	23		I like the recreation activities organized by the university	3.08	1.11
20	10	Neg.	I find it hard to develop a social relationship with the local community	2.94	1.11
21	11	Neg.	I feel confused being in a place with the local people	2.84	1.07
22	8	Neg.	I feel the local community does not like me	2.53	1.16
23	9	Neg.	I feel that the local community looks askance at me	2.51	1.19

From Table I, shown that the level of social adjustment achieved by Malaysian students who are studying in the Jordanian universities is moderate (M = 3.305). With regard to items, we can divide the social adjustment of Malaysian students into levels:

- The high degree in items of: 20, 15, 5 and 18.
- The medium degree in items of: 22, 21, 3, 19, 14, 1, 12, 4, 16, 2, 13, 17, 6, 7, 23, 10, 11, 8 and 9.

B. *The second question*

What is the level of Arabic language practiced by Malaysian students in the Jordanian universities?

To answer this question, the means and standard deviations of the study sample responses were calculated. See Table IV.

TABLE I I. MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS SCORES ON PRACTICE OF SECOND LANGUAGE ITEM

R	no	Item Status	The Practice of Second Language	M	S
1	19		I make an effort to examine and know the meaning of every new word I hear or see	3.97	0.81
2	12		I do not feel awkward speaking in standard Arabic language with the local community although they use the local dialect	3.79	0.95
3	7		I always make an effort to ensure my speech uses the correct grammar	3.73	0.90
4	14		I make an effort to speak with my Arab neighbours and build close social relationships with them	3.72	0.91
5	9		I am committed to using the grammar and standard basic Arabic when speaking and discussing	3.67	0.89
6	8	Neg.	I speak using the local dialect with my Arab friends	3.67	0.95
7	2		I practise Arabic language through my online/electronic social network	3.53	1.00
8	5		I always use the library facilities and borrow Arabic language books	3.48	1.00
9	15		I make efforts to hear/ see Arabic language multimedia materials (CD,VCD,DVD and so forth)	3.46	1.07
10	20		I attend seminars/forums directed at mastery of Arabic language	3.45	1.04
11	6		I watch the Arabic language television programs	3.35	1.10
12	21		I make an effort to use Arabic language in my writing	3.33	1.09
13	11		I try to speak in Arabic language with my fellow countrymen	3.30	1.11
14	13		I take part in text conversations in Arabic language through the online social networks	3.20	1.08
15	17		I write letters and messages to my friends in Arabic language	3.17	1.08
16	16		I make an effort to reduce the use of my native language to the best of my ability	3.08	1.02
17	1		I participate in university sponsored co-curriculum activities to practise my Arabic language	3.11	1.10
18	3		I follow the Arabic language journals and magazines	3.08	1.06
19	18		My hand phone has the Arab-Malay translation application	3.06	1.37
20	4		I read the Arabic language daily newspaper	2.88	1.06
21	10	Neg.	I prefer to sit in the last row in the lecture hall	2.48	1.27

Table shows the mean of Malaysian student practice is 3.39, this refers to the moderate level in the practice of the Arabic language. We also can see that the Malaysian students' degree of practice of Arabic language can be categorized into three levels:

- The high degree practice Arabic language in items of: 19, 12, 7, 14, 9 and 8.
- The medium degree practice of Arabic language in items of: 2, 5, 15, 20, 6, 21, 11, 13, 17, 16, 1, 3, 18, and 4.
- The lowest degree practice Arabic language in items of: 10.

C. *The third question*

Is there a relationship at the significance level α = .05 between the level of social adjustment among the members of the study sample and the level of exercising their second language?

To test whether there is significant level (α = .05) between the level of social dimension among the members of the study sample and the level of exercising their second language, we used chi-square test. See Table I I I

TABLE I I I. CHI- SQUARE TEST THE SIGNIFICANT BETWEEN THE LEVEL OF SOCIAL DIMENSION AMONG THE MEMBERS OF THE STUDY SAMPLE AND THE LEVEL OF EXERCISEING THEIR SECOND LANGUAGE

