

***THE IMPORTANCE OF ARABIC LANGUAGE IN DA'WAH ACTIVITIES:  
A STUDY OF WOMEN IN DA'WAH***

**PENTINGNYA BAHASA ARAB DALAM KEGIATAN DAKWAH:  
KAJIAN PEREMPUAN DALAM DAKWAH**

<https://uia.e-journal.id/alrisalah/article/1768>

DOI: 10.34005/alrisalah.v13i1.1768

Submitted: 20-01-2022

Reviewed: 24-01-2022

Published: 29-01-2022

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**Abstract**

*This paper is on the importance of Arabic language and its usage in Da'awah activities by women in Da'awah in Nigeria. It also discussed how Arabic is used in Da'awah by Muslim women in Nigeria. It explained the mission and vision of Women in Da'awah (WID) and their various approaches to Da'awah that includes encouragement of the use and study of Arabic language. Likewise, the paper discusses the Da'awah activities of the Women in Da'awah and outline most the da'awah activities carried out by the organization. It also deliberates the importance of the use of the language for Da'awah purpose with evidence from the Qur'an and Sunnah. The paper adopted and used descriptive approach combined with content analysis approach. Arabic is a compulsory language. When Islam stretched and came into contact with other civilizations, Arabic acted as a bridge of scholarship through the movement of translation.*

**Keywords:** *Arabic, Importance, Da'wah, Activities, Muslim, Women*

## **Abstrak**

*Makalah ini membahas tentang pentingnya bahasa Arab dan penggunaannya dalam kegiatan Dakwah oleh wanita dalam Dakwah di Nigeria. Dibahas pula bagaimana bahasa Arab digunakan dalam dakwah oleh wanita Muslim di Nigeria. Dijelaskan misi dan visi Women in Dakwah (WID) dan berbagai pendekatan mereka terhadap Dakwah yang mencakup dorongan penggunaan dan studi bahasa Arab. Demikian pula, makalah ini membahas kegiatan Dakwah para Wanita dalam Dakwah dan menguraikan sebagian besar kegiatan dakwah yang dilakukan oleh organisasi tersebut. Hal ini juga membahas pentingnya penggunaan bahasa untuk tujuan Dakwah dengan bukti dari Al-Qur'an dan Sunnah. Makalah ini mengadopsi dan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif yang dikombinasikan dengan pendekatan analisis isi. Bahasa Arab adalah bahasa wajib. Ketika Islam merentang dan bersentuhan dengan peradaban lain, bahasa Arab berperan sebagai jembatan keilmuan melalui gerakan penerjemahan.*

**Kata Kunci:** Arab, Kepentingan, Dakwah, Aktivitas, Muslim, Wanita

### **A. Introduction**

The role of Arabic in the Study and dissemination of the knowledge of Islam as the language of the Noble Book of Allah is not only because of the society where Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), assigned as an Messenger and Prophet is an Arabic speaking society but also because it is capable and worthy to embrace and express eternal and universal divine messages (Fuadah, Muhammad & Ahmad, 2014). Arabic had become the language of more than 22 countries in the Middle East and parts of the African continent, which then became the official language as well as the international language used as the working language of the United Nations, the main factor-besides preserving it in conjunction with the "guarantees and divine protection" the maintenance of the Qur'an is vital plan (the spirit of fighting, impetus) and the religious motivation of Muslims to understand the divine messages and traditions (Sunnah) of the Prophet.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, Muslims find the Arabic language to be elegant, flexible, and highly literary in transmitting various Muslim intellectual works in textual form, both books and manuscripts, which are still subject to the study and inspiration of Islamic thought very valuable.<sup>2</sup>

It is also a fact that military and religious conquests played important role in the diffusion of languages and cultures among diverse groups. For instance, the Islamic movement made

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<sup>1</sup> Fuadah, J., Muhammad, R.A., and Ahmad, F.M.A., (2014). "A Review on Literatures of Zakat Between 2003-2013," *Library Philosophy and Practice* 0, No. 1, 1-10.

<sup>2</sup> Berkey, J.P., (2014). *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education*, USA: Princeton University Press, 5-10.

Arabic the language and culture of people beyond the Arabian Peninsula. In a nutshell, with Islam, Arabic became the dominant language not only among its sister Semitic languages but also in Africa.

