

TEACHING ARABIC FOR TOURISM PURPOSES IN PERLIS: NEEDS, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Nur Amnah binti Duniya^{1*}
Mohd Azrul Azlen bin Abd. Hamid²
Muhammad Sabri Bin Sahrir³

¹ Department of Arabic Language, Kuliyah of Sustainable Tourism and Contemporary Languages, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), 84600 Muar, Johor, Malaysia (E-mail: nuramnahduniya@gmail.com)

² Department of Arabic Language, Kuliyah of Sustainable Tourism and Contemporary Languages, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), 84600 Muar, Johor, Malaysia (E-mail: azrul_qld@iium.edu.my)

³ Department of Language and Literacy, Kuliyah of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), 53100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (E-mail: muhdsabri@iium.edu.my)

*Corresponding author: nuramnahduniya@gmail.com

Article history

Received date : 6-8-2025

Revised date : 7-8-2025

Accepted date : 20-8-2025

Published date : 29-8-2025

To cite this document:

Duniya, N. A., Abd. Hamid, M. A. A., & Sahrir, M. S. (2015). Teaching Arabic for tourism purposes in Perlis: Needs, opportunities and challenges. *Journal of Islamic, Social, Economics and Development (JISED)*, 10 (75), 113 - 128.

Abstract: - With an increasing number of Arabic-speaking tourists in Malaysia, particularly in the northern region including the state of Perlis, the needs to accommodate their needs has emerged in the light of teaching Arabic for tourism purposes. As teaching language for specific purposes differs from general purposes, it must be implemented based on specific tourism-related situations faced by learners based on the need analysis. This study intends to investigate the necessities in implementing teaching Arabic for tourism purposes in Perlis in term of needs, opportunities and challenges. Drawing on the existing literature, tourism data and current initiatives and plans, this study identified that positive trends of Arab tourists, importance of communication skills in tourism sector, addressing staff language and cultural gaps as the main needs for this initiative in Perlis. Among the opportunities proved by this study are international tourism events, embedding Arabic language into education, developing digital and blended learning and strategic partnership. However, challenges persist including lack of qualified trainers, material limitations, logistical and financial constraints besides low learning motivation among tourism employees. This study provides practical recommendations in addressing the needs, seizing opportunity and navigating challenges such as localized learning materials, micro-credentials and cultural immersion programme, Arabic interpreters' trainings, digital learning platforms and strategic partnership. Hence, this study demonstrated the needs towards teaching Arabic for tourism purposes in Perlis as a strategy to equip the employees with required Arabic communication skills. To conclude, this initiative is beneficial to enhance service quality and tourists' satisfaction which contributes in positioning Perlis as a leading tourism destination among Arab tourists.

Keywords: Arabic for Tourism Purposes, Teaching Language for Specific Purposes, Perlis Tourism, Communication Skills

Introduction

Arabic language is recognized as one of the most important languages in the tourism sector in Malaysia due to the rising number of Arabic-speaking tourists year by year, mainly from middle east countries. Malaysia witnessed 37.96 million of tourists' arrival with the percentage growth of 31.1% compared to the previous year, 2023 and recorded RM102.2 billion of tourism receipts (MOTAC, 2024). Meanwhile, the Gross Value Added of Tourism Industries (GVATI) has reached a total of RM251.5 billion, remarked a great contribution of 14.0% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), indicates an increase of 12.8% from 2023 (ASEAN Briefing, 2025). With its infrastructure connectivity, identity consolidation through the tagline of "Malaysia Truly Asia", Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) Tourism and business events, tourism offerings, government initiatives, Malaysia has succeeded in attracting international tourists and providing a good tourism experience.

Among the notable market of Malaysia tourism is middle east mainly from Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) for its Muslim-friendly services and environment, diverse attractions (Islamic Tourism Centre, 2025). Apart from these factors, safety, security, affordable cost, good country image, excellent hospitality and experience also among the main factors lead to increasing number of Arab-tourists in Malaysia (Salman & Hashim, 2012). Compared to the other segment, Arab-tourists have a high purchasing power for their 5 stars hotels preference and 8 to 10 nights average lengths of stay (Ibrahim et. al., 2009). They are also considered as big spenders primarily from Saudi with RM11,600 of tourism expenditure per capita, followed by United Arab Emirates (UAE) with RM10,000, Oman with RM9,100, Kuwait with RM9,000 and Iran with RM8,500 (Tourism Malaysia, 2020). This phenomenon creates a significant demand for Arabic language skills and proficiency in communicating with Arab-tourists in Malaysia among the tourism employees.

Perlis, as the smallest state in Malaysia located in the northern region of the west coast of its peninsular, is an important gateway and a rising hub for tourism. Despite its small size, it holds a strategic potential in attracting tourists domestically and internationally including from middle east and beyond. Perlis is strengthening its position as a leading tourism destination with its captivating slogan, Perlis: Asia's Best Kept Secret" by focusing on eco-tourism and agro-tourism (Deliana, 2024). With its unique nature, destinations and cultural heritage, this state is consistently developing its tourism services targeting to achieve 6.5 million of tourist arrival by 2030 (PLANMalaysia, 2020). In supporting this remarkable rise, teaching Arabic language for tourism can highly boost the tourism sector growth and foster high service quality.

