Available online at www.ejal.info
http://dx.doi.org/10.32601/ejal.911524
Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 8(1) (2022) 133-142
EJAL Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics

Benefits of Arabic Vocabulary for Teaching Malay to Persian-speaking University Students

Kazuhito Uni*

Malaysia France Institute
University of Kuala Lumpur
kazuhito.uni@gmail.com

Received 15 February 2022 | Received in revised form 22 March 2022 | Accepted 25 April 2022

APA Citation:
Uni, K. (2022). Benefits of Arabic Vocabulary for Teaching Malay to Persian-speaking University Students. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 8*(1), 133-142.
Doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.32601/ejal.911524

Abstract
Arabic is one of the largest donor languages to Malay and Persian. This study explores the benefits of Arabic vocabulary in teaching Malay words of Arabic origin to Persian-speaking students using a vocabulary survey containing 40 Malay words of Arabic origin, most of which retain phonetic or semantic similarity in Persian. Participants were 20 native Persian-speaking students at a Malaysian university. Page 1 of the questionnaire demonstrated a list of 40 Malay words of Arabic origin and yes/no columns in order to verify participants' prior knowledge. Page 2 demonstrated 40 Malay words followed by their etymologies, including multiple-choice questions in which participants selected the most appropriate meaning. Participants averaged 19.9 correct answers and 17.35 newly learned words. At a 5% level, a significant difference was observed in their scores before and after the explicit demonstration of the word origins ($p = .000$, $t = 20.28$). This study concludes that the proposed method to explicitly present Malay words of Arabic origin and their etymologies assist Persian-speaking students in learning basic Malay vocabulary.

Keywords: Arabic, etymology, Malay, Persian, semantic similarity

Introduction

According to the Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia, more than 100,000 non-Malaysian students have studied at Malaysian tertiary institutions, of which Iranians formed the largest group until around 2015 (approximately 14% of the student body). As per the records of the University of Malaya in 2013, Iranians comprised the largest overseas group (33%) among non-Malaysian postgraduate students. Between 2013 and 2022, the value of rial, Iran's legal currency, decreased to approximately 10% because of economic sanctions by Western countries and social problems in Iran (Katzman, 2022). Apparently, in recent years, the number of Iranians studying in Malaysia also decreased. As the economic situation in Iran is presently improving, Iranian students in Malaysia may again increase in the near future.

English is the primary language used at major Malaysian universities; however, basic proficiency in Malay is crucial for foreigners so that they can communicate with the ethnic majority in Malaysia, the Malay people. Since 2013, international students at Malaysian universities have been required to attend fundamental Malay courses and pass an examination as a requirement for completion of their studies. In recent years, Iranian entrepreneurs have increased in Malaysia (Fereidouni, Masron, Nikbin, & Amiri, 2010). Consisted of various types of compatriots, the Iranian diaspora has enhanced its influence (Bani Kamal & Hossain, 2017). Therefore, Iranians studying in Malaysia need to understand fundamental Malay for daily

* Corresponding Author
E-mail: kazuhito.uni@gmail.com ORCID: orcid.org/0000-0003-3492-6277

communication with Malay people.

Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian are the three major donor languages to Malay and Indonesian (Jones, Grijns, & de Vries, 2007). Basic Malay and Indonesian words of Arabic origin are *alamat* ("address") from the Arabic [ʕala:ma] ("sign, mark"), *isyarat* ("sign") from [iʃa:ra] ("signal"), *syarat* ("condition") from [ʃartˤ], which had an identical meaning, and the Malay *kerusi* (pronounced [krusi]) and its Indonesian variant *kursi* ("chair, seat") from [kursi:], which have the same meaning. The Arabic word [daradʒa] ("degree") was loaned as *darjah* in Malay and *derajat* (pronounced [dradʒat]) in Indonesian; however, Arabic loanwords in the two languages are similar and mutually intelligible. The Malay *dunia* ("world") and *adat* ("custom") stem from the Arabic [dunja:] ("world") and [ʕa:da] ("custom"), and have almost identical meanings in Persian. With this in mind, it is perceivable that it would be possible for Persian-speaking learners of Malay to use their first-language vocabulary knowledge effectively because many Malay and Persian words of Arabic origin still preserve similar meanings.

Historically, most Malays practiced Hinduism and Buddhism before the spread of Islam in the Malay Peninsula. Malay borrowed thousands of Sanskrit words because of the religious and cultural influences of the Ancient Indian subcontinent. For instance, fundamental nouns such as *bahasa* ("language"), *isteri* ("wife"), *suami* ("husband"), *kepala* ("head"), *muka* ("face"), *masa* ("time"), *nama* ("name"), *roti* ("bread"), *rupa* ("form, appearance"), and *warna* ("color") originate from Sanskrit (Jones, Grijns, & de Vries, 2007). Several Malay words including *bahasa* ("language"), *nama* ("name"), and *roti* ("bread") are intelligible to Hindi and Nepali speakers because *bhāṣā* ("language"), *nām* ("name"), and *roṭī* ("bread") are used in both these languages. However, Persian speakers are unfamiliar with these terms because several words in Old Persian that shared origins with their Sanskrit counterparts were replaced with Arabic terms after the Islamization of the Persian people.

The Persian language belongs to the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family. Several basic Persian words are of Indo-European origin, such as *mādor* ("mother"), *barādar* ("brother"), *dokhtar* ("daughter") (*kh* pronounced [x]), and *setāre* ("star"), and are similar to their equivalents in English, which belongs to the same language family. In addition, Malay vocabulary includes several words of Persian origin, such as *anggur* ("grape") from the Persian *angūr* ("grape") and *kismis* ("raisin") from *keshmesh* ("raisin").