Consequently, Arabic became the indigenous language of places nowadays recognized as ‘Arab’ countries in Africa like Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Mauritania, Algeria and Sudan to some extent. It thereby overwhelms the native languages of those countries and others, and also makes heavy linguistic borrowings from Arabic. Hausa, Swahili, Fulfulde and Yoruba are best examples.<sup>3</sup>

Arabic language and Islam reached the Savannah region of West Africa in the 8th century and spread to the part of Northern Nigeria called Kanem-Borno Empire in 1085 C. E. Later, it reached Hausaland and therefore, spread to Yorubaland in the 18th century. From the 16th and 17th centuries, Kano and Katsina were famous centres of learning to which students from the present day Northern States of Nigeria and the Niger Republic came to receive their education. From the early 19th century, Sokoto too became a major focus of learning.<sup>4</sup>

It was established that Arabic education was the first form of education known in Lagos and was also the first form of literacy in the whole of West Africa. The Shuwa Arabs, an ethnic group based in Northern Nigeria, speak no other language besides Arabic. A number of local works have also been compiled in Hausa and Fulfulde by indigenous writers in their native languages using the Arabic script. It was largely during the 19th and early 20th centuries that Arabic education began to enjoy a wide popularity in the Northern States of Nigeria.<sup>5</sup>

Human life can only be religiously and educationally progressive in a society when it is in line with the Islamic *Shari’ah*. A Muslim can only practice Islam as a Divine and Noble religion when he is able to comprehend the meaning of the two sources of Islam; the Qur’an and *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). *Da’awah* serves as one of the most suitable ways of inviting mankind to Islam, as it is one of the major ways of teaching the Muslims the doctrines and ethos of the Holy religion, for the betterment of this life and the hereafter. It is clear that the Qur’an was revealed in Arabic Language; the language of the Messenger of Allah

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<sup>3</sup> Sirajudeen, A.A., (2008). “Background to Arabo-Islamic Culture in Nigeria”. *AL-FIKR: Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*. Ibadan. 21(1).

<sup>4</sup> Tijani, K.F., (2006). “Arabic Language and Information Technologies” in M. A. Muhibbu-din (ed.), *Globalization and Terrorism: The Response of Islamic Scholarship*. The Nigeria Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies (NATAIS) Publication.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

(S.A.W). In this case, therefore, a propagator (*Da'iyah*) needs to be Arabic literate before they can engage in the activities of *Da'awah*.

Women in *Da'awah* (WID) as an Association in Nigeria, was created purposely for different Islamic propagation activities across the nation. It conducts many religious activities for the benefit of women and children. Thus, the necessity for Arabic language in these righteous activities is obvious. This paper discusses the importance of Arabic Language in *Da'awah* activities, with special focus on Women in *Da'awah*. The paper is divided into: an introduction, Definition of *Da'awah*, Brief historical Background of Women in *Da'awah*; The Activities of Women in *Da'awah*; Importance of Arabic Language to Women in *Da'awah* activities, and Conclusion.

## **B. Methods**

The approach used in writing this paper is a literature study approach. Basically the literature study is the same as research in general, but the research data obtained is secondary data using the literature study method. The three steps that the researcher will take in preparing this article include: first, finding and collecting reference sources that are relevant to the theme of this research. Second, several scientific papers that have been collected are then processed and elaborated, in order to comprehensively explain the inter-sections of this article. Third, as the last step, the researcher concludes specifically referring to the title raised in this study, namely the importance of Arabic language in *da'wah* activities.

## **C. Result and Discussion**

### **1. Conceptualizing *Da'awah***

The literal meaning of *Da'awah*: *Da'awah* is an Arabic word with its origin in three roots words, which mean to propagate, to call or to invite; *Da'aa*, past tense, *Yad'uu* present simple tense, *Ud'u* the imperative. Many words with close meaning can also be derived from it, such as: *Du'a'* to implore, to pray, to supplicate as well as demand and appeal, *Daa'iyah* someone who propagates, *Du'aat* plural of *Daa'iyaa* etc (Al Zamakshari 1979). Almighty Allah says In His Glorious Book using the imperative *Ud'u* with the meaning of pray: "Pray humbly to your Lord, Verily, He (Allah) does not like Aggressors" (Qur'an, Surah Al-A'raf:55).

