

GENDER AND PERFORMANCE IN ARABIC LANGUAGE LEARNING IN LAGOS

K. O. OLANIYAN-SHOBOWALE¹

Department of Language, Arts and Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Education,
Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos

Tijani Akinola MOGAJI²

Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Arts, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos

¹solalaniyan_2004@yahoo.com*

²mogajitijani@gmail.com

*Corresponding author

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on gender analysis of performance and enrolment for Arabic Language in a selected Arabic school in Lagos State. The study adopted the survey method for choosing the admitted students during the three years between 2014 and 2016. The purposive sampling technique was employed to select Daarul Da'wah wal Irshaad as a case study. The results revealed that the male Arabic students performed significantly better than the female students. Secondly, it indicated that the enrolment of males is far higher than that of females. The study concludes on the need to encourage the womenfolk to cultivate Arabic learning and sensitize them on the wealth of opportunity accruable from learning the language.

Keywords: Arabic language, gender, enrolment, performance, Arabic schools

Introduction

Arabic is a Central Semitic language, and classified alongside other Semitic languages such as Hebrew and Aramaic. It has the largest number of speakers amongst the Semitic languages. It is spoken by more than 280 million people as a first language and by 250 million more as a second language. Most native speakers of Arabic reside in the Middle East and North Africa (Mogaji, 2009, p. 161). The New Encyclopaedia Britannica regards the Arabic language as a Southern-Central Semitic language spoken in a large area including North Africa, most of the Arabian Peninsula and other parts of the Middle East. Arabic is the language of the Qur'an (or Koran the sacred book of Islam) (sic) and is the religious language of all Muslims (Mogaji, 2009).

Arabic, Himyaritic (South Arabic), and Ethiopic belong to the southern group of the Semitic languages, of which Phoenician and Hebrew form the western, Aramaic the northern, and Accadian (Assyro-Babylonian) the eastern group (Hitti, 1972, p. 152; Mogaji, 2009, pp. 161-162). Arabic is a member of the Semitic language family, which is part of a wider Hamito-Semitic family, including also ancient Egyptian within that family; it belongs to the Southern-Semitic or South-West Semitic branch, which includes two further sub-groups: South Arabian (comprising ancient Sabaeen, Minaean, Katabanian, Hadramitic, etc in Yaman and Southern Hadramawt and modern Mehri, Sh Khauri etc in Northern Hadramawt and the language of the Island of Sokotra (Gibb, Kramers, Levi-Provencal, Schacht, Stern, Lewis, Pellat, Dumont and Savory, 1986, pp. 561-562; Mogaji, 2009).

Hitti contends that Arabic is the best surviving representative of the original Semitic speech, despite the fact that its recorded literature is one of the youngest of the Semitic literatures (1972, p. 152; Mogaji, 2009, pp. 161-162). In addition, it is generally believed to be nearer than any of the rest to the original archetype, the "rsemitisch" (Nicholson, 1985, p. xiv).

Internationally, the significance of Arabic language and its role in communication, education, media, commerce, tourism, diplomacy, technology and sports etc. are widely reported (Oderinde, 2007). Globally, Arabic language functions as the lingua franca of the Arabico-Islamic world. It is the medium of transmission of Islam to all the nooks and crannies of the world.

Hence, it permeated the socio-cultural, economic, political, religious, diplomatic existence of Muslims irrespective of race, culture, educational qualification and socio-economic orientation. Consequently, the language functions as a major international language and medium of communication in all spectra of human relations and inter-relations.

In the south-western part of Nigeria and specifically in Lagos State, Arabic education remains a significant pillar of public and private learning. Thus, Arabic instruction takes place at three different levels, namely, formal and government owned schools, formal and privately owned Muslim schools, and traditional and privately owned Arabic schools.

This paper focuses on the later type of schools (traditional and privately owned). According to Adetona (2017, pp. 8-14), this type of schools "are not guided by any syllabus and the volume of knowledge possessed by the proprietor is what is imparted to the students". They are purposely established for the propagation of the Islamic faith and all sciences. And despite its non-recognition by the government, they continue to flourish in Lagos state and they produce hundreds of male and female graduates yearly.

Review of Literature

The educational research on gender and language learning is germane and researchers continue to offer insights into its development and florescence. Arguably, the research on gender differences originated in the west (Qian, 2015). In the 1920s, the relationship between gender differences and language learning

captured the interest of anthropologists, psychologists and sociologists, who did considerable research on the subject.