In this contemporary era, teaching language for specific purposes has emerged as a vital field to develop professionals including teaching Arabic for tourism purposes. This specific programme focuses on the real vocabularies, phrases and expressions required in tourism context, that faced by employees on daily basis (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). To achieve a mutual understanding when communicating with Arab tourists, Arabic language is necessary besides cultural knowledge. However, tourism employees in Perlis face a lot of communication challenges due to limited proficiency in second language, limited exposure to diverse languages and cultures and lack of proper communication training, which can negatively affect tourists' satisfaction and retention if it is not well addressed.

Lack of Arabic communication skill leads to incline in Perlis' image as tourism destination among Arabic-speaking tourists due to possibility of misunderstandings and cultural conflicts. Md Noor et. al. (2023) mentioned that poor communication skills have a direct influence on the service quality and customer loyalty especially in hotels and other tourism facilities. There is limited research on the extent to which tourism employees in Perlis are equipped to handle Arabic communication effectively. Therefore, this study intends to examine the needs, opportunities and challenges of teaching Arabic for tourism purposes in the context of Perlis.

Objectives

There are three objectives of this study as stated below:

- 1) To examine the linguistic and professional needs of tourism employees in Perlis regarding Arabic communication
- 2) To highlight potential opportunities to support the teaching of Arabic for tourism in Perlis
- 3) To assess the challenges in implementing teaching Arabic for tourism purposes in Perlis

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative content analysis and conceptual review to examine the needs, opportunities and challenges associated with teaching Arabic for tourism purposes in Perlis. The secondary data were gathered from various sources such as tourism statistics and report mainly from Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) and other official repositories, previous studies related to teaching language for specific purposes, event records and state government documents and policy. These sources were selected based on their relevance and credibility in providing insights into the intersection between Arabic language education and tourism in the local context. The analysis provides a contextual understanding of linguistic demand in Perlis tourism sector and the relevancy of Arabic language education among its employees.

Thematic analysis was then applied to determine key areas related to the needs, opportunities and challenges. The framework was guided by the following analytical steps:

- 1) Needs were identified through content analysis of the tourism data to understand the current trends of Arab tourists and Perlis' potential in tourism sector related to this tourist's segment, previous studies related to tourism, communication, the current capacity and limitations of its employees in Arabic communication.
- 2) Opportunities were explored through reviewing current initiatives, tourism events and national and regional planning that potentially support Arabic language education in tourism sector in Perlis.
- 3) Challenges were drawn from particular reported issues in previous studies and practical limitations in implementing Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) related to materials, curriculum, trained instructors and motivation.

Key themes and patterns were identified and synthesized to provide a holistic view of teaching Arabic for tourism purposes in Perlis. This study is limited by the absence of primary data sources such as interview and questionnaire, which has restricted deeper insight on realistic perspectives of tourism employees and stakeholders.

Needs of Teaching Arabic for Tourism Purposes in Perlis

As part of tourism development strategy, Perlis aims to attract more diverse range of international tourists including those from Arabic-speaking countries. Preparation in term of employing linguistics and professional needs to cater this segment of tourists must be identified in providing the best tourism services. This section highlights the need of teaching Arabic for tourism purposes in Perlis based on several key points as follows:

Demographic Trends of Arab Tourists

Tourism statistics recently show a gradual increase of Arab tourists particularly during Arab season from July to September (mid-year months) as it coincides the summer holidays in the middle east region. During this season, majority of Arab tourists travel to urban and coastal areas such as Kuala Lumpur, Pulau Langkawi, Penang, Pulau Perhentian and Melaka. Nonetheless, Perlis, due to its proximity to Pulau Langkawi and Penang, has begun to attract a small yet notable segment of this tourism market.

In 2022, Perlis recorded the arrival of 2.99 million tourists, yet majority of the international tourists are excursionists which do not contribute to tourism receipts (Belanjawan Negeri, 2024) as they only stop by before travelling to other parts of Malaysia especially to Pulau Langkawi through Kuala Perlis jetty. Three biggest tourism expenditures are shopping, accommodation, food and beverages and accounted as the best representation of tourism receipts. As middle east tourists in Malaysia have a high tourism expenditure per capita and high length of stay, it contradicts with the case of Perlis as majority of them are excursionists which typically associated with lower economic contribution compared to overnight tourists. International tourists' highly concern on value and service quality in considering their spending (Park, Woo & Nicolau, 2020). While the study is limited to the spending concern among international tourists as a whole, this study calls for a strategic effort to attract Arabic speaking tourists with a longer length of stay that bring impacts economically through improving tourism value on Perlis.

This includes by promoting Arabic language as the linguistic landscapes for effective communication with Arab tourists. This seasonal trend highlights the potential of Perlis in expanding their appeal to Arab tourists especially those who visit Pulau Langkawi through Kuala Perlis, by increasing the promotion and language development among its tourism employees

Importance of Communication Skills in Tourism Sector

As Perlis is strengthening its position as an alternative tourism destination in the northern region, communication skills is vital to cater tourists' need including Arab tourists. The employees that engage majorly with customer service such as in hotels, homestays, restaurants, tourism destinations, transportation hub need Arabic language proficiency to avoid misunderstanding with Arab tourists. Besides, communication efficiency between employees and tourists is critical in ensuring their satisfaction and good tourism experience, which directly influence their retention.

Ali et. al. (2025) in his study reveals that Arab tourists agreed on the importance of Arabic communication skills among tourism employees in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia to minimize language barriers. However, similar research focusing on Perlis, a northern gateway with its

own tourist dynamics remains limited. In tourism settings, the language and vocabulary needed is vary from the other sectors as it is very specific and to service interaction context. Teaching Arabic for specific purposes is designed to analyse the specific linguistics needs required in tourism sector in the daily operation based on a systematic methodology. Bahtiar et. al. (2024) identified several Arabic linguistic functions needed among tourism members of Pokdarwis, West Java Province, Indonesia including greetings and introductions, asking direction, executing purchase and sale transactions to solve limited ability of Arabic communication skills with Arab tourists. Similar studies that focus on Perlis context are still lacking, revealing a gap in research and curriculum development for Arabic language teaching which meets its realistic needs.

