Misconceptions on *Ism Al-'Adad Wa Al-Ma'dud* Among Students of Arabic Language in Malaysia

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Abstract - This paper discusses *ism al-'adad wa al-ma'dud* in the teaching and learning of grammar knowledge. The core of discussion revolves around Arabic language educators of various levels in institutions implementing the teaching of grammar knowledge for the topic *ism al-'adad wa al-ma'dud.* A unique and interesting topic, it is frequently mentioned in verses of the Quran and Hadith. The target audience for *ism al-'adad wa al-ma'dud* is students of all levels of education, be it in institutions of higher learning or schools. Educators and students of Arabic language in Malaysia are not native speakers of the language or *ghair al-natiq bi al-'arabiyyah.* On that basis, misconceptions and confusion regarding *ism al- 'adad wa al-ma'dud* are bound to occur, especially among students and involving the issue of gender - *muannath* (feminine) and *muzakkar* (masculine). This paper attempts to uncover the concepts and operations of *ism al-'adad wa al-ma'dud* and the common misconceptions among students.

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I. Introduction

The teaching and learning of Arabic grammar knowledge is highly distinctive compared to other subjects. The obvious difference is that it involves an extensive array of grammatical methods and comprehensive skills. The comprehensiveness of skills in Arabic grammar knowledge comprises eloquent mastery of Arabic Language, profound understanding, strength of memory as well as high creativity. Arabic grammar knowledge also requires vast and deep understanding of a concept in an accurate and holistic manner. All Arabic language teachers must be responsible in maintaining competency in the implementation of the Arabic grammar knowledge teaching and learning process by taking into account the requirements and level of attainment of the students. As such, any grammar knowledge learning problems raised by students should be accepted and handled positively to preserve the beauty and fluency of the Arabic language. Arabic language is the most beautiful and noble language created by Allah Subhanahu

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Wataa'la for mankind. The Quran, which was revealed by Allah Subhanahu Wataa'la through Jibril 'Alaihi al-Salam to Prophet Muhammad Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wasallam, contains a diversity of knowledge involving all aspects of living, including grammar knowledge. It discusses the numerous methods available to be cognizant of the laws that have to be established at the end of every Arabic word, in terms of order which comprise *i'rab* and *bina'*. The scope of discussion regarding grammar knowledge is related to the phrases or words in Arabic language in order to avoid errors in speech and writing (Mustafa 2005). However, grammatical errors in speech and writing tasks are common among students who are nonnative speakers of the language. Many studies have revealed that grammatical errors are made by students of all levels in Malaysia.

II. Studies on Grammatical Errors Among Arabic Language Nonnative Speaking Students in Malaysia

According to Jassem Ali (2000), Malay students learning Arabic Language as a Foreign Language or Second Language face difficulties when learning the four essential skills (*maharat al-'arba'*), namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Among the four skills, writing is alleged to be the most difficult and most susceptible to grammatical errors. Errors in grammar usage largely occur among students. This is based on studies involving grammar application error analyses from various aspects carried out in secondary schools and institutions of higher learning (Muhammad Bakhit 1998; Jassem Ali 2000; Hanizam 2005; Norasmazura 2005). The most frequently made grammatical errors are those referring to gender and quantity, whether pertaining to the *i'rab* marks for gender and quantity, or the formation of phrases and sentences related to the similarities or differences in gender and quantity (Sohair 1990; Bakhit 1998; Jassem 2000). A study carried out by Ashinida (1998) on grammatical errors committed in religious secondary schools found that students usually make mistakes in constructing sentences, especially those involving *al-idafat* and *al-na'at*. Mohd Bakhit (1998), in his analysis on grammatical errors in examinations among Malay students in local institutions

of higher learning found that the mistake often repeated in examinations involving essay writing is *ism al-'adad wa al-ma'dud* besides other grammatical errors.

The grammar topic which Arabic language teachers find the hardest to impart to their students is العدد والمعدود , that is numeral (عدد) and its subject (معدود). This is because the method to determine the gender of عدد is very dependent on the gender of معدود. Sometimes the genders are the same and sometimes they oppose each other (Noorhayati 2009). As such, Arabic grammar teachers are unable to make accurate comparisons between numeral classifiers in Malay language grammar and *al-ᶜadad wa al-maᶜdud* in Arabic grammar as there is no similarity between them. A teacher teaching this topic has to master and understand it well because many students find the *muzakkar* and *muannath* or otherwise known as the masculine and feminine aspects confusing and cannot be likened to numeral classifiers in Malay language (Zabiyyah 2002).