However, despite its historical origin, Persian has borrowed countless Arabic words because of the Islamization of the Persian people, thus making it as much a mixed source language as a single source language. The Persian alphabet is a modified Arabic alphabet with several additional consonant letters (IPA: [g], [p], [tʃ], and [ʒ]). Rypka (1968) notes that Persian became "a mixed language, in particular with regard to the manner of speech of the higher classes and the whole of its literature." Persian contains thousands of nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and other parts of speech from Arabic. For instance, frequently used Persian words of Arabic origin are *majalle* ("magazine"), *khabar* ("news"), and *sābūn* ("soap"). Until date, their Malay equivalents retain both phonetic and semantic similarities: *majalah* ("magazine"), *khabar* ("news"), and *sabun* ("soap"), respectively.

Several shared words between Persian and Malay have more pronounced phonetic differences. The Arabic loanword in Persian *masʔale* ("problem") corresponds to the Malay noun *masalah*, which also means "problem." Many Persian words of Arabic origin such as *madrase* ("school") from Arabic [madrasa] have a broader meaning than the Malay loanword *madrasah* ("religious school"), but majority of Malays can guess the primary meaning of many Persian words.

A significant number of Persian verbs are combinations of an Arabic vocabulary item and the original Persian verb *kardan* ("to do") (Mace, 2003). For example, the Arabic adjective *tamām* ("complete") is included in the Persian verb *tamām kardan* ("to finish"). The lexical similarity between Arabic and Persian would help Persian speakers learn Malay and other foreign languages, which share similar vocabularies of Arabic origin.

The present study hypothesizes that presenting Malay words of Arabic origin and their etymologies in Arabic can assist Persian-speaking students in learning Malay vocabulary. Arabic vocabulary would be a significantly beneficial element shared between Malay and Persian. Although Arabic is not the first language of Persian-speaking people, thousands of Persian words of Arabic origin would assist Iranians in learning fundamental Malay vocabulary used in daily communication. This study does not examine grammar and syntax, which are different for each language.

Literature Review

Table 1 shows several Arabic consonants, which are often replaced with another sound in Malay. The Arabic pharyngealized consonants [tˤ], [dˤ], [sˤ], and [ðˤ] evolved into [t], [d], [s], and [z] in both Malay and Persian. For example, the Arabic [tˤaraf] ("utmost part, side") was borrowed as *taraf* ("level") in Malay. Its Persian equivalent is *taraf* ("side, direction"), which is phonetically similar to its Malay counterpart. Long vowels in Arabic words are shortened in Malay. For instance, the Arabic [a:xir] ("last") with a long [a] became

akhir (“end”) with a short [a]. The Arabic voiceless uvular stop [q] as in [qissˁa] (“story, tale”) was modified into [k], as in the Malay *kisah* (“story, tale”).

Table 1. *Arabic Consonants (Above) and their Corresponding Malay Sounds (Bottom)*

[tˁ]	**[dˁ]**	**[sˁ]**	**[ðˁ]**	**[q]**	**[ħ]**	**[θ]**	**[ðˁ]**	**[ʕ]**	**[f]**
[t]	[d]; [l] (in several words)	[s]	[z]; [l] (in several words)	[k]	[h]	[s]	[z]	vowel; [k] in syllable codas	[f]; [p] (in several words)

Moreover, Arabic loanwords are combined with the original Malay circumfix (*ke-* and *-an*) that nominalizes adjectives (Gil, 1994). For example, the Malay *fasih* (“fluent”), which comes from the Arabic adjective [fasˁiːħ] (“fluent”), is also included in the Malay *kefasihan* (“fluency”). Its Arabic equivalent is [fasˁaːħa] (fluency) (Cowan, 1994). The Malay adjective *sabar* (“patient”) and its noun form *kesabaran* (“patience”) originate from the Arabic noun [sˁabr] (“patience”). Original parts of speech of many Arabic words are different from those of their Malay equivalents. Arabic-speaking learners of Malay need to become aware of this confusing feature.

Several studies have investigated Arabic- and Persian-based words in Malay, Indonesian, and Indian languages. For example, Van Dam (2010) discussed phonetic changes in Arabic- or Persian-origin Indonesian words. The majority of Indonesian words, including vocabulary of Arabic and Persian origin, are similar to their Malay counterparts because Indonesian was originally a language variety of Malay spoken in the Dutch East Indies, which has been called Indonesia since 1945 (Sneddon, 2003). Mangrio (2016) investigated the morphological features of Urdu words of Arabic, Persian, or English origin. A major correspondence in the phonetic changes from Arabic concerns the simplification of the Arabic pharyngealized consonant [sˁ] to [s] in Persian, Urdu, and Malay. Moreover, Urdu omitted the voiced pharyngeal fricative [ʕ] in Arabic. Malay evinces a similar phonetic shift except [k] in syllable codes as a replacement of the original consonant.

Although the scope of analysis of the abovementioned studies encompass Arabic and Persian in Malay, Indonesian, Urdu, and several other languages, their findings can scarcely be applied to the teaching of Malay as a foreign language. Uni (2015) examined the benefits of explicitly presenting Malay words of Arabic origin when teaching basic Malay vocabulary to Arabic-speaking university students in Malaysia. The use of Arabic as learners’ first language encouraged Arabic speakers, who successfully became aware of semantic and phonetic similarities between Arabic and Malay. However, most of these studies were not oriented towards Malay vocabulary instruction for Persian speakers.

Uni (2017) suggested that Nepalese workers in Malaysia would benefit from the acquisition of Sanskrit and Arabic vocabulary to facilitate the learning of Malay. A total of 25 Nepalese workers in Malaysia participated in Uni’s vocabulary survey. The Sanskrit-based Malay words listed in that study included *bahagia* (“happy”), *bahasa* (“language”), *cahaya* (“light”), *cuti* (“leave, holiday”), *guru* (“teacher”), *roti* (“bread”) and *suara* (“voice”), while Arabic-based Malay words included *dunia* (“world”), *faedah* (“benefit”), *jawapan* (“reply”), *maaf* (“forgiveness, sorry”), *sabun* (“soap”), *tarikh* (“date”), and *umur* (“age, life”). The participants found it difficult to identify the Nepali counterparts of most of these words. The identification of Arabic-based Malay noun *jawapan* (“reply”) appeared problematic because the original Arabic word *jawāb* (“reply”) and its Nepali counterpart *jawāph* do not comprise *-an*, which functions to change parts of speech in Malay. Explicitly demonstrating Nepali and Malay words of identical origin could efficiently allow most participants to become aware of semantic and phonetic similarities between Nepali and Malay.