In the case of Perlis, where the majority of its workforce is Malay-speaking, the ability to use Arabic language will improve its good image and service quality. Therefore, teaching Arabic for tourism purposes is the best initiatives to welcome Arab tourists in Perlis as communication skills is the main factor that determine tourists' satisfaction.

Addressing Staff Language Gaps

Regardless of the importance of communication skills among tourism employees, Perlis face a huge challenge related to language gaps. This situation needs to be solved by implementing teaching language for specific purposes (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). With approximately 1.5 million of tourists recorded by May 2024 in Perlis including international tourists, most of the tourism employees rely on Malay language besides basic English language to communicate with tourists. This caused misunderstanding which affect tourists' satisfaction and experiences.

Khan et. al. (2024) mentioned that language barriers and cultural issues also arise between Perlis local homestay owners and international tourists due to lack of English language proficiency. This clearly explains a wastage in the promotion of homestay as local attractions in Perlis as it could not accommodate the linguistic needs of international tourists. Mohd Noor (2019) stated that majority of tourism employees face communication issues in English language such as lack in speech fluency, lack in ability to paraphrase sentences in own words as well as lack in the ability to speak coherently with tourists. On the other hand, this study addressed the Arabic language gaps in Perlis tourism sector, which remain very limited in academic attention compared to English language. The case is worse when the tourists are not able to communicate in English neither in Malay language. Previous research proved that majority of Arab tourists often experienced extensive language barrier throughout their visit in Malaysia caused by the lack of Arabic communication proficiency among tourism employees (Mohammad Najib et. al., 2022; Al-Janabi, 2015; Zalika Adam, 2013).

Consequently, they prefer to communicate with staffs that are able to understand their needs and responds in language that they comprehend well. Moreover, Arab tourists face great difficulties in English communication skills, which hinder them to communicate clearly. The most fundamental needs for communication skills in tourism is ensuring tourists' safety (Tankovic et. al., 2023). This goal is only achieved with language proficiency. Thus, teaching Arabic for tourism purposes is important to foster high quality interaction.

Addressing Cultural Needs of Arab Tourists

Culture cannot be separated from tourism as both has an interrelated beneficial relationship that strengthen the competitiveness of a destination. Tourist and host cultural differences may be rewarding greatly or vice versa imply difficulties that lead to dissatisfaction (Reisinger & Turner, 1998). Even though cultural differences considered as tourism attractions and uniqueness, greater cultural distance often leads to higher risk perceptions, particularly in communication.

Teaching Arabic for tourism purposes is an essential strategy in addressing cultural needs among Arab tourists to ensure effective intercultural interaction. It should go beyond vocabulary and grammar to include the cultural awareness of Arab tourists. The prior knowledge of their culture and preference will help to avoid cultural misunderstanding which could lead to negative impression. Previous research reported that most of Arab tourists are Muslim, thus their culture closely correlates with the Islamic teachings. They prioritize ability to perform five-time prayers, separation between unmarried male and female guests, availability of convenient prayer time and room, accessibility of halal food, modest service and etc. (Yusof, Shariff & Omar, 2019). Besides, they value family relationship, non-physical contact with opposite gender, warm and friendly tone in communication etc. This finding highlights the gaps in research related to Arab tourists' preferences in the context of Perlis, calling for a focus on teaching Arabic for tourism purposes and its concern on cultural awareness. This cultural awareness can be addressed through the implementation of teaching Arabic for tourism purposes to equip employees with sufficient understanding including on non-verbal communication.

Opportunities of Teaching Arabic for Tourism Purposes in Perlis

There are a lot of opportunities lies in Perlis for teaching Arabic for tourism purposes, in supporting its strategic tourism development. As this initiative potentially attracts Arab tourists, few opportunities should be considered.

Leveraging International Events for Authentic Language Learning

Organizing international events is considered as one of the most influential strategies in boosting the tourism appeal of the host destination (Sonja Oklobžija, 2015). It can further enhance the reputation of the destination as tourists not only benefitting from the event, but experience the service and explore the place. Perlis has conducted various successful international events. Perkampungan Sunnah or Perlis International Sunnah Convention, an international religious event organized by Perlis Mufti State Department since 2015, has recorded 20,000 visitors from all over the world in year 2022 and has a great potential to be further promoted as main annual tourism event in the state (Mohd Yusuf & Muhamad Asni, 2023). Besides, the inaugural International Kite Festival 2025 has drawn 119 participants from 42 countries among kite enthusiasts proving its potential to attract international tourists in visiting Perlis (New Straits Times, 2025). Despites the research focus on the successful event, it shows a lack in explaining the important role of language in attracting a wide range of tourism segments from various nationalities including Arabic language.

Perlis East Wind Festival, Perlis Mango and Agricultural Industry Festival (PERMAI), Nakawan Rainforest Festival and Kuala Perlis International Water Festival 2025 also contribute to boost the arrival of international tourists. Yet, efficient promotion strategy is

needed to boost the international tourist arrival including from Arabic-speaking region. In Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) theory, real-life communication needs to be prioritized as the core of language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). By teaching Arabic for tourism purposes, language proficiency and efficient communication among tourism employees with Arab tourists can be achieved to support their needs in these events.

