

## **The Social and Cultural Implications of the Educational Program for Students of Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic Language to Non- Native Speakers" (Descriptive Study)**

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### **Abstract**

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Studying Arabic Language and disseminating it among non-Arabic speaking countries is considered as a basic tool for the dissemination of Islamic values, and important for understanding the Holy Koran and the Prophet's *Sunnah* in mother language. The Arabic Language has a spiritual power with which Islam can be fully understood beyond the translation of Koran into other languages that make us lose the spiritual effect of Koran on soul. God, Glory be to Him, said: "We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an, in order that ye may learn wisdom" (Yusuf-2). Accordingly, this study sheds light on the importance of using the implications of educational programs for teaching the non-Arabic speaking people. This is to alter the typical view generated in peoples of these countries and presenting a positive picture expressing the reality of the cultural, scientific, value, ethical heritage that was produced by Arabic Language throughout eras. This study has attempted to identify the social and cultural implications achieved by an educational program held in the faculty of Sultan Qaboos for non-Arabic speaking people. The study tried to identify the implications and topics through which students are taught the Arabic Language. It also identified the cultural and social activities in which the students are involved during their study in the faculty. It also attempts to identify the students' impression about what the students received about the social life in the Sultanate for two months. Hence, the study has listed the suggestions necessary for the development of this program to achieve the full benefits of recognizing the cultural and social heritage of the Omani society. The study used the descriptive analytical typology and was based on the methodology of analyzing the content of the educational program and the cultural program to which learners are subjecting during their study period in the faculty. For the fields of the study, the human scope was represented in interviewing professors, supervisors, and officials in the faculty, beside, the analysis of the content of students' reports about their impressions about the program. For the location of the study, the study was limited to the faculty of Sultan Qaboos for Teaching the Non-Arabic Speaking Students. The study duration was two months. The study used an interview guide to applied to specialists, and another guide for recording the impressions of students about the program and about the social environment in which they lived during their study period of time. The following are the major findings reached by the study: The program of the faculty has not been limited to the general objective, i.e., teaching Arabic Language, but it obviously focuses on the achievement of other objectives as the students' knowledge of culture and customs of the Omani society and linking them to other topics related to Arab and Islamic World. The study concluded a set of recommendations. The following are the important ones: The researcher recommends that it is important for the faculty to write a book and designing a form to be filled in by each student immediately after coming to The Sultanate of Oman to know the previous impressions about the Omani and Islamic society. This is to design a plan for correcting the negative impressions. Another recommendation by the research was to provide the university residence with playgrounds and sports halls for both sexes, and to let community members participate in playing with students. The researcher recommends also that a permanent exhibition should be placed in the faculty to show the heritage, thought, habits, and customs consistent with the values of the society and Islam.

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### **Problem of the Study:**

Studying Arabic Language and disseminating it among non-Arabic speaking countries is considered as a basic tool for the dissemination of Islamic values, and important for understanding the Holy Koran and the Prophet's *Sunnah* in mother language. The Arabic Language has a spiritual power with which Islam can be fully understood beyond the translation of Koran into other languages that make us lose the spiritual effect of Koran on soul. God, Glory be to Him, said: "We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an, in order that ye may learn wisdom" (Yusuf-2).

With the spread of institutes and institutions that are interested in teaching Arabic Language to non-native speakers, the interest paid to the implications of topics included in the teaching program has an ultimate importance for achieving other objectives than teaching Arabic Language. Unfortunately, as the Arabic speaking societies have experienced civilization retard, wars, and the emergence of extremist thoughts, this has led to a kind of anxiety and caution of learning Arabic Language in Arabic speaking countries fearing of falling into the gap of these extremist thoughts. The Western countries have also generated an idea that there is no necessity to learn Arabic Language, since there is no need to learn the language of those countries. Arabic countries, from their perspective, consume everything, such as, culture, science, technology of others; accordingly, there is no need to learn their language.