In this regard, Burstall, (1975) reported that girls were more scattered in all language testing than boys, in his tracking study of 6,000 French children. In same vein, Boyle's (1987) survey of 490 Hong Kong students about their English learning revealed that girls' English proficiency test scores were significantly higher than boys by nearly ten folds. In the light of these studies, Li, (2005) concludes that woman is superior to man in learning a foreign language. Qian (2015) posits that the advantage which the female gender has on the male gender in language learning is hinged on the following factors:

- i. **Physical factors:** Psychology studies indicated that the partial side of the brain hemisphere of men and women is quite different in the speed of development and level of specialisation. Women's left hemisphere on sexual partial side of sexual function develops earlier and stronger than men's; therefore, they are better than men in terms of language expression. In addition, the biological anatomy of women is far more advanced than that of men. Consequently, women's sound and pronunciation organs develop much earlier than men's. Hence, the female students are good at verbal, hearing and expressional skills. Thus, their verbal expressional ability and auditory perception are stronger than those of boys. He contends further that girls have the advantage of intelligence, which indicates that girls have reason to get higher scores than boys; and
- ii. **Gender differences in IQ:** Intelligence is not a kind of simple ability but the combination of attention, observation, memory, and thinking ability Qian (2015).

A Brief Note on Daarul Da'wah Arabic Institute

Sheikh Mustapha Zuglul Sanusi is the founder of Daarul Da'wah wal Irshaad Arabic School. He was born on 18th August 1937 in Ikirun, Osun State, Nigeria. He obtained his preparatory and primary Arabic education from the Qur'anic School of his father Muhammad Sanusi. Thereafter, at the age of 18, he proceeded to Markaz Ta'lim al-'Arabiyy al-Islamiy, Agege, Lagos where he received his Intermediate stage in Arabic studies (Al-'Idaadiyah) between 1955 and 1959. Upon his graduation, he worked as a teacher in his Alma Mata after which he embarked on an educational voyage to Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Saudi Arabia. In 1965, he was appointed the Principal of the Markaz, and obtained his Diploma in 1967 from the institution.

In 1970, Sheikh Mustapha established Daarul Da'wah wal-Irshaad in Olohunsogo, Mushin, Lagos. The school began with the Primary (Al-Ibtidaaiyyah) and the Intermediate (Al-I'daadiyyah) stages. In 1981, it moved to its permanent site at Isolo, Lagos where the Secondary stage of learning (Al-Thanawiyyah) commenced.

The total population of the school as at the time of this study is 600 students, male (535), and female (65); and there are eight classes from Al-Tahdiiryi (Preparatory) to Al-Thanawiyah altogether. In the 4th class (Rabiah Al-I'daadiy), there

are a total of 70 students, 58 males and 12 females. The average performance of the female students is 40%, while it is 60% for the male.

Methodology

This study is a survey research which employed the purposive sampling technique to select Daarul Da'wah wal- Irshaad Arabic Institute, among notable Arabic Institutes in Lagos State. The study provided answers to the following research questions:

- i. What is the enrolment ratio of the female and male students of Daarul Da'wah Arabic institute between 2014 and 2016?
- ii. What is the mean achievement of the male and female students of Daarul Da'wah Arabic Institute in Arabic language between 2014 and 2016?

Against these research questions, 2 null hypotheses were also tested thus:

- i. There are no gender-based significant differences in the enrolment for Arabic studies at the DDI between 2014 and 2016.
- ii. There are no gender-based significant difference in the academic achievement at the DDI between 2014 and 2016.

Having obtained with necessary permission, primary data were collected from the institution management which comprised the number of students admitted between 2014 and 2016. Similarly, the academic performance of the same students was also collected for analysis. Frequency counts and t-test statistical tools were used to analyse data collected.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Students' enrolment and students' sex cross tabulation (2014) count

Students' Enrolment	Grouping Variables		Total
	Male	Female	
Tahdiriy	45	10	55
Awwal I'daadiy	80	10	90
Thanni I'daadiy	89	11	100
Thaalith I'daadiy	90	10	100
Rabi'ah I'daadiy	80	10	90
Awwal Thanawiy	81	9	90
Thanni Thanawiy	81	9	90
Thaalith Thanawiy	81	9	90
Total	627	78	705

(Source: Field Survey, 2014)

Table 1 shows the sex distribution of each class in 2014. This indicates that Thanniy and Thaalith I'daadiy are the most populated classes with 100 students. In addition, it indicates that the male students are the majority (627). There were only 78 female students out of 705 students.