Embedding Arabic for Tourism Purposes into Education

Higher education and TVET institutions in Perlis such as Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UNIMAP), Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin (UNISIRAJ), Politeknik Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin (PTSS) and Institut Kemahiran MARA (IKM), Bseri provide course related to hospitality, tourism and Islamic studies. All these courses required good communication skills among its players. These institutions represent as an ideal platform in embedding teaching Arabic specifically for tourism purposes in their curriculum to cater Arab tourists' needs in while visiting Perlis.

As proved by Mustapha, Duncan Preece & Amzat (2024), Arabic language proficiency is among the main personal competencies that secure employment of graduates especially in business field such as tourism. While Arabic proficiency is increasingly demanded for employability in the tourism sector, targeted research related to the needs of embedding this language education in this sector remain unaddressed. This underscores a pressing need to explore how Arabic language teaching can be aligned with the region's tourism potential. Providing course tailored to tourism needs will support Malaysia's tourism and workforce development tourism goals to increase employability of graduates in roles related to Arab tourists. Meanwhile, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) also equips its employees with training on service and communication skills such as Mesra Malaysia workshop which compulsory for tourists guides and recommended for frontliners and employees that engage majorly with tourists. By integrating Arabic for tourism purposes into learning environments, Perlis is able to strengthens its tourism and translates key principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which ensure the language is functional and purposeful.

Developing Digital and Blended Learning Materials

With the massive technology in this era, language learning has transformed to digital materials. It is indeed efficient tools in teaching language with more inclusivity and accessibility in the context of Perlis. Samah (2007) has stated the importance of using the internet and digital tools as a learning aid to assist non-native learners in language acquisition, especially in learning Arabic language for specific purposes. Several studies have demonstrated that digital platforms and tourism-oriented websites is more beneficial among non-native learners compared to the traditional learning materials in acquiring language. Abdul Ghani, Wan Daud, & Sahrir (2016) revealed that learning Arabic for tourism purposes among MARA Poly-Tech College (KPTM), Kelantan students by using websites has significantly contributes to increase their learning motivation in terms of acquiring vocabulary, improving language skills and gaining information especially in foreign and authentic environments. Yet, no previous study has been conducted in explaining the potential of digital and blended learning strategy in teaching Arabic for tourism purposes in the context of Perlis.

This digital and blended learning materials can be utilized to create online modules, applications, general or event-based, tailored to the needs of tourism context in dealing with Arab tourists and acquire Arabic communication skills. The effectiveness of the online language course depends on how well the learning environment can give students opportunities to practice the language (Zou et al. 2021).

Regional and International Tourism Partnership

Regional and international tourism partnership in Perlis offers practical pathway to integrate teaching Arabic for tourism purposes. Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) has granted 26 tourism accommodation premises in Perlis with Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Hospitality Assurance and Recognition (MFAR) certification (ITC, 2024). With this partnership with ITC, Perlis is currently focusing on Islamic tourism through implementation of seminars and training for tourism employees, providing a wider opportunity to promote teaching Arabic for tourism purposes, which potentially attract Arab tourists' that consists of Muslim majority. Perlis also maintained a strong partnership with Saudi Arabia for the development of various sectors including tourism (Sinar Harian, 2020) which can act as the main factor in teaching Arabic in this sector.

The international events in Perlis attracted international participants and diplomats, offering strategic opportunity to collaborate with foreign tourism agencies including embassies of Arabic-speaking and middle east countries as an effort to captivate more Arab tourists. Integrating Arabic for tourism purposes can better elevate the Perlis' image culturally, linguistically and professionally. Authentic contexts and real situation are the best opportunities to apply language learning among local tourism employees (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Challenges of Teaching Arabic for Tourism Purposes in Perlis

The adoption of teaching Arabic for tourism purposes in Perlis confronts several challenges that need to be solved. If these challenges are not addressed properly, it may hinder the actualization of the initiative and prevent its success to attract more Arab tourists visiting Perlis.

Lack of Qualified Trainers

The most pressing challenges in teaching language for tourism purposes is the limitation and shortage of qualified trainers. As the nature of teaching language for specific purposes differs from general purposes, instructors required to customize their teaching method, learning materials and even assessment based on learners' needs. While general Arabic language educators are present in various educational institutions in Perlis, their focus is more on academic and religious purposes rather than tourism related communication or situational based teaching. They are trained to conduct the teaching according to the approach determined by the institutions to provide general knowledge and basic language skills without concerning on context in any field (Abdul Ghani, Wan Daud & Ramli, 2019).

Teaching Arabic for tourism purposes necessitates the knowledge of need analysis which will determine overall elements in ensuring its success. Fitria (2023) in her study mentioned that English for specific purposes instructors in Indonesia did not undergo pertinent trainings which resulted in lack of pedagogical skills, unrealistic learning materials and inappropriate teaching method. However, there is no previous research discussed the unavailability of qualified

instructors in language education for tourism sector especially in the case of Perlis. Teaching language for specific purposes is more challenging due to its specification in term of making syllabi and lesson plan, designing and selecting learning materials according to learners' needs, difference in students' language proficiency and etc. Lack of qualified trainers must be overcome to ensure the success of teaching Arabic for tourism purposes in Perlis.