Lexical similarities between their L1 and L2 frequently facilitate L2 vocabulary learning if the two languages share similar words of high frequency (Schepens, Dijkstra, Grootjen, & Van Heuven, 2013). Numerous words with the same origins, called cognates, exist among different languages, and many of them retain phonetic and semantic similarities. Ringbom (2007) defined cognates as “historically related, formally similar words, whose meanings may be identical, similar, partly different or, occasionally, even wholly different.” The present study focuses on cognates in Malay and Arabic that share phonetic and semantic similarities, and those that no longer retain either type of congruence will not be discussed hereafter.

Nation (2001) insisted that the use of learners’ L1 in vocabulary tests enable them to learn word meanings. It has often been stated that a learner’s first language is of crucial importance in the processes of second-language acquisition, and many studies have suggested the usefulness of the first language for learning second-language vocabulary (Lubliner & Hiebert, 2011; Ringbom, 2012; Uni, 2019). However, cross-linguistic cognates, which have different meanings need to be carefully taught (Domínguez & Nerlich, 2002).

Sabaté-Carrové and Chesñevar (1998) have explored English and Spanish cognates with different meanings, which sometimes cause mistranslation, but their study categorized such words to decrease problems in translation. Lalor and Kirsner (2001) investigated English and Italian cognates with different meanings to reduce problems in vocabulary learning and demonstrated those cognates with another related word as a pair such as the Italian *estate* (“summer”) and *inverno* (“winter”). Janke and Kolokonte (2015) examined degrees of learnability of several types of cognates, giving a translation task to 58 English-speaking participants learning French cognates with little semantic overlap. Reffle, Gotscharek, Ringlstetter, and Schulz (2009) also proposed a strategy to detect cross-linguistic cognates with different meanings and utilize

them for successful learning. In summary, cognates with certain semantic gap could benefit L2 learning when learners become aware of the difference.

Carroll (1992) emphasized that learners of English and other European languages do not necessarily have a deep knowledge of Latin or Greek as word origins but primarily focus on phonetically and semantically similar pairs of cognates between learners' L1 and L2. There are many studies on cognate learning by Spanish-speaking learners of English. Lubliner and Hiebert (2011), for instance, explored cognates shared by English and Spanish from the Academic Word List and the General Service List, suggesting the benefits of cognates. Dressler, Carlo, Snow, August, and White (2011) compared the use of English cognates by Spanish-speaking students and that of monolingual English speakers. Their study suggests the effectiveness of explicit instruction on cognates to Spanish-speaking learners of English.

Marín and Fernández (2015) also observed a positive effect of using legal English cognates to enhance English vocabulary learning by Spanish college students in Law. Ferré, Sánchez-Casas, Comesaña, and Demestre (2017) also focused on Spanish cognates produced by unbalanced Spanish-English bilinguals and suggested benefits for the enhancement of balanced bilingualism. In addition to Spanish, French also shares thousands of cognates with English. Peeters, Dijkstra, and Grainger (2013) investigated the significance of cognates in English vocabulary instruction for French-speaking learners of English. Hipfner-Boucher, Pasquarella, Chen, and Deacon (2016) focused on reading comprehension tasks on French cognates performed by 81 English-speaking students in a Canadian French immersion class. Their study proposed the significance of the cognate awareness for L2 French reading comprehension among English-speaking French learners.

There are also studies on English vocabulary learning by speakers of Germanic languages, such as Dutch and Swedish. Poort and Rodd (2017) examined the usefulness of phonetically and semantically similar words for Dutch speakers learning English vocabulary. Odlin and Jarvis (2004) highlighted a positive L1 influence on Swedish-speakers' English learning in Finland. Finnish spoken in Finland does not belong to Indo-European languages, but Swedish is a Germanic language. For this reason, Swedish-speaking students in Finland can utilize Swedish cognates for English vocabulary learning. Solak and Cakir (2012) compared the learning of cognate and non-cognate English words by Turkish-speaking students and proposed the utility of the use of cognates between Turkish and English. The aforementioned studies all unequivocally advocated the importance of considering the learners' first language when teaching new foreign language vocabulary.

Methodology

- *Research question*

Can the explicit demonstration of Malay words of Arabic origin and their original Arabic forms assist Persian-speaking university students in learning basic Malay vocabulary?

- *Participants and materials*

The participants in this study comprised 20 native Persian-speaking postgraduate students at a major urban university in Malaysia. All of them were Iranian nationals. A majority of the participants were majoring in engineering or natural science. All of them were beginners in Malay, and had completed a three-week Malay language course offered by the Malaysian university. All participants communicated in Persian with other Iranians and most frequently spoke English with Malaysians and international students from other countries. They were able to introduce themselves in Malay and knew approximately 100 Malay words before they participated in the vocabulary survey of this study. They had very limited opportunities to speak Malay in the campus as all lectures they attended were taught in English. Each participant was asked to answer a simple check sheet about the listed 40 Malay words on Page 1 of the questionnaire. They were next asked to respond to 40 multiple-choice questions listed on Page 2 of the questionnaire. Each participant's number of correct answers and newly learned words were counted, and the means were analyzed using the *t*-test.