One of the studies conducted about this topic is Al-Khasawnah (1988). The study aimed at the clarification of cultural fields shown in Arabic Language books used by the non-native speakers, the way they are taught, level of focus on these fields. This study provided the responsible for preparing such books, a picture of the weaknesses existing in this material, aiming to pay attention to the positive aspects in the future. The sample of the study consisted of 6 groups of educational curricula. The researcher developed a model for cultural content analysis of these books. The study found that these curricula have not been developed on scientific basis and that they are insufficient to achieve the general objective of teaching Arabic Language to the non-native speakers (Bashir Al Zoghby, 2009).

Abul Rous (2001) aimed to identify the effect of teaching Islamic and Arabic cultural patterns on the understanding of non-native speakers studying Arabic language. As to whether these texts are consistent to their motivations and wants, and whether the characteristics of a learner (nationality and mother tongue) affect the development of his understanding of these topics, the researcher analyzed the contents of the curricula taught to the subjected students. The study showed an increase in the level of understanding the Islamic Arabic culture among students, and showed also that there positive relationship between their understanding of concepts and their nationality and mother tongue. The study showed also that there are statistically significant differences between the learner's gender and his/her understanding of concepts and cultural patterns. In addition, a positive relationship was found between the level of linguistic excellence of learners and their studied understanding (Abul Rous, 2001).

In addition, Choi Sung-Mock (2006) aimed to identify the effect of texts based on funny and entertaining topics on the reading comprehension of non-English speaking students. The study revealed that overwhelming details, even if attractive, dismiss the general ideas after students' absorption of them. The over-detailed information fails in improving the reader's comprehension. The attractive details and information just achieved slight improvement of comprehension.

Accordingly, this study sheds light on the importance of the implications of educational programs for the non-Arabic speaking people; how to use these programs for altering the typological view in their countries; and using these programs to present a positive view expressing the reality of value, cultural, scientific and ethical heritage produced by Arabic Language throughout eras.

This study attempts to identify the social and cultural implications achieved by an Arabic learning program applied in the Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers. The study identified the contents of topics used to teach Arabic language to those students, and contents of social and cultural activities practiced in the college by those students. The study also seeks to identify the students' impressions about what they had recognized about social life in the Sultanate of Oman for two months. The study concluded with the suggestions necessary for developing the program in order to benefit in recognizing the cultural and social heritage of the Omani society.

The study used the descriptive analytical typology and was based on the methodology of analyzing the content of the educational program and the cultural program to which learners are subjecting during their study period in the college. For the fields of the study, the human scope was represented in interviewing professors, supervisors, and officials in the college, beside, the analysis of the content of students' reports about their impressions about the program.

For the location of the study, the study was limited to the Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers. The study duration was two months. The study used an interview guide to applied to specialists, and another guide for recording the impressions of students about the program and about the social environment in which they lived during their study period of time. The study ended with a lot of important results and recommendations.

### Questions of the Study:

- 1- What are the social implications of the learning program for non-native speakers in the Sultan Qaboos College?
- 2- What are the cultural implications of the learning program for non-native speakers in the Sultan Qaboos College?
- 3- What are the impressions generated in students concerning the social and cultural aspects about the college and the surrounding community?
- 4- What are the suggestions given for developing the social and cultural implications of the learning program in the college?

### Concepts of the Study:

#### 1- Language:

**Ferdinand de Saussure** defined "language" as a system of distinct signs. **Edward Sapir** defined it as "a human phenomenon to communicate emotions, ideas and desires by means of a system of terminological sound symbols". **American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)** defines Language is as a complex and dynamic system of conventional symbols that is used in various modes for thought and communication. Ibn Khaldun defines the language as speaker's self-expression in phrases and this expression is a lingual action intending to produce meaningful speech; it exists in each nation depending on its conventions. Mohamed Al-Kholi defines it that it is basically a sound system composed of accidental?? Symbols used by members of a group to exchange ideas and feelings (Hussein Mokhtar Al-Zaher, p.20, 2011).

#### 2- Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers:

It is a college that was established according to royal commands by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, in 2012. It is considered as the first college all over the world that is specialized in teaching Arabic to non-native speakers. It is sponsored by the Sultan Qaboos Higher Institute for Culture and Science. It represents how His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said is interested in teaching Arabic language to nonnative speakers.(The College's Introduction Handbook).