Material Limitations

Absence of proper learning materials in Arabic for tourism purposes is considered as one of the significant barriers. Learning materials need to be aligned with Perlis tourism landscape and its cultural elements to suit the real situation of the targeted learners. Most of the existing learning materials are either generalized or too broad making it difficult for non-native learners to grasp the language knowledge and basic language skills needed in tourism contexts. These materials distinct from the principle of teaching language for specific purposes leading to a disconnection between what is taught and what is needed in the real situation (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). The difference between learning materials in Arabic for general purposes and specific purposes is illustrated in figure 1 as follows (Abdul Ghani, Wan Daud & Ramli, 2019):

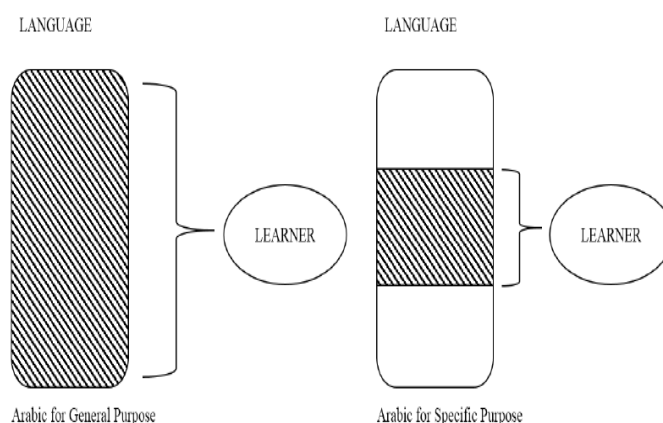


Figure 1: The Learner-Restricted Syllabus

Source: Mohammad Taufiq Abdul Ghani, Wan Daud & Ramli. (2019). Arabic For Specific Purposes in Malaysia: A Literature Review

Yuslina Mohamed et. al. (2022) explained that syllabus designed in teaching Arabic for tourism purposes must consists of authentic tourism texts followed by the practical exercises that focus on listening and speaking skills, yet lack in addressing the local context rather than general design which is not specific in nature. The materials for teaching Arabic for tourism purposes in Perlis differ from its material in other tourism destination in Malaysia. The cognitive ability and individual preferences need to be examined to ensure the material effectiveness. Moreover, materials limitation will force the instructors to depend on ad-hoc or translated materials without proper need analysis and content selection which may compromise the quality and of teaching Arabic for tourism purposes in Perlis.

Logistical and Financial Constraints

Logistical and financials constraints can limit teaching Arabic for tourism purposes especially for Small Medium Enterprises (SME) and private businesses related to tourism in Perlis. They may see the needs and importance for this programme, yet the budget and resources limitations

prevent them from enrolling their staffs in formal training or even hiring tourism specialized language instructors. As teaching language for specific purposes requires a lot of simulation activities, the purchasing cost of the course design and materials should be evaluated (Teoh, 1993). Tourism stakeholders in Perlis must observe this phenomenon in ensuring the Arabic language proficiency among its employees and attracting Arab tourists.

Nur Izzati & Ahmad Taufiq (2017) in their study revealed that the tourism organisations in Terengganu, Malaysia do not provide any foreign language training for its employees and shopkeepers in assisting them to perform their daily tasks. This issue occurs because of the logistical and financial constraints refraining from the language investment in tourism sector. Abdullah Sani et. al. (2023) stated that tourist guides in Perlis face difficulties in attending private training particularly related to communication as the fee is considered not affordable. However, this study is limited to tourist guide which called for a need to discuss these constraints generally among tourism employees focusing in Arabic language education. To support this initiative for a long-term benefit, centralised governmental and non-governmental organization support contributes in solving these limitations and achieving the role of multilingualism in tourism sector.

Low Awareness and Motivation

Low current awareness and motivation towards learning foreign language among employees complicates the implementation of teaching Arabic for tourism purposes. Compared to the case of English language, the needs to learn the language is clear as an international language required in business dealings and professional settings especially tourism sector (Kholidi et. al., 2022 & Dzia-Uddin et. al., 2023). Yet, there is very minimal study conducted in examining the learning motivation in Arabic for tourism purposes and its awareness especially in developing state in tourism sector such as Perlis. Motivation is one of the necessities in teaching Arabic for tourism purposes as it serves as foundation for the learning process and drives them to acquire the language. Yunus et. al. (2023) in their study explained that low level of motivation in language learning will lead to fear and anxiety in practicing it.

Majority of stakeholders and policy makers in Perlis do not perceive Arabic language as a critical investment for the future projection unless the benefits are observable in prevailing tourism trend. Currently Perlis is not receiving an encouraging number of international tourists as compared to the neighbouring countries including Arab tourists', making employees less motivated to learn Arabic language.

Summary of needs, opportunities and challenges of implementing teaching Arabic for tourism purposes in Perlis is as illustrated in table 1 below:

Table 1: Needs, Opportunities and Challenges of Teaching Arabic for Tourism Purposes in Perlis

Needs	Opportunities	Challenges
Demographic trends of Arab tourists	Leveraging international events for authentic language learning	Lack of qualified trainers
Importance of communication skills in tourism sector	Embedding Arabic for tourism purposes into education	Material limitations
Addressing staff language gaps	Developing digital and blended learning materials	Logistical and financial constraints
Addressing cultural needs of Arab tourists	Regional and international tourism partnership	Low awareness and motivation

Discussion and Recommendations

The needs, opportunities and challenges of teaching Arabic for tourism purposes in the context of Perlis indicates that this initiative is feasible and impactful, yet current effort remain underdeveloped and not centralised. It is observed that there is a visible gap between the linguistic needs in tourism settings and lack of language proficiency, supported by non-availability of tourism specific Arabic curriculum.