- *Research instrument*

A questionnaire survey was adopted to collect data for this study. This multiple-choice vocabulary survey covered 40 Malay words of Arabic origin. The survey did not include basic Malay words of Arabic origin, such as *dunia* ("world," from Arabic [dunja:]) and *takwim* ("calendar," from [taqwi:m]). The questionnaire included a list of 40 Malay words of Arabic origin and yes/no columns in order to verify participants' prior knowledge. If the participants knew the meaning of the words, they checked "Yes" and wrote its meaning in designated parentheses. If they encountered an unknown word, they simply checked "No." Page 2 showed 40 Malay words followed by their Arabic etymologies. It also included multiple-choice questions in which participants selected

the most appropriate meaning of the listed words from four options given. Table 2 and Table 3 present an extract from Page 1 of the questionnaire and examples of questions on Page 2.

Table 2. *Extract from Page 1 of the Questionnaire*

Direction: Do you know the meanings of the following Malay words? Please check "NO" or "YES." If yes, please write the main meaning of the words in the blanks in English or Arabic.			
1.	adat	(NO / YES)	……..
2.	aral	(NO / YES	……..
3.	eja	(NO / YES)	……..
4.	pakat	(NO / YES)	……..
5.	takrif	(NO / YES)	……..
6.	tekad	(NO / YES)	……..
7.	waris	(NO / YES)	……..

Table 3. *Examples of Questions on Page 2 of the Questionnaire*

Direction: Please check the most appropriate meaning of the following words. The origins of the Malay words are written between parentheses.				
adat (**عادة**)	1. tool	2. law	3. history	4. custom
aral (**عرض**)	1. problem	2. issue	3. obstacle	4. enemy
eja (**هجاء**)	1. to note	2. to spell	3. to record	4. to describe
pakat (**موافقة**)	1. agreement	2. alliance	3. similarity	4. closeness
takrif (**تعريف**)	1. definition	2. recognition	3. learned	4. intelligent
tekad (**اعتقاد**)	1. opinion	2. determination	3. idea	4. will
waris (**وريث**)	1. maintenance	2. conservator	3. heir	4. protection

A number of consonants changed from their original forms in Malay. The Arabic consonants [ðˤ] and [dˤ] changed to [l] in several Malay words. Cognate pairs of Arabic and Malay words reflecting this change in this study are Arabic [ðˤa:hir] ("distinct") and Malay *lahir* ("born, birth"), and [ħafiðˤa] ("to protect" or "to memorize") and *hafal* ("to memorize").

The voiced pharyngeal fricative [ʕ] at the end of a syllable in Arabic words corresponds to [k] in Malay. This study's questionnaire survey includes the Malay *dakwa* ("accusation") from Arabic [daʕwa:] ("claim, lawsuit"), *iklan* ("advertisement") from [iʕla:n] ("advertisement"), *makna* ("meaning") from [maʕna:] ("meaning"), and *takrif* ("definition") from [taʕri:f] ("definition"). The voiceless uvular stop [q] in Arabic changed into [k] in Malay, for example, Arabic [ba:qi:] ("remainder") and Malay *baki* ("remainder").

Dental non-sibilant fricatives [θ] and [ð] usually correspond to [s] and [z] in Malay and Persian, respectively. Word pairs reflecting this change in this study are Arabic [wari:θ] ("heir") and Malay *waris* ("heir"), and Arabic [iðn] ("permission") and Malay *izin* ("permission").

Arabic [ʃ] becomes [s] as seen in the Arabic [ʃadʒara] ("trees") and the Malay *sejarah* ("history") and also the Persian *shalvār*/[ʃælvɑ:r] ("trousers," borrowed from Persian to Arabic as [sirwa:l]) and the Malay *seluar* ("trousers"). In addition to changes in sound, some consonants in original Arabic words disappeared. The voiced pharyngeal fricative [ʕ] in Arabic [ʕa:da] ("custom, habit") was lost, resulting in Malay *adat* ("custom"). In Malay, multiple consonants rarely appear in syllable codas. Malay words of Arabic origin thus include additional [a]: Arabic [asˤl] ("origin") becomes Malay *asal* ("origin"), and [sˤabr] ("patience") becomes *sabar* ("patient").

Results

The average of correct answers was 19.9 and average of newly learned words was 17.35 out of 40, respectively. In addition, total number of correct answers was 398 and the total number of newly learned words was 347, respectively. Table 4 shows the numbers of correct answers and newly learned words among the participants. In the tables, participants are labeled P1 through P20. Correlations between the test scores on pages 1 and 2 of the exercise (before and after participants were given the Arabic etymologies) were statistically analyzed, and a significant difference was found (at the 5% level) between performance before and after the presentation of the original Arabic words (p = .000). The t-value was 20.28.

Table 4. *Numbers of Correct Answers (Above) and Newly Learned Words (Bottom) by Persian-speaking Participants (P1, P2…)*

P1	**P2**	**P3**	**P4**	**P5**	**P6**	**P7**	**P8**	**P9**	**P10**
21	20	16	20	21	24	23	23	18	18
21	18	15	20	20	17	19	20	18	13

P11	P12	P13	P14	P15	P16	P17	P18	P19	P20
27	19	20	21	8	15	19	20	21	24
22	16	18	19	6	14	18	18	11	24

Table 5. *Result of* t*-test between Numbers of Words Known before the Test and Numbers of Correct Answers on Page 2*

	Numbers of Words Known before the Etymological Presentation	Numbers of Correct Answers on Page 2
Total	51	398
Mean	2.55 (out of 40)	19.9 (out of 40)
p-value	0.000*	
Df	18	
t-value	20.28	

Table 6 shows the 11 most recognized Malay words. All participants correctly identified the Malay nouns *asal* ("origin"), *makna* ("meaning"), and *sabar* ("patient"), and the letter *k* in the Malay *takrif* ("definition"), which is pronounced [taʕri:f] in Arabic, confused only one participant. *Kuat* ("strong") and *kubur* ("grave"), which originally started from [q], hindered the comprehension of only three respondents. The meaning of *pakat* ("agreement") from Arabic [muwa:faqa] ("agreement") was correctly guessed by 16 participants, and 14 respondents successfully identified the Malay words *adat* ("custom"), *kaum* ("race"), and *mungkin* ("maybe, possible").