Table 2
Students' enrolment and students' sex cross tabulation (2015) count

Students' Enrolment	Grouping Variables		Total
	Male	Female	
Tahdiriy	46	9	55
Awwal l'daadiy	85	15	100
Thanni l'daadiy	91	9	100
Thaalith l'daadiy	85	15	100
Rabi'ah l'daadiy	79	11	90
Awwal Thanawiy	77	8	85
Thanni Thanawiy	77	8	85
Thaalith Thanawiy	77	8	85
Total	617	83	700

(Source: Field survey, 2015)

Table 2 shows the sex distribution of each class in 2015. This indicates that Awwal l'daadiy, Thanni l'daadiy and Thanni l'daadiy are the most populated class with 100 students. Furthermore, it implies that, the male students are the majority (617) and there were only 83 females out of 700 students.

Table 3
Students' enrolment and students' sex cross tabulation (2016) count

Students' Enrolment	Grouping Variables		Total
	Male	Female	
Tahdiriy	53	12	65
Awwal l'daadiy	81	19	100
Thanni l'daadiy	80	20	100
Thaalith l'daadiy	87	8	95
Rabi'ah l'daadiy	85	10	95
Awwal Thanawiy	78	7	85
Thanni Thanawiy	72	8	80
Thaalith Thanawiy	72	8	80
Total	608	92	700

(Source: Field Survey, 2016)

Table 3 shows the sex distribution of students in 2016. This indicates that Awwal l'daadiy and Thanni l'daadiy are the most populated class with 100 students. It indicates further that, the males are the majority (608), while there were only 92 females.

Hypothesis One

H₀: There is no significant difference between the enrolment for Arabic Studies among male and female students of Daarul Da'wah Wal-Irshaad Arabic Institute, Isolo, Lagos.

H_i: There is a significant difference between the enrolment for Arabic Studies among male and female students of Daarul Da'wah Wal-Irshaad Arabic Institute, Isolo, Lagos.

2014 enrolment.

Table 4
t-test on enrolment of male and female students

Grouping Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Male	627	271.50	153.410	5.614
Female	78	39.40	21.083	2.433

Table 4 shows that the male students are more with higher mean of 271.50 than the females with a lower mean of 39.40. The significance of the experimental group performance is tested and presented in Table 5.

Table 5
t-test for hypothesis One

	t-test for Equality of Means						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Students' Enrolment							
Equal variance assumed	11.569	703	.000	232.100	15.307	189.814	258.186

Assumption = Equal variances assumed
 T- Test Calculated (Statistic) = 12.869
 Degree of freedom = 703
 Level of significance = 0.05
 Returned p-value= 0.000

The *t*-test statistics was calculated as 11.569, at 0.05 significance level, with 703 degrees of freedom, the returned *p*-value of 0.000 was found less than the level of significance ($p < 0.05$). There is a significant difference between the enrolment for Arabic Studies among male and female students of Daarul Da'wah Wal-Irshaad Arabic Institute, Isolo, Lagos. This indicates that the male students who enroll for Arabic Studies in 2014 are more than the females.

2015 enrolment.

Table 6
t-test on enrolment of male and female students in 2015

Grouping Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Students' Enrolment				
Male	617	281.50	151.410	6.614
Female	83	41.30	21.083	2.533

Table 6 shows that the males are more with higher mean of 281.50 than the females with a lower mean of 41.30.

Table 7
t-test for hypothesis One

	t-test for Equality of Means						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Students' Enrolment							
Equal variance assumed	14.669	698	.000	240.200	19.407	179.814	268.171

Assumptions = Equal variances assumed
 T-Test Calculated (Statistic) = 12.869
 Degree of freedom = 698
 Level of significance = 0.05
 Returned p-value= 0.000

The *t*-test statistics was calculated as 14.669, at 0.05 significance level, with 698 degrees of freedom, the returned *p*-value of 0.000 was found less than the level of significance ($p < 0.05$). There is a significant difference between the enrolment for Arabic Studies among the male and female students of Daarul Da'wah wal-Irshaad Arabic Institute, Isolo, Lagos. This indicates that the male students who enroll for Arabic Studies are more than the females.