As the demand of Arabic for tourism purposes is significantly growing which motivated by the increasing number of Arab tourists visiting Malaysia, Perlis can seize the opportunity to enhance the employees' communication skills and service quality. Even though the present challenges stated previously such as lack of qualified trainers, material limitations, logistical and financial constraint and low level of learning motivation represent as main concern in the implementation, all that are manageable and possible to be resolved with practical and coordinated solutions. This study proposed several recommendations to encourage the development of Arabic language for tourism purposes in Perlis such as follows:

Designing Localized Arabic Language Learning Materials

An immediate need to design a localized Arabic language learning materials based on Perlis context emerged based on its growing demands in many aspects. Modules and training curriculum called for a customized learning contents based on the state tourism landscape and its attractions, besides common communication phrases and expressions such as greetings, check-in and check-out process, providing information, handling complains etc.

Every tourism destination differs from one another in term of uniqueness and cultural values, creating a need to prepare a local contextualized language modules and training. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) assert that the course design in language for specific purposes must be as close as possible to the real situation faced by learners in their daily operation. This secures a more realistic learning materials that directly focusing on Perlis settings which not yet available to improve learners' proficiency level.

Implementation of Short-Term Basic Communication Course

Tourism stakeholders and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions in Perlis are recommended to provide short term and micro credentials programme

in teaching basic Arabic language communication skills among tourism employees. Azmi et al. (2024) in their study stated that tourism students from various Malaysian universities agree that micro credentials programme is impactful based on its flexibility and accessibility in advancing expertise in specialized area. Furthermore, this kind of programme has a great potential in boosting the learning motivation in acquiring qualifications in language learning in shorter duration. Short courses on Arabic for tourism purposes can be executed with the collaboration with Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA) as a government certified institutions to motivate tourism employees in enhancing their service and upscale their career growth.

Integration of Cultural Immersion Programmes

Arabic for tourism purposes in Perlis can further be promoted through cultural immersion programmes that allow the real communication with the native speaker. This includes guest-exchange programme, staff exchange programme to Arab tourists' zone such as Kuala Lumpur and Pulau Langkawi and volunteer-based cultural exchange programme. By allowing direct engagement with Arab personnels, the cultural values and preferences can be understood better. Nasirudeen (2024) in his study demonstrated language enhancement among non-native learners is better achieved through cultural immersion programmes. As Perlis already organized several international events, it is a great opportunity to immerse this initiative into those events.

Arabic Interpreters Training for International Events

Preparing Arabic interpreters through systematic trainings is an added value for international events in Perlis. Perkampungan Sunnah particularly and other events such as International Kite Festival, Perlis East Wind Festival and etc. are able to be enhanced by the service of Arabic interpreters for the invited Arab guests. Interpretation is a highly required element in any international event including academic conferences, festivals, sport match and etc. in elevating foreign guests' experience and maximise the benefits (Ibrahim, 2008). Other than this assists guest in adapting the events, it benefits the promotion of Arabic language in tourism purposes in Perlis.

Development of Digital Learning Platforms

As digital learning platforms offer easy accessibility and self-learning, it is highly recommended for teaching Arabic for tourism purposes in Perlis. Developing applications, websites, utilizing social media and its specific learning contents for acquiring Arabic communication skills needed in tourism sector provide a greater opportunity for employees to achieve language proficiency. The emerging platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams also accommodate successful blended learning, making it easier for tourism employees in Perlis. Cooperation from experts from teaching language for specific purposes and digital learning is needed in ensuring the platforms built adhere to real needs.

Strategic Partnership with Tourism Stakeholders

More strategic partnership with main tourism stake holders and key players is necessary to implement teaching Arabic for tourism purposes. This initiative is considered a long-term and future investment for the context of Perlis tourism, yet the early preparation and planning will institutionalize its implementation. Rather than the partnership just focuses on developing

Arabic language, it boosts the strategy to attract more international tourists including from Arabic-speaking countries, by promoting the tourism uniqueness and offerings.

Conclusion

The needs to incorporate teaching Arabic for tourism purposes in Perlis is vital to address the expanding demand. As this initiative is believed to develop communication skills and service quality, it highlights the ability to increase Arabic-speaking tourists' satisfaction and encourages retention. Beyond improving tourists' engagement, teaching language for specific purposes mainly in tourism sector offers career upskilling in term of language proficiency for the development of local workforce. In order to achieve a positive outcome, strategic cooperation and partnership among tourism stakeholders is the key factor for a sustainable and realistic Arabic language training programmes. Future empirical research must be conducted focusing on learning materials design, its evaluation and effectiveness by incorporating tourism employees and stakeholders in Perlis in ensuring an aligned language needs according to tourism sector's demand.

Acknowledgements

- 1) The authors gratefully acknowledge the contributions of prior research and secondary data sources that informed this study and formed the basis of this conceptual and qualitative content analysis. No funding or institutional support was received for this work.
- 2) The authors would like to express sincere gratitude to Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Perlis (MAIPs; Council of Islamic Religion and Malay Customs of Perlis), for awarding Jamalullail Scholarship to the first author, which made this research possible.