Technical meaning of *Da'awah*: It has two broad applications in this context: The first is with the meaning of Islam as a religion and the Message sent to Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) that is the true call of worship to Allah alone and to be far from polytheism. It is the

comprehensive principle for the behavioural act of mankind as well as the establishment of rights and commandments. The second meaning is the extensive spread of Islam and the message of Allah to the People (Arrawi 1965). In the Qur'an, Almighty Allah says instructing the believers and guiding them to the successful way of calling to the Path of Allah:

*Invite to the way of your Lord with Wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a best way, indeed your Lord is Most Knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is Most Knowing of who is –rightly- guided. (Qur'an, Surah An-Nahl:125).*

Ibn Taimiyah sees *Da'awah* as belief and having trust in Allah, calling to the word of testimony with full identification of good application of the teaching of Islam which includes, consideration of the five compulsory daily Prayers, giving out of *Zakat*, Fasting the month of *Ramadan*, Pilgrimage to the Holy House of Allah, as well as to believe in Allah, His Angel, His Books, His Messengers, Day of Resurrection after death, good and bad destiny and to worship Allah as if you are seeing Him (Ibn Taimiyyah nd). Ahmad Muwaffaq defined *Da'awah* as motivating people over doing good deed and keeping away from evil attitude, by bringing the people out from the darkness of *Kufr* to the Light of Islam (Shukri 1988). As a career, *Da'awah* should be carried out practically and verbally by a knowledgeable and qualified scholar and to be in accordance with the legitimate methods and strategies in line with the circumstances of those to be invited at anytime and anywhere.<sup>6</sup>

In the same vein, Munir Hijab (2004) succinctly stated that the formal meaning of *da'wah* could be identified in two ways: first (teaching the) religion or Islam, its basic elements, facts and values and its legislation. It is, in reality, a complete social system which comprises all facets of human activity and all laws regulating this activity including those that involve the rights of the Lord over his servant. The second identification involves spreading, conveying and inducing or communicating and informing the religion.<sup>7</sup>

Regarding the above definitions of *Da'awah*, it can be understood that calling to the right path in course of teaching and propagation is the target of the word *Da'awah*. It can be clearly seen that this paper refers to *Da'awah* with the specific meaning of teaching people practically and verbally to the light of Islam as a Religion, under the observation of the legitimate method and procedures that suits those to be taught across the country.

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<sup>6</sup> Al-Rahili, Hamud Bn Ahmad Farj, (2004), *Minhaj Alqur'ani Alkarim fi Da'awati Almushrikina Ila Al- Islam*, Madinah, First Edition, Vol. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Munir Hijab, 2004.

## 2. Brief Historical Background of Women in *Da'awah* (WID)

“Women in *Da'awah*” (WID) is an umbrella body of Muslim Women Organizations involved in education, enlightenment, outreach and advocacy on women issues in Nigeria. It was established in 2003 in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja and is a non-profit organization with the overall goal of ensuring the spiritual, moral, economic and psycho-social well-being of members and the entire community. It was registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) on 5 October 2006, and has a well-established and functional seven-member Board of Trustees. The organization has its membership drawn from women from all walks of life especially professionals and grass root women engaged in Islamic propagation and outreach. The head office of the Organization is No. 7, Safi Street, Zone 4, Wuse Abuja. It has grown in the last sixteen years and presently has chapters in eighteen states of Nigeria.<sup>8</sup>

**VISION:** Women in *Da'awah* Association envision a world where women become positive role models through scholarship and moral rejuvenation.<sup>9</sup>

**MISSION:** To propagate the accurate message of Islam in theory and practice through massive re-education and empowerment of women Islamic preachers. To unite women *Da'awah* groups through provision of a strong and efficient structure in Nigeria.<sup>10</sup>

The following names are of the members of its Board of Trustees: Sheikh Muhammad Sulaiman- Chairman, Sheikh Muhammad Bn Uthman, Alhaji Umaru Ibrahim, Alhaji Salisu Garba Muhammad, Mallam Musa Bukar Sani, Mallam Nafiu Baba Ahmed, Hajiya Maryam Idris Othman, Hajiya Zahra’u Umar Idris and Dr. Zainab Shinkafi Bagudu.<sup>11</sup>