According to Baharuddin Abdullah (2003), the Arabic grammar syntax system is very complex due to changes at the end of a word involving changes to the end vowel or additions. Besides that, there are words which are positioned earlier and later in Quranic verses and reasons for the repetition of certain words. Changes which take place at the end of a word in Arabic language is known as *i'rab* or case. There are various cases, in the form of nominative (*marfuᶜ*), accusative (*mansub*) or genitive (*majrur*). This also applies to *ism al-'adad wa al-ma'dud* which involves various cases, depending on the position of *ism al-'adad wa al-ma'dud* in a sentence.

There are studies stating that *ism al-'adad wa al-ma'dud* is among the most difficult topics in Arabic grammar. Nevertheless, it is undeniably very important. Some researchers have expressed their amazement over the topic as it involves a law that contradicts the norm; feminine is coupled with masculine and vice versa (Mahmud Ramadhan 2007). In addition, there are also cases of feminine and masculine being coupled with their respective gender. As such, Arabic language teachers need to master and possess vast and profound knowledge regarding the concept and operations of *ism al-'adad wa al-ma'dud* to ensure it is effectively conveyed to the students.

III.   The Concept and Operations of *Ism al-'Adad Wa Al-Ma'dud*

ᶜAdad is something that shows quantity, such as one, two, three and so forth. *Maᶜdud*, on the other hand, is a countable item (Dayf 1986). Ahmad (2001) in "*al-Wajiz fi al-nahw wa al-sarf*" defines *al-ᶜadad* as something that shows the quantity of a countable item. In correlation with this, Dayf (1986) states that *ᶜadad* is any noun or adjective showing the quantity of an item or portraying a specific sequence. *ᶜAdad* consists of two sections, namely *ᶜadad asli*, that is واحد اثنان ثلاث أربع خمس

and *ᶜadad tartibi* such as الأول الثاني   الثالث الرابع الخامس and so forth*.* *ᶜ*Adad is also divided into several parts, namely *ᶜadad idafah, ᶜadad murokkab, ᶜadad ᶜataf maᶜtuf* and *ᶜadad ᶜuqud* as follows:

i. In *mufrad* form with the position of *maᶜdud marfᶜut* and *isim ᶜadad* as *naᶜat*. This *isim ᶜadad* is for quantities 1 and 2 (*ᶜadad al-mufrad*). For example:

في الغرفة طفل واحد وطفلة واحدة و خارج الغرفة طفلان اثنان وطفلتان اثنتان

ii. In the form of *idafah* arrangement with the position of *maᶜdud* as *mudaf ilaih* and *isim ᶜadad* as its *mudaf*. This *isim ᶜadad* is for quantities 3 until 10 (*ᶜadad al-mufrad*). For example:

قرأت ثلاث قصصٍ وأربعة كتبٍ

iii. In the form of *mudaf* and *mudaf ilaih* arrangement with the position of *maᶜdud* as *tamyiz*. This *isim ᶜadad* is for quantities 11 until 19 (*ᶜadad al-murakkab*).

ركب الطائرة أحد عشر سائحًا واثنتا عشرة سائحةً
اشترك في الرحلة اثنا عشر طالبًا وإحدى عشرة طالبةً
في الفصل ثلاث عشرة طالبةً وأربعة عشر طالبًا

iv. In the form of *mulhaq jamaᶜ muzakkar salim* with the position of *maᶜdud* as *tamyiz*. This *isim ᶜadad* is for quantities 20 until 90 (*ᶜadad al-ᶜuqud*).

جاء عشرون طالبًا وثلاثون طالبةً
قرأت خمسين كتباً وسبعين مجلةً

v. In the form of *ᶜataf* and *maᶜtuf* arrangement with the position of *maᶜdud* still as *tamyiz*. This *isim ᶜadad* is for quantities 21 until 99 (*ᶜadad al-maᶜtuf*). For example:

في الحقيبة واحد وعشرون كتابا وإحدى وعشرون مجلة
على المكتب تسع وثمانون قصة وخمسة وخمسون كتابا

vi. In *idafat* arrangement with the position of *maᶜdud* as *mudaf ilaih* or possibly a combination of *mudaf* and *mudaf ilaih*. This *isim ᶜadad* is for quantities 100 and above such as:

