

THE RISE OF INTEREST IN LEARNING ARABIC LANGUAGE IN BUKHARA REGION, UZBEKISTAN: SOCIOLINGUISTIC SURVEY

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Abstract: This article concerns the implementation of the Arabic language in Uzbek society particularly in the area of Bukhara. Nowadays the importance of learning this language is a significant part of the Islamic religion. The introduction of Arabic language teaching in Bukhara reflects a historical legacy dating back to the 9th century when the city became a hub of Islamic culture and education. Despite facing challenges such as a shortage of qualified teachers and teaching materials, this initiative presents significant opportunities for the local community. The ability to speak Arabic not only preserves and promotes Islamic culture and heritage but also opens up academic and professional avenues in fields like Islamic studies, international relations, and business. Moreover, it can enhance Bukhara's global reputation as a center of Islamic learning, attracting students and scholars worldwide. The positive impact extends to economic and social development, fostering cultural exchange and trade with Arabic-speaking countries

Keywords: Arabic language, Bukhara, local Arab people, the preserved form of the language, Madrasah (a place where people acquire knowledge about Muslim culture and learn the Arabic language), language center, mastery level.

Introduction: The Arabic language appeared several centuries ago in the territory of Arabian Peninsula.¹ However, it is widely spoken in the Arabian community living in Central Asia as well, since the Arab ethnic communities distributed all over the globe, especially in Asian countries. Nowadays, people speak Iranian, Afghan, Uzbek, and Tadjik languages in these areas, because the importance of the Arabic language has declined over the period. However, learning and utilizing this language has not disappeared from the nation wholly. There are certain reasons why the Arabic language was widespread in the areas of Central Asia, especially in the territory of Bukhara. The main root of this phenomenon rides on the migration of the Arab communities to Central Asia after the collision of the Sassanian Empire.² In the period of the 8th century Muslim conquerors settled 50,000 Arabic families in the regions of Samarkand, Bukhara, Kashkadarya, and even Afghanistan. Not only people became part of the Uzbek nation but also they brought their religion to the area. Owing to the heavy influence of the Islamic religion the Arabic language soon became the most common language of society. This language was used in literature and science, and also as an important communication tool among locals. Uzbekistan, and particularly the city of Bukhara, has a long-standing reputation as a center for Islamic scholarship. Madrasas (Islamic schools) were established to impart knowledge of the Quran, Hadith, and Islamic sciences, with Arabic as the primary language of instruction. However, during the Soviet period, which lasted from the early 1920s until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Arabic language almost disappeared and many religious institutions, including madrasas, faced significant challenges and changes. Several years after independence this language revived again and certain traditions persist to some extent today, as Islamic education remains an integral part of Uzbekistan's cultural and educational landscape.³

The recent data estimates that 96 percent of the Uzbek population is considered to be in the Muslim religion. The reason behind the widespread learning of the Arabic language lies in the roots of reading and understanding the Holy book Quran⁴. Arabic holds a special significance in Uzbekistan due to its role as the language of the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam. The Qur'anic script is in Arabic, and many Uzbek Muslims learn to read and recite the Qur'an in its original language. This connection to Arabic contributes to a sense of cultural and religious identity among the Uzbek population.

Methods

Two methods used for the data collection: surveys and questionnaires; and individual interviews. Surveys and questionnaires involve asking participants a set of standardized questions to collect quantitative data. It is useful for collecting large

¹ "The Oxford Handbook of Arabic Linguistics" edited by Jonathan Owens

² "The Golden Age of Persia" written by Richard N. Frye in 1975.

³ "Islamic Iran and Central Asia" by Richard N. Frye in 1979.

⁴ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs the most recent statistics collected in January 2022

amounts of data from a diverse group of respondents. With increasing globalization and interconnectedness, interest in learning Arabic has grown in Uzbekistan. Educational institutions, language centers, and online platforms now offer Arabic language courses, catering to individuals seeking to deepen their understanding of the language for academic, cultural, or business purposes. We gathered information from various sources, for example, created online polls specifically for the learners from the internet, and distributed lists of questionnaires to language learning centers. According to the number of online subscribers the number of participants also increased to 1000 people from the Bukhara region.