### Theoretical Framework of the Study:

#### 1- Brief History of Arabic Language:

There are different sayings about the first one who developed the Arabic writing. It is said that he was Adam, Peace be upon him (PBUH). It is known about the prophet Mohamed (PBUH) that he said "The first one who wrote was the prophet Enoch (PBUH)". It is said also that they are a group of kings whose names are "AbgadHawazHottiKalamonSaafas, which the alphabets of Arabic Language were attributed to their names. It is said also that the first Arab who wrote in Arabic was *Harb Ibn Omayya Abd Shams, who had learned from the people of Hira, who had already learned from people of Al Anbar*. The Arabic resources agree that the formation of Alphabets is attributed to Maramer Ibn Morrah and Aslam Ibn Hadrah, of Al Anbar people, in a village called *Bakkah*.

Ibn Khaldun mentioned that Arabic handwriting was weak at the beginning, since Arabs were not so much sophisticated in Art. He pointed out that the Koraan Book's writing was not highly sophisticated at the beginning also. Hence, Arabs intended to enhance their handwriting later. There are three persons whom virtue of using dots in Arabic handwriting can be attributed. They are: Abul Aswad Aldo'ali, Nasr Ibn Assem, and Yehia Ibn Ya'mar. The alphabets were written without dots before Abul Aswad Al Do'ali who used dots and other symbols above the end of words for grammatical purposes (i.e. grammatical work). Then, Nasr Ibn Asem used dots to differentiate some letters from others (ب/ت "Ba and Ta"; ف/ق "Fa and Qaf").

Afterwords, Khalil Ibn Ahmed came to use vowel symbols above and under letters as known now (Ahmed Abdel Sattar, 2008, p. 9).

### **Major Motives of Students for Learning Arabic Language:**

There are a set of motives that motivate students to learn Arabic Language. The following are the most important motives:

- 1- Religious motives,
- 2- Educational,
- 3- For work/jobs
- 4- Political,
- 5- Economic and commercial
- 6- Diplomatic
- 7- National motives
- 8- Scientific motives, and
- 9- For travel and tourism (Hussein, Mokhtar. 2011, p. 292).

### **The Importance of Implying the Cultural Aspect when Preparing Books for Teaching Arabic Language to Non-Native Speakers:**

A language is considered as a pot for culture. The analyzer of learning language books cannot ignore the discussion of the cultural content of books. Talking about cultural content calls for dealing with many things, such as, way of introducing the cultural concepts; cultural models, extent of using Arabic nouns; the general impression on readers about Arabic culture; and extent of content's relationship with Islamic culture.

Culture as styles of people's life, political, economic, social, pedagogical and educational systems occupies an important status in teaching and learning foreign languages. It is considered as a complementary, even basic, part of educational material. Accordingly, the cultural components should be fully merged into the learning/teaching material and into all aspects and aids of education, especially books. The studies proved that most learners know that cultural information and knowledge are as a basic goal of any material for learning a foreign language. They know also that it is an important factor for succeeding in teaching language and their uses (Teima, Rushdy and Mahmoud, Kamel, 1983, p.44).

There is a common culture for all people of the same language. This culture overwhelms the vocabulary of that language with important meanings of religious, social, civilizational or historical nature. It may be difficult to understand some of these terms without relating them to the culture. Accordingly, the first and the second language should be taught in terms of their own cultures (El Zoghbi, Bashir, 2009, p. 72).

It is obvious that learning about culture affects the learners' understanding. A lot of metaphors reflect the certain social or cultural experiences. Accordingly, they may be well understood when translated to another language (Omar, 1985, p.82). The learner of Arabic as a foreign language cannot understand the meanings of vocabulary and sentences away from the culture of the Arabic and Islamic society. Hence, how a foreign learner can understand a poem isolated from the social and cultural surrounding that is reflected in the poem (Alghali, 1991, 24).

The learner's ignorance of the native speakers' culture causes a basic problem in his/her study of meanings when trying to find in a language a term that gives the same meaning in another language. Here, he supposes that the two terms are identical concerning typology, culture, social circumstances and linguistic metaphors (Omar, 1985, p.90). That shows the effect of culture on language is that the habits of utterance acquired since childhood in the first language have social implications and certain roots, accordingly, the utterance of sounds and vowels can be related to social implications and social culture (Alzein, 1997, p. 274).