The Social Dimension	Statistic	Level Of Practicing Second Language			Total
		Low	*Moderate*	*High*	
Low	Count	1	1	0	2
	Expected Count	0.10	1.21	0.69	2
	Adjusted Residual	2.954	-0.308	-1.028	
Moderate	Count	18	219	71	308
	Expected Count	15.16	186.72	106.12	308
	Adjusted Residual	1.664	8.376	-9.369	
High	Count	0	14	62	76
	Expected Count	3.74	46.07	26.19	76
	Adjusted Residual	-2.213	-8.402	9.646	
Total	Count	19	234	133	386
	Expected Count	19	234	133	386
Value	Df		Sig. (2-sided)		
111.575	4		0.000		

Table I I I shows that there is a significant (p < .05) difference between the level of the social dimension among the students in the sample and the level of exercising their second language. This suggests that increased level of exercising the second language among the members of the study sample will increases the level of the social dimension among them.

IV.   Discussion

Data analysis revealed that Malaysian students have moderate level of general social adjustment, but some of the items indicated a high level of adjustment as with tourism related items where, for example item 20 was highest rank and item 18 achieved the fourth rank, while item 22, 21 on religious activities attained fifth and sixth rank respectively.

The research of [7] and [31] indicate that social support and the support coming from friends, self and school play an integral role in determining students' successful adjustment. As for the area of direct interaction with local community and the area of initiative in building social relationships, the results shows that Malaysian students have the desire to interact with the Jordanian people, but they face difficulties in communicating with them. We can look to the answer of items 8 and 9 where the mean values for these two items are 2.53 and 2.51 respectively, Perhaps the reason for this is the different nature and culture. The Malaysians are naturally inclined to simplicity and calmness, besides having low initiative; it proves their timidity [15] [24] while the Jordanian citizens naturally inclined to seriousness.

Regarding the second question of practice, the answers of the students in practice of second language field show that the level of the general student's participation was medium, but we see from Table 1 that the practice of reading (item 19) received the highest mean value (3.97); maybe it is because Arabic pronunciation and spelling is similar to Malaysian traditional Jawi script, so it is easy for Malaysian students to read.

As for the items related to their use of formal Arabic (12, 7 and 9), the mean of these items received high values as follows: (3.79), (3.73) and (3.67) respectively. These results prove that the Malaysian students pay attention to using formal Arabic in the environment of Jordanian society where the local people use the colloquial Arabic language rather than the formal Arabic language. Consequently, the Malaysian students face a serious problem which is the mixing of their learning of formal Arabic with the colloquial Arabic language.

Also, the result indicates that the degree of practicing the Arabic language among the Malaysian students was limited and confined to the traditional aspects whether at the academic or social level. It is essential for students in the time of technology and development to exploit those means which provide them with opportunities to participate in speaking Arabic, whether the language is written or spoken [33]. The reading and self-reading that is not scheduled within the curriculum are very important and the students must devote enough time for this kind of practice; it is not less important than reading textbooks and references within the curriculum.

As shown earlier, we can clearly see the relationship between the adjustment and the level of practice of the language in various fields and various disciplines. As the students immersed more in the community, participated and interacted with it, they have the opportunity more and more to practice the language and then learn with proficient as noted in the introduction that the practice is essential to learn the language with proficiency. As the child needs to interact with the surrounding community to acquire language [1], a student also need to practice the language and adapt to the community to be able to learn the language with proficiency [15].

For example, the social adjustment through building a relationship with neighbours is a way to practice the language and talk to them in their own Arabic language. Also, this is similar to the case of the initiative to share activities such as eating and drinking and hiking with friends in the local community. All of them mentioned are essential for the student to practice the language and also possess high skills in speaking. So, the adjustment factor needs to initiative and courage to talk with those around us, even if rolled mistakes, and this is supported by Thorndike's theory of learning by trial and error, and this method is a way of learning. However, if we always fear of error and shame of talking to others to avoid mistakes, then we are going to fail to learn the language and this will be reflected fully at the academic level and classroom interaction and participation during the academic discussion.

Hence, the student's affair division at the university has to provide the necessary services to help students and support them in the case of language and how to communicate with others. In addition, it needs to focus on the guidance of the new students in the first weeks of the enrolment of foreign students to the university since the students facing difficulty in making friends, and interaction and participation with the community.

Furnham and Bochner [8] and Neuliep [18] also suggested to customize a variety of different training programs containing lectures, seminars and programs for social skills training, and the use of modern technologies that help to educate new students and enable them to establish positive relationships and learn how to communicate with others within the new culture they are experiencing.

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