ومئتان امرأة   جاء مائة رجل
جاء عشرون ألف رجل وخمسون ألف امرأة

In understanding *ism al-ᶜadad wa al-maᶜdud*, there are several concepts which students generally find confusing, especially those involving the functions of the various types of *ᶜadad* and *maᶜdud* (Muhammad Fahmi 2003). Not all quantities are determined by just one regulation, but in general it can be assumed as *tasrif* noun because its *harakat* or end vowel changes according to its *'ikrab* (*ᶜAbdullah ᶜAbbas 1995) as shown in the following Table:

مجرور	منصوب	مرفوع	العدد
• مررت أمام ولدٍ واحدٍ • مررت أمام بنتٍ واحدةٍ • مررت أمام ولدين اثنين • مررت أمام بنتين اثنتين	• رأيت ولداً واحداً • رأيت بنتاً واحدةً • رأيت ولدين اثنين • رأيت بنتين اثنتين	• جاء ولدٌ واحدٌ • جاءت بنتٌ واحدةٌ • جاء ولدان اثنان • جاءت بنتان اثنتان	عدد مفرد من 1- 2
• مررت أمام أحد عشر ولدا • مررت أمام إحدى عشرة بنتا • مررت أمام اثني عشر ولدا • مررت أمام اثنتي عشرة بنتا	• رأيت أحد عشر ولدا • رأيت إحدى عشرة بنتا • رأيت اثني عشر ولدا • رأيت اثنتي عشرة بنتا	• جاء أحد عشر ولدا • جاءت إحدى عشرة بنتا • جاء اثنا عشر ولدا • جاءت اثنتا عشرة بنتا	عدد مركب من 11 - 12
• مررت أمام واحدٍ وعشرين ولدا • مررت أمام واحدةٍ وعشرين بنتا • مررت أمام اثنين وعشرين ولدا • مررت أمام اثنتين وعشرين بنتا • مررت أمام واحد وثلاثين ولدا		• جاء واحد وعشرون ولدا • جاءت واحدة وعشرون بنتا • جاء اثنان وعشرون ولدا • جاءت اثنتان وعشرون بنتا • جاء واحد وثلاثون ولدا • جاءت واحدة وثلاثون بنتا	عدد معطوف من 21- 22 31- 32 حتى 91- 92

Based on the examples above, the numerals for one and two should be the same as the subject in terms of gender and quantity. If the *ᶜadad* is *muzakkar*, then the *maᶜdud* has to be *muzakkar* too. On the same note, if the *ᶜadad* is *muannath,* then the *maᶜdud* has to be *muannath* too (Hamdi, 1998). Fuad Niᶜmah (1973), in his book *Al-Mulakhas fi Al-Qawaᶜid Al-Nahwiyah* also explained that the numerals for one and two should always be the same as the subject in terms of gender and quantity, whether both numerals are in the form of single words (*mufrad*) , phrases (*murakkab*) or combined phrases (*maᶜtuf*).

A vast content knowledge of the *al-'adad wa al-ma'dud* concept, combined with established paedagogical knowledge, enables an Arabic language educator to realise the Arabic language curriculum in order to successfully achieve the aims and objectives outlined. Arabic language educators who possess paedagogical content knowledge of the *al-'adad wa al-ma'dud* concept are capable of handling any misconceptions among students regarding *ism 'adad wa al-ma'dud.*

IV. ANALYSIS ON THE MISCONCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS REGARDING *Ism Al-'Adad Wa Al-Ma'dud*

Wise Arabic language educators are able to identify several forms and causes for errors made by students in *ism 'adad wa al-ma'dud*. A misconception that usually occurs in the learning of *ism 'adad wa al ma'dud* is the concept of *'adad murakkab* (Mahmud Ramadhan 2007). Students are often confused when '*adad murakkab* is involved in the process of constructing relevant *jumlah* or sentences. This is due to them not fully understanding or mastering the concept of *'adad murakkab*. In the teaching and learning process, students will be enlightened that *'adad murakkab* is *'adad* 1 to 9 which is incorporated with quantities عشر or عشرة to produce numbers in teens such as 11, 12, 13 until 19. *'Adad murakkab* also consists of two parts or الجزءان which are opposing in terms of *muzakkar* and *muannath*, except for 11 and 12 whereby both parts are the same from the aspects of *muzakkar* and *muannath* as given below:

واحد + عشر = أحد عشر / واحدة + عشرة = إحدى عشرة / اثنان + عشر = اثنى عشر / اثنتان + عشرة = اثنتا عشرة / ثلاث + عشرة = ثلاث عشرة/ ثلاثة + عشر = ثلاثة عشر until تسع + عشرة = تسع عشرة/ تسعة + عشر = تسعة عشر .