References

- Abdul Ghani, M. T., Wan Daud, W. A., & Sahrir, M. S. (2016). Web-based Learning in Arabic for Tourism purposes: A Case Study at KPTM. *Springer Science+Business Media Singapore 2016, J.E. Luaran et al. (eds.), Envisioning the Future of Online Learning*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-0954-9_3
- Abdullah Sani, N., Yusof, Y., Ahmad, Y., Abdul Rahman, N. (2023). Dark Tourism as an Alternative Tourism Development in Wang Kelian, Perlis, Malaysia. *Advances in Humanities and Contemporary Studies*, 4(2), pp. 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.30880/ahcs.2023.04.02.001>
- Ali, M. A., Kamis, M. S., Ali, R., Bakeri, Y., Ying Khoo, S. Y. (2025). Exploring the Linguistic Landscape of Kuching Waterfront to Enhance Arab Tourist Experience: Opportunities and Challenges. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 15(3). <https://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v15-i3/24944>
- Al-Janabi, A. (2015). *Al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah wa al-Irshādāt al-Siyāhiyyah fī al-Bilād al-Nāṭiqah bighayr al-'Arabiyyah: Mālīziyā namūdhajan* [Arabic Language and Tourist Guidance in Non-Arabic-speaking Countries: Malaysia as a Model]. *Majma' al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah al-Urdunī*.
- ASEAN Briefing. (2025). Malaysia's Tourism Evolution: Infrastructure, Identity, and International Appeal. Retrieved via the link: <https://www.aseanbriefing.com/news/malaysias-tourism-evolution-infrastructure-identity-and-international-appeal/>
- Azmi, A., Zubir, H. A., Farook, F., Noorafizi, H., Abd Wahab, A. M. (2024). The Effectiveness of Micro-credential Programme from the Perspective of Tourism Students. *Journal of Ecohumanism*, 3(4), pp. 377 – 389. <https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v3i4.3578>

- Bahtiar, I. R., Jubaidah, S., Sarip, M. & Failasuf, C. (2024). Microlearning-based Tourism Arabic Teaching Material Model for Tourism Awareness Groups in Tourism Villages, Proceedings in International Conference on Culture, Arts, Languages, Literature, and Education, *KnE Social Sciences*, pp. 78–92. DOI 10.18502/kss.v9i9.15659
- Čuić Tanković, A., Vitezić, V. and Kraljić, V. (2023). Employee Communication and Soft Skills Influencing Tourists' Satisfaction. *European Journal of Tourism Research*, 34, pp. 3410. <https://doi.org/10.54055/ejtr.v34i.2967>
- Deliana, D. (2024). Strategy Ecotourism in Perlis Malaysia to Become One of Malaysia's Top Destination. *Teumulong: Journal of Community Service*, 2(3).
- Dzia-Uddin, D. N., Anuar, J., Mhd Atan, I. M., Minghat, A. D. (2023). Communication Skills and Success for Hospitality TVET Graduates Post Pandemic: A Review. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 14(5). <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v14-i5/21568>
- Fitria, T. N. (2023). English Lecturers' Difficulties in Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in Various Higher Education in Indonesia. *Journal of English Teaching and Learning Issues*, 6(1), p. 65–80. DOI: 10.21043/jetli.v6i1.19178
- Hutchinson, T., & Waters, A. (1987). English for Specific Purposes: A Learner-centered Approach. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ibrahim, N. (2008). Conference Interpreting in Malaysia: Professional and Training Perspective. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Granada, Granada, Spain.
- Ibrahim, Z., Zahari, M. S., Sulaiman, M., Othman, Z., Jusoff, K. (2009). "Travelling Pattern and Preferences of the Arab Tourists in Malaysian Hotels". *International Journal of Business and Management*, 7(7).
- Islamic Tourism Centre. (2024). Islamic Tourism Centre Soft Launched Islamic Tourism Month 2024 And MFAR Plaques Award. Retrieved via the link: <https://www.itc.gov.my/islamic-tourism-centre-soft-launched-islamic-tourism-month-2024-and-mfar-plaques-award/#:~:text=Launched%20in%20the%20presence%20of,for%20domestic%20and%20international%20tourists.>
- Khan, N. I., Kamaluddin, A., Saad, S., Ismail, A. H., Mahmud, R. & Ibrahim, N. N. (2024). The Issues and Challenges of Homestay Business Sustainability in Selangor and Perlis: In the Lens of Social, Economic and Environmental Factors, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(5), pp. 6565-6577. <https://doi.org/10.53555/kuey.v30i5.3983>
- Kholidi, M. A., Syauqina Azhan, N. A., Ariawan, S. (2022). Needs Analysis of English Language Use in Tourism Industry in Selangor, Malaysia. *LSP International Journal*, 9(1), pp. 123–136. <https://doi.org/10.11113/lspi.v9.18285>
- Md Noor, N. N., Mohd Said, N., Lahap@Wahab, J., Hakim, F. A., & Rahim, N. (2023) The Influence of Service Quality and Employee Quality on Customer's Loyalty Towards Hotels in Perlis During COVID-19 Pandemic. *ESTEEM Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 7(Special Issue). <https://ir.uitm.edu.my/id/eprint/86375>
- Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) Malaysia. (2024). Malaysia Tourism Statistics in Brief 2024. https://data.tourism.gov.my/frontend/pdf/New_Final_Malaysia%20Tourism%20Statistics%20in%20Brief%202024.pdf
- Mohammad Najib Jaffar et. al. (2022). Arabic For Specific Purpose and Systematic Literature Review on The Design of Islamic Tourism Mobile Application. *IJAZARABI: Journal of Arabic Learning*, 5(1).