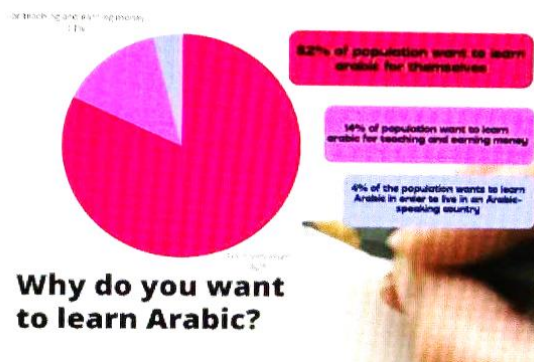
We gave several questions with multiple choices to all participants and calculated their voices. In-depth, one-on-one, with participants, guided by a set of open-ended questions. This is effective for gathering detailed qualitative data, exploring participants' perspectives, and obtaining nuanced insights. There were overall 6 questions and an additional 3 personal questions in our interview. The main aim of the research was to explore the historical connections between Bukhara and Arabic scholarship. These studies also investigated the availability of qualified Arabic language teachers and the potential challenges in developing a relevant curriculum for Arabic studies in Bukhara. We wanted to delve into the practical implications of integrating Arabic language teaching into the existing educational framework of the city. This study also involved consultations with local educators, and students to assess their interest and readiness for Arabic language instruction.

Online questions were given in the online telegram channel which is named “Nisa - school”. [Nisa school](#) is an online education school focused on the development of women in various fields, especially personal growth. Nisa_school organizes various paid and free courses and clubs every month. The average number of followers of this online school is 13,000-15,000 students. Observers are religiously educated and most of them have an intermediate level of Arabic.

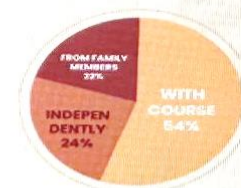
There are questions below:

1. Are there any Arabic language teaching centers in your area? Yes/No
2. Do you know the Arabic language and how did you learn it? Yes, I attended special courses/ Yes, I learned independently/ No I had not chance to learn it yet.
3. What skills have you acquired in the Arabic language? Writing and reading/ reading only/ writing, reading, and speaking/ all four skills.
4. What was your main aim in learning this language? I consider learning this language to be my biggest obligation/In order to teach others/ I want to live in a society where the Arabic language is my first language.

The result of the first research:



HOW YOU LEARNED ARABIC LANGUAGE?



The findings of this study compared with previous studies and existing theories to refine the conceptual framework of the study and determine the process of the Arabic language teaching was conducted in Bukhara in their first language and translated into English language. Two types of research were conducted in this territory. Data collected from online bases showed that a higher proportion of dwellers learned this language while only 29% of them did not have any basic knowledge in Arabic language. The proportion of participants who attended special centers were more than half of the all participants and for other two categories showed almost the same percentages. 47% subscribers knew the language till the basic reading skill and mere 12 % learned it fully with all four skill base. The aim of the almost all participants of learning language was that they considered this language as very crucial for religious purpose.

There was personal interview questions for the students of “Modari Abdulazizxon Madrasah”. All of the participant were women and in different age groups, including adults and older people. Here are the specific questions which are given to them:

1. What is your main aim of learning the Arabic language?
2. What do you think are there any challenges or obstacles in the process of learning it?
3. What opportunities you can obtain if you acquire the Arabic language?
4. Are there any benefits to society implementing high-quality educational centers in Bukhara?

The result of the second research:

When the second group of participants were asked special questions, their answers differed from each other. The participants answered to the question concerning their aim they answered like: “This played a significant role in Islamic scholarship, with many religious texts and academic works being written and studied in Arabic and we consider it as our special obligation.” Another group of people, however, learned

this language for their own benefit as a second communicative language. For the third controversial question about the main obstacle most of them answered like there are not enough teachers and materials in Arabic language at an address close to where they live and sometimes government pose limits to learning it. But there are many special Arabic language learning centers within the city of Bukhara. For example, Misbah or Iqra private training center have different courses tailored to different age groups and students' level of Arabic language proficiency. The biggest opportunity that their knowledge about this language was to go Muslim pilgrimages in Arabic countries, speak with local people in their language and to understand their culture. The basic benefit to the country who implement higher standards in teaching the Arabic language was to build hard bond with other Muslim countries and to give better nurturing to the future generation. For example, most Islamic countries established schools and private language centers specialized in teaching Arabic language which is being extremely beneficial for nations future prospects.

Discussion:

Arabic has had a significant impact on various fields such as religion, literature, and international relations, making it an essential language to learn for individuals interested in these areas. In Bukhara, a city in present-day Uzbekistan, there is a growing interest in the implementation of Arabic language teaching in schools and universities. These detailed types of researches aim to delve deeper into the challenges and opportunities associated with the introduction of Arabic language teaching in Bukhara, as well as the potential impact it could have on the local community.