Table 6. *Eleven Most Recognized Malay Words*

Malay	Etymologies	Numbers of Correct Answers
asal (origin)	[asˁl] (origin)	20
makna (meaning)	[maʕna:] (meaning)	20
sabar (patient)	[sˁabr] (patient)	20
takrif (definition)	[taʕri:f] (definition)	19
kuat (strong)	[quwwa] (power)	17
kubur (grave)	[qubu:r] (graves; tombs)	16
pakat (agreement)	[muwa:faqa] (agreement)	16
seluar (trousers)	Arabic [sirwa:l] (trousers) Persian *shalvār* [ʃælvɑ:r] (trousers)	16
adat (custom)	[ʕa:da] (custom; habit)	14
kaum (race)	[qawm] (people)	14
mungkin (maybe, possible)	[mumkin] (possible)	14

These 11 most frequently identified Malay words in the vocabulary survey clearly demonstrate semantic and phonetic similarities with their etymological origins in Arabic although difference in parts of speech exists between the Arabic noun [quwwa] ("power") and the Malay adjective *kuat* ("strong"), which has *kekuatan* ("strength") as a derivative. The high degree of similarity appeared to aid the majority of participants to recognize the correct meaning of the listed Malay words.

Table 7 demonstrates the 10 least recognized words. Only one participant correctly answered the meaning of *lahir* ("born, birth"), *kuliah* ("lecture"), *sejarah* ("history"), *rela* ("willing"), *peduli* ("to care"), *tekad* ("determination"), and *aral* ("obstacle"). The Malay *lahir* ("born, birth"), *rela* ("willing"), *peduli* ("to care"), and *aral* ("obstacle") all contain an [l], which does not exist in their etymologies, and therefore, may have been a major impediment to the participants' understanding. For the Malay *kuliah* ("lecture"), most participants chose either "faculty" or "college" because of the meaning of its original Arabic word. Similarly, the Malay *sejarah* ("history") and its original Arabic word [ʃadʒara] ("trees"), which are semantically different, affected 19 participants' comprehension. For *rela* ("willing"), most participants chose incorrect options, such as "satisfaction" and "satisfied." Only one participant correctly guessed the meaning of *tekad* ("determination"), and most of them were confused by the option "opinion," which may have been considered closer to the meaning of the Arabic etymology [iʕtiqa:d] ("firm belief").

Table 7. *Ten Least Recognized Malay Words*

Malay	Etymologies	Numbers of Correct Answers
lahir (born; birth)	[ðˁa:hir] (distinct)	1
kuliah (lecture)	[kullijja] (college; school/faculty of a university)	1
sejarah (history)	[ʃadʒara] (trees)	1
rela (willing)	[ridˁa:ʔ] (satisfaction)	1
peduli (to care)	[fudˁu:li:] (inquisitive; curious)	1
tekad (determination)	[iʕtiqa:d] (firm belief)	1
aral (obstacle)	[ʕardˁ] (breadth; width; presentation)	1
dakwa (accusation)	[daʕwa:] (claim; lawsuit)	2
nikmat (pleasure)	[niʕma] (grace)	2

perlu (necessary)	[fardˤ] (duty)	2

Moreover, only two participants selected the correct answer for *dakwa* ("accusation"), *nikmat* ("pleasure"), and *perlu* ("necessary"). Most respondents may have been manipulated by the consonant [k] in the syllable codas of Malay *dakwa* ("accusation") and *nikmat* ("pleasure"), which originates from the voiced pharyngeal fricative [ʕ] in Arabic. The consonant alternation from [f] to [p] between Arabic and Malay also prevented almost all participants from guessing the meaning of *perlu* ("necessary") and *peduli* ("to care") correctly. The Arabic noun [fardˤ] ("duty") is borrowed as *farz*/[færz] ("duty") in Persian, which retains the [f] sound. Moreover, the semantic difference between Malay *perlu* ("necessary") and Arabic [fardˤ] ("duty") may have negatively affected identification accuracy—most participants incorrectly selected "obligation" for *perlu* ("necessary").

Table 8 shows the number of correct answers for the remaining words. Thirteen participants correctly identified *izin* ("permission") as the original Arabic word [iðn] is pronounced *ezn* ([ɛzn]) in Persian and shares the same consonants as its Malay counterpart. Similarly, [θ] in the Arabic word [wari:θ] ("heir") is pronounced [s] in Persian. Twelve participants selected the correct meaning of *jamak* ("plural") and *jiran* ("neighbor") as the Arabic [dʒamʕ] ("plural"), etymology of *jamak*, retains the identical meaning in Persian. The absence of [h] in the Malay *eja* ("spell") from the Arabic [hidʒa:ʔ] ("spelling") did not prevent nine participants from correctly identifying the meaning of the listed Malay word. The Malay *layak* ("fit") also received 11 correct answers as the Arabic [la:ʔiq] ("suitable") is used as *lāyeq* ("fit, worthy, competent") in Persian. The Malay *akal* ("intelligence") was correctly identified by 10 participants because the Arabic [ʕaql] ("mind, intelligence") means "wisdom" in Persian. The semantic similarity between Arabic and Persian assisted the 10 participants.

Nine participants correctly identified the meaning of *baki* ("remainder") from the Arabic [ba:qi:], which retains semantic similarity in Persian. The vowels of *baki*, which are long in its original Arabic form, did not confuse the nine respondents, but 11 people selected incorrect options: "stop," "stay," and "result." The Malay word *rakyat* ("citizens") and Arabic [raʕijja] ("subjects; citizens") are semantically similar; however, the phonetic shift from [ʕ] to [k] between Arabic and Malay led to confusion among more than a half of participants, as its Persian counterpart *raʕyat* ("subject") does not include a sound that is similar to [k]. The Malay *tamat* ("finish"), originating from the Arabic *tamma* ("to be completed"), is also semantically similar, and the consonant [m] is simplified with the consonant [t] added at the end. Furthermore, over the course of multiple phonetic changes, cross-linguistic cognates shed their similarities.