Nevertheless, misconceptions are common among students, especially in the combination of the second part (الجزء الثاني) in *'adad murakkab*. For instance, students often place ثلاث عشر and ثلاث عشرة as vice versa especially when constructing sentences. Errors involving *ma'dud* are also prevalent whereby the *ma'dud* is often wrongly combined with *'adad* in terms of *muzakkar* and *muannath* such as رأيت **ثلاث عشر** ولدا whereas it should be رأيت **ثلاث عشرة** ولدا . Sometimes students are inclined to place the *ma'dud* as *jama'* whereas if the quantity is 11 and above, then the *ma'dud* must be *mufrad* and the case should be *mansub*. The following is an example of *ma'dud mufrad mansub* present in Surah Yusuf, verse 4:

« إذ قال يوسف لأبيه يا أبت إنى رأيت أحد عشر كوكبا والشمس والقمر رأيتهم لي ساجدين »

Which means: (Remember the event) when Prophet Yusuf said to his father: "O father! I saw in my dream eleven stars as well as the sun and the moon; I saw them prostrating themselves before me".

'*Adad* present in the verse is أحد عشر and the *ma'dud* is كوكبا whereby the *ma'dud* is *mufrad* and *mansuf* and the word كوكب is not turned into *jama'* to كواكب although this occurs frequently due to the confusion with *'adad mufrad*, that is quantities 3 until 10.

Besides misconceptions in understanding the concept of *'adad murakkab*, students also tend to make errors in *'adad mufrad* involving quantities 3 until 10. The misconception is when *'adad* contravenes the *ma'dud* from the aspects of *muzakkar* and *muannath* (Nuha 2005). If the *ma'dud* is *muzakkar* then the *'adad* must be *muannath*, for instance 3 boys and 3 girls ثلاثة أولاد و ثلاث بنات. The word أولاد is *jama'* for the word ولد which is a *muzakkar* singular noun and the word بنات is *jama'* for the word بنت which, on the other hand, is a *muannath* singular noun. Meanwhile, the '*adad* is ثلاثة in which it is a *muannath* incorporated with a *muzakkar ma'dud*, that is أولاد. '*Adad* ثلاث is *muzakkar* but it is incorporated with a *muannath ma'dud*, that is بنات . The error frequently committed by students is that when they wish to construct a sentence in the context of *'adad mufrad*, they will first look at the *'adad* to see whether it is *muzakkar* or *muannath*. What they should do when constructing sentences in the form of *tahwil* is to observe the *ma'dud* and ascertain whether the *ma'dud* is *muzakkar* or *muannath*. If the *ma'dud* is *muzakkar*, the *'adad* should be *muannath* and vice versa. Only then can the *ma'dud* be turned into *jama'*.

Various misconceptions arise among students when learning *ism 'adad wa al-ma'dud*. As such, Arabic language educators who are involved in the teaching and learning process of this topic should be more creative and innovative in dispelling misconceptions among students and coming up with practical strategies to overcome them (Nuha 2005). Many researches propose diverse teaching and learning strategies which may cultivate the interest among students to learn grammar knowledge and simultaneously trigger enjoyment in learning a difficult grammar topic (Jassem 'Ali, 2000). The following are several suggestions and recommendations from Arabic language researchers which can be adopted in the teaching of *ism al-'adad wa al-ma'dud*:

i. Create simple analogies using elements from the students' environment and provide many examples other than those given in modules or textbooks, preferably using ICT (Abu Latifah 2005).

ii. Carry out appropriate demonstrations for students by utilising resources available in the classroom (Amir Fakhruddin 2000).

iii. Excerpt verses from the Quran and Hadith which contain *ism al-'adad wa al-ma'dud* besides taking *i'ktibar* from the Quran and Hadith (Baseem Hawamedah 2009)

iv. Initiate conversations between Arabic language educators and students on the topic of *al-'adad wa al-ma'dud* (Zabiyyah 2002).

V. Summary

Arabic language educators imparting knowledge on *ism 'adad wa al-ma'dud* should possess vast content knowledge and topped with paedagogical knowledge. When combined, it is known as paedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Arabic language educators who have profound paedagogical knowledge are capable of attracting the interest of students in learning *ism al-'adad wa al-ma'dud*. Teaching strategies which combine various approaches, methods and techniques, together with creative analogies and adaptation of textbook content according to the environment of the students will pave the way towards the best and most effective teaching methodology.

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