## 3. The Activities of Women in *Da'awah* (WID)

Since the establishment of Women in *Da'awah*, most of the active members of the Association have been carrying out so many activities that are in line with the aim and objectives of the body. The activity of Women in *Da'awah* as an Association can be categorized as follows:<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Women in *Da'awah*: An Introduction, (nd), (Manuscript).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

- a. The group organizes lecture/seminars at state and national levels. The group instituted its annual conference series in 2006. The annual conferences seek to further educate its members and equip them to meet the challenges in our constantly changing world. They create a forum for the review of strategies and collaboration for outreach activities. It is also an opportunity to bring together women involved in *Da'awah* activities from various backgrounds to rub minds and share experiences.
- b. It held its first national conference at Kano in June 2006 and has held fourteen (14) successive national conferences in Kaduna (twice), FCT (twice), Borno, Niger, Sokoto, Nasarawa, Jigawa, Zamfara, Katsina, Bauchi, and Kebbi states. The 2019 National Conference was held in Kaduna State.
- c. Women empowerment through skills transfer.
- d. Women and children education. It has schools in most of the eighteen state chapters.
- e. Eminent lecture series where eminent scholars are hosted from within and outside the country.
- f. Citizen engagement and enlightenment on topical issues.
- g. Submission of various Memoranda and participation at National Assembly Public Hearings on issues that have direct impact on women and Muslims in general.
- h. Advocacy on the right of Muslim women to wear *Hijab* (proper Islamic dress).
- i. Establishment of schools and mosques in the FCT and some state chapters.
- j. Conduct of *Tafsir* (commentary on Qur'an) at state chapters. Some members of Women in *Da'awah* use to deliver *Tafsir*, examples of such members include Maijidda Aliyu Harazimi (Kano State Chapter), and Aisha Salihu (Sokoto State Chapter).<sup>13</sup>

#### 4. **The Importance of Arabic Language in Women in *Da'awah* Activities**

Having discussed the activities of women in *Da'awah* and use of Arabic language in Nigeria, it becomes necessary to explain why the knowledge of Arabic is significant for women in *Da'awah* in Muslim Community in Nigeria. Since it is a fact that Muslim women also have certain roles and responsibilities to discharge like their male counterparts as prescribed by Allah, adequate knowledge of Arabic will, therefore, assist them in carrying out such responsibilities.

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<sup>13</sup> Hajiya Maryam Uthman, (2021), National *Amirah*, Women in *Da'awah*, interviewed on 14<sup>th</sup> January, facilitated by *Malama* Fatima Laminu.

The impact of Arabic language on Nigerian Muslim women can also be viewed from *da'awah* activities among women by organizing educational classes. In the first place, they will play a great role in the dissemination of knowledge to their brothers, sisters and even their children. Secondly, they will play there in the field of preaching through poems in both Arabic and local languages. In a nutshell, as soon as women became soundly educated in Arabic language, they will start conducting classes for girls and women, which will help in widening the circle of knowledge among the womenfolk.<sup>14</sup>

Arabic language is the language of the glorious Book of Islam, the Qur'an. It is the tongue of our beloved Prophet, Muhammad (S.A.W). Meanwhile, the two Sacred Sources of Islam: the Qur'an, and the traditions of the messenger of Allah (S.A.W) including the Islamic Jurisprudence and its Sciences are all documented and inscribed in Arabic language. Hence, the good understanding of the Islamic originality of *Shari'ah* depends on an excellent understanding of Arabic as a language.<sup>15</sup>

Almighty Allah mentions of the importance of the Arabic language in His Glorious Book in different Qur'anic verses and in different occasions. In *Suratul Yusuf* Almighty Allah says: "Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an that you may understand" (Yusuf: 2). In another verse Allah says:

*And thus We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an and have diversified therein the warning that perhaps they will avoid –sin- or it would cause them remembrance (Qur'an, Suratul Taha:113).*

In a *Hadith* reported by Ibn Abbas (R.A), the messenger of Allah said:

*I love the Arab for three reasons; because I am Arab, the Qur'an is in Arabic and the Language of the people of Paradise is Arabic (At-Taarai nd).*