Table 8. *Other Malay Words Used in the Survey*

Malay	Etymologies	Numbers of Correct Answers
izin (permission)	[iðn] (permission)	13
waris (heir)	[wari:θ] (heir)	13
jamak (plural)	[dʒamʕ] (gathering; collection)	12
jiran (neighbor)	[dʒi:ra:n] (neighbor)	12
eja (spell)	[hidʒa:ʔ] (spelling)	11
layak (fit)	[la:ʔiq] (suitable)	11
akal (intelligence)	[ʕaql] (mind; intelligence)	10
baki (remainder)	[ba:qi:] (remainder)	9
rakyat (citizens)	[raʕijja] (subjects; citizens)	6
tamat (finish)	[tamma] (to be completed)	5
salji (snow)	[θaldʒ] (snow)	5
bazir (to waste)	[mubaððir] (wastrel)	4
jamin (guarantee)	[dˤami:n] (responsible; liable)	4
iklan (advertisement)	[iʕla:n] (advertisement)	4
syarah (to lecture)	[ʃarħ] (explanation)	4
hajat (intention)	[ħa:dʒa] (need)	4
hafal (to memorize)	[ħafiðˤa] (to protect; to memorize)	3
matlamat (target)	Malay *mata* (eye) and Arabic [ʕala:ma] (sign)	3
sah (valid)	[sˤaħħ] (to be correct)	3

Only five participants successfully identified *salji* ("snow") because the original Persian word *barf*/[bærf] ("snow") is phonetically different from the Arabic [θaldʒ] ("snow"). This is a minor difference between vocabularies proper to Persian and Arabic. The participants faced difficulty in identifying the Malay *bazir* ("to waste") because the first syllable of its etymological Arabic word [mubaððir] ("wastrel") had been dropped in Malay. The Malay word *jamin* ("guarantee"), which originates from the Arabic [dˤami:n] ("responsible; liable"), begins with the consonant [dʒ], which rarely occurs in Malay but is seen here as a replacement for the Arabic consonant [dˤ]. This exceptional phonetic shift prevented 16 participants from correctly identifying the Malay word *jamin*. The voiced pharyngeal fricative [ʕ], which usually becomes [k] in syllable codas in Malay, appeared to hinder the identification of the Malay *iklan* ("advertisement"). The voiced pharyngeal fricative exists in both Arabic and Persian, and its replacement with [k] negatively affected the participants' analyses of Malay words. These considerable phonetic changes require foreign learners to have their attention

explicitly drawn to them.

Only four participants correctly selected the meaning for *syarah* ("to lecture"), which was derived from the Arabic noun [ʃarħ] ("explanation"), primarily due to the semantic differences between these words. Several students who selected an incorrect option guessed that the Malay *syarah* ("to lecture") is a cognate of the Arabic [sajja:ra] ("car"). The Malay *hajat* ("intention") and its Persian cognate *hājat*/[hɑ:dʒæt] ("need, necessity") are phonetically similar but diverge semantically. Further, most participants may have selected the incorrect option "necessity" due to semantic interference of the Persian word. Only three respondents correctly recognized the Malay *hafal* ("to memorize"), *matlamat* ("target"), and *sah* ("valid"), possibly because these Malay words and the original Arabic words have limited semantic and phonetic similarities.

The meaning of the original Arabic words, which is more varied than that of loanwords in Malay, affected participants when identified the meaning of the least recognized Malay words. However, the explicit demonstration of the Arabic etymologies on Page 2 enabled most participants to guess and identify the most appropriate meaning of the questioned Malay loanwords.

Discussion

The present study used a multiple-choice vocabulary survey with 40 Malay words of Arabic origin to examine the advantages of phonetically and semantically similar Arabic vocabulary when teaching Malay vocabulary to Persian-speaking university students in Malaysia. They averaged 19.9 correct answers and 17.35 newly learned vocabulary items, respectively. At a 5% level, a significant difference was observed between participants' scores before and after the demonstration of the original Arabic words (p = .000, t = 20.28). All the participants selected the correct answers for the Malay words *asal* ("origin"), *sabar* ("patient"), and *makna* ("meaning"). Although many respondents could not understand these words while reading a simple Malay word list on Page 1, the Arabic etymologies [asˤl] ("origin") and [sˤabr] ("patience") shown on Page 2 facilitated all the participants' meaning comprehension of their Malay equivalents. Other most correctly identified words were *takrif* ("definition," 19 correct answers), *kuat* ("strong," 17 correct responses), *kubur* ("grave," 16 correct answers), *pakat* ("agreement," 16 correct responses), *seluar* ("trousers," 16 correct answers), *adat* ("custom," 14 correct responses), *kaum* ("race," 14 correct answers), and *mungkin* ("maybe, possible," 14 correct responses). Majority of these words retain semantic and phonetic similarities to their etymologies in Arabic. Semantic similarities are more helpful than phonetic similarities when utilizing cognates for Malay vocabulary learning.

Explicitly presenting the Arabic original words on Page 2 of the questionnaire significantly encouraged the participants' identification of correct word meanings. The Arabic voiceless uvular stop [q], which changed into [k] in Malay (e.g., *kuat*, *kubur*, and *kaum*), did not hinder most participants' meaning identification. Short vowels in the listed Malay words, which were originally long in the original Arabic words, either did not impede respondents. Similarly, more than 50 percent of participants selected the most appropriate meaning of *izin* ("permission"), *waris* ("heir"), *jamak* ("plural"), *jiran* ("neighbor"), *eja* ("spell"), *layak* ("fit"), and *akal* ("intelligence"). The results of the survey justify the advantages of cognates suggested by Petrescu, Helms-Park, and Dronjic's (2017) study, which explored English cognate learning by Romanian-speaking students. As proposed by Ringbom (2012), similarities between L1 and L2 vocabularies also assisted most participants of the present study. The Arabic consonants [θ] and [ð], which were primarily borrowed as [s] and [z] in Malay and Persian, would benefit Persian-speaking learners of Malay.