Bukhara has a rich history of Islamic scholarship and learning, dating back to the 9th century when it became a center of Islamic culture and education. The city includes several madrasahs and mosques and one of the famous ones is [Mir Arab](#). "The 'Qubbatul Islam,' recognized in Bukhara as a symbol of our nation's historical progress and high intellectualism, is closely related to the 500-year-old Mir Arab Madrasa. This madrasa was founded by the renowned scholar Said Abdullokh Yamani with the name Mir Arab during the years 1530-1536, as mentioned by the current leader of the Uzbekistan Muslims administration, Homidjon Ishmatbekov. Over the past five centuries, the madrasa has been a place where numerous students acquired knowledge.

Built with the goal of spreading the light of knowledge in the unique way of Said Abdullokh Yamani, this madrasa has produced many great scholars who have served on the path of enlightenment in both the East and the West. Scholars from this institution have contributed significantly in the lives of Muslims in Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, Russia, the Caucasus, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and other countries.

Graduates of this madrasa, having received education, have returned to their respective countries, dedicating themselves to religious education and fostering virtues. In particular, scholars such as Shahobuddin Marjoni, Galimjon Borudi, Musa Bigiev, Sadriddin Ayni, Abdullojon Kalonzoda, Usto Alihon, Munavvar Qori Abdurashid Khan, Abdulrauf Fitrat, Eshon Bobohon ibn Abdulmazhid Khan, and other esteemed figures received their education in this madrasa.

They, in their time, actively participated in maintaining religious values in the region, resisting against external forces that aimed to undermine the sanctity of our sacred religion. They engaged in spiritual struggles against political conflicts, avoided division into sects, and worked towards expanding the understanding of pure Islamic knowledge, contributing to ensuring peace in their homeland." The Arabic language has always played a significant role in Islamic scholarship, with many religious texts and academic works being written and studied in Arabic. Therefore, the introduction of Arabic language teaching in Bukhara can be seen as a continuation of this historical legacy.

Arabic language teaching in Bukhara is not without its challenges. One of the main obstacles is the lack of qualified teachers who are proficient in Arabic and have the necessary pedagogical skills to teach the language effectively. Furthermore, there is a shortage of suitable teaching materials and resources, making it difficult to develop a comprehensive curriculum for Arabic language instruction. Additionally, there may be resistance from conservative elements within the local community who are opposed to the introduction of Arabic language teaching in schools and universities. Despite these challenges, there are also significant opportunities associated with the implementation of Arabic language teaching in Bukhara. The ability to speak and understand Arabic can open up a wide range of academic and professional opportunities for students, particularly in the fields of Islamic studies, international relations, and business. Moreover, the introduction of Arabic language teaching can help to preserve and promote the rich cultural and historical heritage of Bukhara, reinforcing its identity as a center of Islamic learning.

Arabic language teaching in Bukhara has the potential to have a positive impact on the local community. By providing students with the opportunity to learn Arabic, schools and universities can contribute to the preservation and promotion of Islamic culture and heritage in Bukhara. This, in turn, can enhance the city's reputation as a center of Islamic learning and attract students and scholars from other parts of the world. Furthermore, the ability to speak Arabic can also open up new opportunities for trade and cultural exchange with Arabic-speaking countries, thereby contributing to the economic and social development of the region.

Conclusion

By providing students with the opportunity to learn Arabic, schools and universities can contribute to the preservation and promotion of Islamic culture and heritage in Bukhara, while also opening up new academic and professional opportunities for students. As such, the implementation of Arabic language teaching in Bukhara holds great potential for enhancing the city's reputation as a center of Islamic learning and contributing to its economic and social development. In the context of Bukhara, the implementation of Arabic language teaching in schools and universities calls for careful consideration of educational guidelines and standards. The development of a robust curriculum, training of qualified teachers, and the availability of appropriate teaching. The significance of the Arabic language extends beyond its historical and cultural importance. In today's interconnected world, Arabic has become an important language in international relations and diplomacy. With the Middle East playing a crucial role in global geopolitics and economics, understanding Arabic can provide individuals with valuable insights and opportunities in various professional fields. Additionally, the ability to engage with Arabic-speaking communities can foster better understanding and collaboration, promoting peace and harmony in a multicultural society.

Resource:

1. "The Oxford Handbook of Arabic Linguistics" edited work by Jonathan Owens.
2. The Golden Age of Persia” written by Richard N. Frye published in 1975.
3. “Islamic Iran and Central Asia” by Richard N. Frye published in 1979.
4. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs the most recent statistics collected from the citizens of Uzbekistan in January 2022.