Arabic language is very essential for a *Da'iyah*. It is one of the most important tools one need in the course of pursuing a special task that has to do with the *Iman* of those invited or those to teach the instructions of Allah and His Messenger. Some scholars spoke about the importance of Arabic Language in understanding Islam and the Glorious Qur'an. For instance, Imam Mujahid, may Allah have mercy on him, opined that it is not permissible for anyone who believe in Allah and the Day of Resurrection to speak on the Book of Allah if they are not

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<sup>14</sup> Kaura, J.M., (1990). "Emancipation of Women in the Sokoto Caliphate" in A. M. Kani and K. A. Gandi (eds.) *State and Society in the Sokoto Caliphate*. Sokoto: Usmanu Dan Fodiyo University.

<sup>15</sup> Khalid K. Hamid Al-Hazimi, (1424AH), *Al-Athar Al-Tarbawiyah gidirasati Al-Luggah*, Islamic University, Madina, 1st Edition.



familiar with the language of the Arabs. Ibn Qutaibah, may Allah have mercy on him, is of the opinion that there is no one who can comprehend the Qur'an except those who, among other things, understand the language of the Arabs.<sup>16</sup> The importance of Arabic Language in *Da'awah* activities includes the following:

- a. Making the utterance or memorization of the two *Shahadat: Ash-hadu an la ilaha illallah wa Ash-hadu anna Muhammadan Rasulullah*
- b. Practicing *Ibadat*, such as the recitation of the Qur'an
- c. Praying the five compulsory daily prayers
- d. Recitation of the daily *Azkar* and the *Zikr* in general
- e. Supplications to Allah preferably in Arabic Language

In relation to the primary focus of this paper, Women in *Da'awah* is an organization that is basically established for the purpose of enlightening Muslim Women, to enable them acquire the knowledge of their religion, by organizing conferences, seminars and different types of religious and educative gatherings as mentioned above. Arabic as the language of Islamic teachings plays a vital role that has to do with those women carrying out the *Da'wah* activities and those benefiting from the religious activities of the Association.

Nigeria, where the Association of Women in *Da'wah* originated, and is based is a non-Arabic speaking country. One can only understand the Arabic language when one attends any of those Arabic and Islamic Schools established across the nation, where a person can begin to learn how to pronounce the Arabic alphabets, to recognize some of the Arabic words and their meaning, then to be able to read and comprehend Arabic passages. In such environment, a person can only speak in Arabic when one is in the school premises if restricted by the schools administrators by making it compulsory both to the teachers and students of those schools.

In line with the above discussion, it is clear that the importance of Arabic language in Women in *Da'wah* activities can be directed to the propagators (*Du'at*) and those invited or called upon to the way of Allah. The propagators can only pass the teachings of Islam to those they are inviting or teaching when they know and understand Arabic, when they can correctly recite, quote and read the verses and of the Qur'an and the *Hadith* of the Prophet (S.A.W), this

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<sup>16</sup> Yaqub, Tahir Mahmud Muhammad, (2016), "Allugatu Al-Arabiyyah wa makanatuha Al-Ilmiyya fi fahmi Al-Qur'an wa Tafsirih", *Mujallatu Alqismi Al-Arabi*, No.23, University of Punjab, Lahore-Pakistan

will enable them understand the textual meaning of the two sources and explain them to their listeners/audience.

- 1) Learning the correct method of reciting the verses of the Holy Quran.
- 2) Learning the correct way of reciting the *Hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.).
- 3) Performing the *Ibadat* in Arabic where necessary.
- 4) Acquiring the knowledge of Arabic pronunciations of some selected supplications as they were revealed.

#### **D. Conclusion**

In conclusion, after discussing about the importance of Arabic Language in *Da'wah* activities by bringing the literal and technical meaning of *Da'wah*, brief historical background of women in *Da'wah* and its activities as well as the importance of Arabic Language in activities of Women in *Da'wah*. It is discovered that Arabic language is a way of life to the Muslim *Ummah*. True Muslims are those who practice their religious obligations in accordance to the teachings of the two primary sources of Islam. And that the use of Arabic language in *Da'wah* by Muslim women is commendable as it will encourage the younger generation of Muslims to study and understand the language of the Qur'an. And it will go a long way in assisting the in undertaking *Da'wah* activities in the future.

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