However, cognates with semantic difference could hinder learning. Malay words, such as *lahir* ("born; birth"), *kuliah* ("lecture"), *sejarah* ("history"), and *rela* ("willing"), whose meaning had changed, were correctly identified by only one respondent. Two participants correctly selected the meaning of *dakwa* ("accusation"), *nikmat* ("pleasure"), and *perlu* ("necessary"). Most respondents may have been manipulated by the consonant [k] in the syllable codas of Malay *dakwa* ("accusation") and *nikmat* ("pleasure"), which originates from the voiced pharyngeal fricative [ʕ] in Arabic. These least correctly identified words have semantic and phonetic difference from their Arabic etymologies and need to be demonstrated carefully to Persian-speaking learners.

Negative effects of several cognates need to be reduced by additional improvements. In particular, the meanings of the Malay *lahir* ("born; birth") and its Arabic etymology [ðˤa:hir] ("distinct") differ considerably. Similarly, the meanings of *sejarah* ("history") and its origin [ʃadʒara] ("trees") are completely different. Nevertheless, Lalor and Kirsner (2001), which demonstrated Italian cognates with little semantic overlap along with a related word in the same category, exemplified possible methods to prevent learners' misunderstanding. Another possible method would be vocabulary demonstration with antonyms, such as presenting *rela* ("willing") and *segan* ("unwilling") or *lahir* ("born; birth") and *mati* ("die") as pairs. It would help learners become aware of semantic gaps and understand the word meanings correctly. Presenting synonyms of the listed words would also help learners identify meanings and recognizing similar vocabulary items as a group. As emphasized by Carroll (1992), etymological information needs to be a medium of learning facilitation.

Conclusion

With the aforementioned benefits, the present study concludes that explicitly presenting Arabic etymologies can assist Persian-speaking students in learning Malay vocabulary of Arabic origin. The benefits of the method for Persian-speaking speakers at a Malaysian university was more significant than that of Uni's (2015) vocabulary survey conducted for Arabic-speaking speakers at the same university, a study which used Malay words of Arabic origin to teach basic Malay vocabulary to Arabic-speaking university students. The benefits of shared vocabularies are also supported by Dressler et al. (2011), Hipfner-Boucher et al. (2016), Poort and Rodd (2017), Ringbom (2012), and Solak and Cakir (2012), all of which explored the advantages of the use of cognates for L2 vocabulary learning. Because the participants of the present study were university students, the author primarily recommends the etymological demonstration approach to Persian- or Arabic-speaking adults in tertiary education or business who wish to learn Malay vocabulary.

The importance of the Indonesian language is increasing with the country's growing economy. Indonesian is another standardized language variety of Malay and remains similar to the standard spoken in Malaysia. Since most Malay words listed in the aforementioned questionnaire are also used in Indonesian except several words such as *salji* ("snow") (*salju* in Indonesian), the presentation method proposed in this study would benefit Arabic or Persian-speaking learners of Indonesian. They would gain a deeper understanding of Arabic loanwords as a shared linguistic and cultural heritage between multiple languages. In addition to Indonesian, Nepali, Hindi, and Urdu include thousands of words originating from Arabic. Approximately 400,000 Nepalese people have been working in Malaysia as security guards, waiters, etc. (Low, 2020). However, their majority with a limited Malay-language proficiency have experienced communication problems with their Malaysian superiors and colleagues. Uni (2017) explored the usefulness of similar vocabularies between Malay and Nepali for Nepalese workers learning basic Malay. The Nepali language is primarily spoken in Nepal, while the Hindi and Urdu languages are spoken in India and Pakistan. All these languages ultimately originate from Sanskrit and retain lexical similarity.

In addition, these languages borrowed thousands of Arabic words during the rule of the Muslim-dominant Mughal Empire in the northern Indian subcontinent. For instance, the Hindi, Urdu, or Nepali noun [mawsam] ("season") stems from the Arabic [mawsim] ("season"). The Arabic loanword in these languages and its Malay equivalent *musim* ("season") could be explicitly demonstrated when teaching Malay to Hindi, Urdu, or Nepali speakers. The method proposed in this study would be applicable for Hindi- and Urdu-speaking learners of Malay. If India and Pakistan continue a rapid economic growth, more and more Hindi or Urdu speakers will visit Malaysia for business and tourism. For any type of travels, basic Malay vocabulary knowledge would allow them to deepen awareness of the usefulness of similar vocabularies between their L1 and Malay.

As the number of Malay words listed in the questionnaire was small, future studies would elaborate a more comprehensive list of Malay vocabulary for Arabic- or Persian-speaking intermediate learners of Malay. Such vocabulary lists would help them gain a deeper understanding of Malay terms used in academic texts written in Malay. Future studies could explore the usefulness of the Malay *kamus* ("dictionary") from Arabic [qa:mu:s] ("dictionary"), *faedah* ("benefit") from Arabic [fa:ʔida] ("benefit"), and also *hadam* ("digest") from Arabic [hadˁm] ("digestion") in a future study. This would assist Persian speakers in learning Malay.

References

Bani Kamal, A. M., & Hossain, I. (2017). The Iranian diaspora in Malaysia: A socio-economic and political analysis. *Diaspora Studies*, *10*(1), 116-129. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/09739572.2016.1239439

Carroll, S. E. (1992). On cognates. *Second Language Research/Interlanguage Studies Bulletin (Utrecht)*, *8*(2), 93-119. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/026765839200800201

Cowan, J. M. (1994). *Arabic-English dictionary: The Hans Wehr dictionary of modern written Arabic* (4th ed.). Spoken Language Services.