- Mohd Noor, N. M. (2019). A Needs Analysis of English Oral Communication Skills among Tourism Management Students. (Unpublished Master Dissertation). University Of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.
- Mohd Yusuf, B. N. & Muhamad Asni, M. F. A. (2023). Program Perkampungan Sunnah Perlis sebagai Produk Pelancongan Islamik. *International Journal of Business and Technology Management*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.55057/ijbtm.2023.5.1.9>
- Mustapha, T. A., Duncan Preece, A. S., Amzat, I. H. (2024). Exploring the Employability and Relevancy of Arabic Graduates in Southwest Nigeria. *Al-Hikmah International Journal for Islamic Studies & Human Sciences*, 7(2). E-ISSN: 2637-0581. http://irep.iium.edu.my/115669/8/115669_Exploring%20the%20Employability%20and%20Relevancy%20of%20Arabic%20Graduates%20in%20Southwest%20Nigeria.pdf
- Nasirudeen, A. I. (2024). The Impact of Language Immersion on Developing Arabic Language Skills in Non-Native Learners: A Descriptive Study. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 13(4). <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v13-i4/23199>
- New Straits Times. (2025). Kuala Perlis Poised to Become Top Destination for International Events Following Kite Fiesta. Retrieved from the link: <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2025/02/1177103/kuala-perlis-poised-become-top-destination-international-events>
- Ng, S. I., Lee, J. A., & Soutar, G. N. (2007). Tourists' intention to visit a country: The impact of cultural distance. *Tourism Management*, 28, pp. 1497–1506. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2006.11.005>
- Nur Izzati & Ahmad Taufiq. (2017). The Role of Multilingualism in Enhancing Tourism Sector in Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 7(7). <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v7-i7/3154>
- Park, S., Woo, M., & Nicolau, J. L. (2020). Determinant factors of tourist expenses. *Journal of Travel Research*, 59(2), pp. 267-280.
- Belanjawan Negeri. (2024). Teks Ucapan Belanjawan 2024, Rang Undang-Undang Perbekalan Tahun 2024, Dewan Undangan Negeri Perlis.
- PLANMalaysia (2020). Pelan Induk Perancangan Fizikal Pelancongan Negeri Perlis. Bahagian Rancangan Pembangunan. Pejabat Projek Zon Utara (Jabatan Perancangan Bandar dan Desa).
- Reisinger, Y., & Turner, L. (1998). Cultural Differences between Mandarin-Speaking Tourists and Australian Hosts and Their Impact on Cross-Cultural Tourist-Host Interaction. *Journal of Business Research*, 42(2), pp. 175–187. [https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963\(97\)00107-0](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963(97)00107-0)
- Richards, J., & Rodgers, T. (2001). Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching (p. 204). New York: Cambridge University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667305.021>
- Salman, A. & Hashim, M. S. (2012). Factors and Competitiveness of Malaysia as a Tourist Destination: A Study of Outbound Middle East Tourists. *Asian Social Science*, 8(12). <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ass.v8n12p48>
- Samah, R. (2007). Penggunaan Internet dalam Pengajaran Bahasa: Kajian Terhadap Bahasa Arab Komunikasi Pelancongan. *Malaysian Education Dean's Council Journal*, 1(2), pp. 83–95.

- Sinar Harian. (2020). Kerjasama Perlis, Arab Saudi perlu dipelihara. <https://www.sinarharian.com.my/article/65187/edisi/utara/kerjasama-perlis-arab-saudi-perlu-dipelihara>
- Sonja Oklobdžija. (2015). The Role of Events in Tourism Development. *БизИнфо (BizInfo Journal)*, 6(2), pp. 83-97. DOI: 0.5937/BIZINFO15020830
- Suhaimi, N. I. B., & Abdullah, A. T. H. B. (2017). The Role of Multilingualism in Enhancing Tourism Sector in Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 7(7). <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v7-i7/3154>
- Teoh, M. L. (1993). Simulation in Language Teaching - Its Advantages and Limitations in an ESP Context. *The English Teacher*, XXII. https://melita.org.my/journals/TET/downloads/tet22_01_08.pdf
- Tourism Malaysia. (2020). Malaysia Tourism Statistics in Brief, <http://www.tourism.gov.my/statistics>
- Yunus, N., Abdul Alahdad, S. N., Ammar, A., Sazali, A. R. (2023). The Influence of Motivation on Fear in the Learning of Arabic Language as a Foreign Language. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 13(11). <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i11/12290>
- Yuslina Muhammad, & al-Ākharūn. (2022). Al-waḥda al-tadrīsiyya lil-lugha al-‘Arabiyya li-aghrād khāṣṣa (al-siyāḥa) bayna nazariyya wa usus taṣmīmihā [The Arabic language instructional unit for specific purposes (tourism) between theory and design foundations]. *Al-Azkiyaa’ International Journal of Languages and Education*, 1(2). <https://doi.org/10.33102/ala-zkiyaa.v1i2.25>
- Yusof, N. S., Shariff, N. M., & Omar, H. (2019). Muslim Tourists’ Expectation towards Islamic Hospitality Services in Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research Business and Social Sciences*, 9(6), pp. 1–10. <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v9-i6/5911>
- Zalika Adam. (2013). Ta‘līm al-‘Arabīyah li-aghrād siyāḥīyah fī Mālīziyā: Taḥlīl al-ḥājāt wa-taṣmīm waḥadāt dirāsīyah. *Al-Jāmi‘ah al-Islāmīyah al-‘Ālamīyah – Mālīziyā, Kūālā Lambūr*.
- Zou, C., Li, P., & Jin, L. (2021). Online College English Education in Wuhan against the COVID-19 Pandemic: Student and Teacher Readiness, Challenges and Implications. *PloS one*, 16(10), e0258137. <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0258137>