2016 enrolment.

Table 8
t-test on enrolment of male and female students

Grouping Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Students' Enrolment				
Male	608	241.10	131.110	5.114
Female	92	43.70	20.183	2.103

Table 8 shows that the male students are more with higher mean of 241.10 than the females with a lower mean of 43.70. The significance of the experimental group performance is tested and presented next.

Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the academic performance of the male and female students of Daarul Da'wah Arabic Institute, Isolo, Lagos in Arabic studies.

2014 academic performance.

Table 9
t-test on performance of male and female students

Grouping Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Students' Performance				
Male	627	9.31	14.211	.697
Female	78	4.52	.503	.058

Table 9 shows that the male students performed better with higher mean score of 9.31 in the Arabic Institute than the females with a lower mean score of 4.52.

Table 10
t-test for hypothesis Two

	t-test for Equality of Means						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Students' Performance Equal variance assumed	2.312	703	.021	4.79	1.532	.331	7.128

Assumptions = Equal variances assumed
 T-Test Calculated (Statistic) = 2.312
 Degree of freedom = 703
 Level of significance = 0.05
 Returned p-value= 0.021

The *t*-test statistics was calculated as 2.312, at 0.05 significance level, with 703 degrees of freedom, the returned *p*-value of 0.021 was found less than the level of significance ($p < 0.05$). Hence, there is a significant difference between the academic performance of the male and female students of Daaruu Da'wah Arabic Institute, Isolo, Lagos in Arabic studies. This indicates that the male students perform significantly better than the females who enroll for Arabic Studies.

2015 academic performance.

Table 11
t-test on performance of male and female students group statistics

Grouping Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Students' Performance				
Male	617	8.71	12.961	.739
Female	83	4.79	.613	.032

Table 11 shows that the male students performed better with higher mean score of 8.71 in the Arabic Institute than the female students with a lower mean score of 4.79.

Table 12
t-test for hypothesis Two

	t-test for Equality of Means						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Students' Performance Equal variance assumed	3.211	698	.012	3.129	1.222	.523	6.312

Assumptions = Equal variances assumed
 T-Test Calculated (Statistic) = 3.211
 Degree of freedom = 698
 Level of significance = 0.05
 Returned p-value= 0.012

The *t*-test statistics (Table 12) was calculated as 3.211 at 0.05 significance level, with 698 degrees of freedom, the returned *p*-value of 0.012 was found less than the level of significance ($p < 0.05$). There is a significant difference between the

academic performance of the male and female students of Daaruu Da'wah Arabic Institute, Isolo, Lagos in Arabic studies. This indicates that the male students perform significantly better than the females who enroll for Arabic Studies.

2016 academic performance.

Table 13

t-test on performance of male and female students group statistics

Grouping Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Students' Performance				
Male	608	7.56	14.121	.978
Female	92	4.12	.754	.074

Table 13 shows that the male students performed better with higher mean score of 7.56 in the Arabic Institute than the females with a lower mean score of 4.12.

Table 14

t-test for hypothesis Two

	t-test for Equality of Means						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Students' Performance Equal variance assumed	2.75	698	.011	3.440	1.323	.323	6.334

Assumptions = Equal variances assumed
 T-Test Calculated (Statistic) = 2.750
 Degree of freedom = 698
 Level of significance = 0.05
 Returned p-value= 0.011

The *t*-test statistics (Table 14) was calculated as 2.75, at 0.05 significance level, with 698 degrees of freedom, the returned *p*-value of 0.011 was found less than the level of significance ($p < 0.05$). There is a significant difference between the academic performance of the male and female students of Daaruu Da'wah Arabic Institute, Isolo, Lagos in Arabic studies. This indicates that the male students perform significantly better than the females who enroll for Arabic Studies.

Conclusion

The male-female enrolment and performance in private formal Arabic schools in Lagos state has been an unexplored area of research and there is a dire need for aggressive research in this area of study. The low level of enrolment for female students in modern formal private schools in Lagos State is unhealthy for balanced education of the teeming womenfolk in Lagos state. There is urgent need to encourage and sensitise the womenfolk on the accruable benefits of embracing Arabic education in the contemporary world and the occupational opportunities which are available to female students of Arabic studies nationally and globally. These include the mass media (both electronic and print), international relations and diplomacy, international trade, commerce and economy, Translation and conference interpreting, international sporting events, and education.

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