Domínguez, P. J. C., & Nerlich, B. (2002). False friends: Their origin and semantics in some selected languages. *Journal of pragmatics*, *34*(12), 1833-1849. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(02)00024-3

Dressler, C., Carlo, M. S., Snow, C. E., August, D., & White, C. E. (2011). Spanish-speaking students' use of cognate knowledge to infer the meaning of English words. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition, 14*(2), 243-255. doi:https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728910000519

Fereidouni, H. G., Masron, T. A., Nikbin, D., & Amiri, R. E. (2010). Consequences of external environment on entrepreneurial motivation in Iran. *Asian Academy of Management Journal*, *15*(2), 175-196.

Ferré, P., Sánchez-Casas, R., Comesaña, M., & Demestre, J. (2017). Masked translation priming with cognates and noncognates: Is there an effect of words' concreteness? *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, *20*(4), 770-782. doi:https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728916000262

Gil, D. (1994). The structure of Riau Indonesian. *Nordic Journal of Linguistics*, *17*(2), 179-200. doi:https://doi.org/10.1017/S0332586500003000

Hipfner-Boucher, K., Pasquarella, A., Chen, X., & Deacon, S. H. (2016). Cognate awareness in French immersion students: Contributions to grade 2 reading comprehension. *Scientific Studies of Reading*,

20(5), 389-400. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/10888438.2016.1213265
Janke, V., & Kolokonte, M. (2015). False cognates: The effect of mismatch in morphological complexity on a backward lexical translation task. *Second Language Research*, *31*(2), 137-156. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/0267658314545836
Jones, R., Grijns, C. D., & de Vries, J. W. (Eds.) (2007). *Loan-words in Indonesian and Malay*. KITLV Press.
Katzman, K. (2022). *Iran sanctions*. Retrieved from https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RS/RS20871/313
Lalor, E., & Kirsner, K. (2001). The representation of "false cognates" in the bilingual lexicon. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, *8*(3), 552-559. doi:https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03196191
Low, C. C. (2020). Migrant labour recruitment reform in Malaysia: Towards ethical and zero-cost migration. *Otoritas: Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan*, *10*(2), 142-164. doi:https://doi.org/10.26618/ojip.v10i2.4641
Lubliner, S., & Hiebert, E. H. (2011). An analysis of English-Spanish cognates as a source of general academic language. *Bilingual Research Journal*, *34*(1), 76-93. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2011.568589
Mace, J. (2003). *Persian Grammar: For reference and revision*. Routledge. doi:https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315029559
Mangrio, R. A. (2016). *The morphology of loanwords in Urdu: The Persian, Arabic and English strands*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
Marín, M. J., & Fernández, P. (2015). The influence of cognates on the acquisition of legal terminology: Help or hindrance? A corpus-based study. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *198*, 320-329. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.450
Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge University Press.
Odlin, T., & Jarvis, S. (2004). Same source, different outcomes: A study of Swedish influence on the acquisition of English in Finland. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *1*(2), 123-140. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/14790710408668183
Peeters, D., Dijkstra, T., & Grainger, J. (2013). The representation and processing of identical cognates by late bilinguals: RT and ERP effects. *Journal of Memory and Language*, *68*(4), 315-332. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jml.2012.12.003
Petrescu, M. C., Helms-Park, R., & Dronjic, V. (2017). The impact of frequency and register on cognate facilitation: Comparing Romanian and Vietnamese speakers on the Vocabulary Levels Test. *English for Specific Purposes*, *47*, 15-25. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2017.03.001
Poort, E. D., & Rodd, J. M. (2017). The cognate facilitation effect in bilingual lexical decision is influenced by stimulus list composition. *Acta Psychologica*, *180*, 52-63. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2017.08.008
Reffle, U., Gotscharek, A., Ringlstetter, C., & Schulz, K. U. (2009). Successfully detecting and correcting false friends using channel profiles. *International Journal on Document Analysis and Recognition (IJDAR)*, *12*(3), 165-174. doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/s10032-009-0091-y
Ringbom, H. (2007). *Cross-linguistic similarity in foreign language learning*. Multilingual Matters.
Ringbom, H. (2012). Review of recent applied linguistics research in Finland and Sweden, with specific reference to foreign language learning and teaching. *Language Teaching*, *45*(4), 490-514. doi:https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444812000225
Rypka, J. (1968). *History of Iranian literature*. Springer Dordrecht. doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-3479-1
Sabaté-Carrové, M., & Chesñevar, C. I. (1998). False friends in English-Spanish translations in computer science literature. *Perspectives*, *6*(1), 47-59. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.1998.9961322
Schepens, J., Dijkstra, T., Grootjen, F., & Van Heuven, W. J. B. (2013). Cross-language distributions of high frequency and phonetically similar cognates. *PloS one*, *8*(5), e63006. doi:https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0063006
Sneddon, J. (2003). *The Indonesian language: Its history and role in modern society*. University of New South Wales Press.
Solak, H. G., & Cakir, A. (2012). Cognate based language teaching and material development. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *46*, 431-434. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.05.136
Uni, K. (2015). Utilising Arabic-origin loanwords in teaching Malay as a foreign language. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, *23*(3), 665-680. Retrieved from http://www.pertanika.upm.edu.my/resources/files/Pertanika%20PAPERS/JSSH%20Vol.%2023%20(3)%20Sep.%202015/08%20JSSH%201102-2014.pdf
Uni, K. (2017). Shared Arabic and Sanskrit loanwords beneficial for teaching Malay to Nepali speakers. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, *25*(3), 1199-1212. Retrieved from http://www.pertanika.upm.edu.my/resources/files/Pertanika%20PAPERS/JSSH%20Vol.%2025%20(3)%20Sep.%202017/11%20JSSH-1573-2016-4thProof.pdf
Uni, K. (2019). Connecting kanji radicals with their Malay equivalents in Japanese kanji instruction to native Malay-speaking students. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, *19*(4), 128-147. doi:https://doi.org/10.17576/gema-2019-1904-07
Van Dam, N. (2010). Arabic loanwords in Indonesian revisited. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land en Volkenkunde/Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*, *166*(2-3), 218-243. doi:https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90003617