Language is a basic component of culture. We use language to express our cultures. One cannot speak about language in isolation of the culture. The language is the pot of culture. As to the relationship between culture and teaching Arabic language to foreigners, understanding the culture of Islamic society is an integrated part of learning Arabic (Alghali, 1991, p. 24).

The following are a set of principles that make the culture an integrated part of learning a foreign language:

- 1- The ability to interact with any language speakers does not only depend on being perfect in language skills, but also depends on understanding its native speakers' habits, hopes and expectations.
- 2- The foreign learners' societies affect their attitudes towards other cultures. There are open societies, right thoughts and wrong thoughts about other cultures.
- 3- The learners have their own purposes for learning a language and its culture. Hence, the native speakers also have their own purposes for teaching their language to others and disseminating their culture. Accordingly, we should be careful to achieve the purposes of both sides.
- 4- A culture has past, present and future dimensions.
- 5- Learners have various purposes of studying language and culture: there are religious, political, commercial, occupational and scientific purposes, etc. (Teima, Rushdy and Mahmoud, Kamel, 1983, p.44).

The relationship between language and culture is a highly controversial issue among researchers. It can be said that culture is more comprehensive than language, and that language is a part of culture. For the importance of culture, the learners when tries to learn a language take have communication with this language as one of their major objectives. "The language's relation to culture emerges on the fact that culture and language are social phenomena, as all other social phenomena that change, alternate and move from one phase to another according to continuous and successive ways.

According to these premises, we can develop a set of conditions and principles that should be taken into consideration when preparing the cultural content of a basic educational material for teaching Arabic language to non-native speakers:

- 1- The material should express the content of Arabic and Islamic culture.
- 2- To give an honest and sound reflection of life in Arab countries.
- 3- The material should reflect the cultural and intellectual interests of different types of learners.
- 4- The material should vary to cover various cultural and intellectual fields within the framework of Arabic and Islamic culture.
- 5- The material should be consistent with the learners' purposes and at the same time with the Arabs' purposes of teaching their language and disseminating it.
- 6- The material should not ignore the life aspects common and across cultures.
- 7- The content should reflect the Arab civilized human life within the contemporary era.
- 8- The cultural content of the material should motivate the students to learn the language and to continue learning this language.
- 9- The cultural content should be presented with a level that suits learners' age and educational levels.
- 10- The material should pay attention to the genuine accepted values in the Arab and Islamic culture.
- 11- It should work on the correction and evaluation of wrong thoughts within learners' minds about the Arab and Islamic culture.
- 12- It should avoid giving intolerant judgments in favor of Arab culture.
- 13- It should avoid giving judgments against other cultures (Teima, Rushdy and Mahmoud, Kamel, 1983, p.44).

**Important topics of Arabic and Islamic Culture that should be included in Arabic Language Programs Used for teaching the non-native speakers:**

- 1- Islam as a legislation and a creed,
- 2- The Holy Koran (revelation, collecting, interpretation..etc.),
- 3- Prophet's Hadith (sayings) and the related disciplines,
- 4- Status of women in Islam,
- 5- Islam and work,
- 6- Islamic economics (wealth and how to be gained and spent),
- 7- The Prophet's life and ethics,
- 8- Government in Islam,
- 9- Al Quds as an Islamic issue,

- 10- Islamic scientists,
- 11- Arabic women,
- 12- Palestine,
- 13- Arabic literature, and
- 14- Arabic traditions and customs (Hussein, Mokhtar, 2011, p.286)

### **Importance of including the social aspect when preparing a book for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers:**

The teachers of foreign languages have been waiting since a long time for the investment of the results of linguistic revolution that was set off by Chomsky. They expected to have a big share in it, but this has not happened, because the thoughts of Chomsky have not gone beyond language as an abstract activity. His thoughts have nothing to do with education. Then, the opinions of social linguistics have come to be far from the deficit and limited linguistic view introduced by Chomsky. They called for more comprehensive view that links language to the speakers' time, place, hearer, purpose and surrounding conditions (...although *Hymes* and his colleagues have not stop searching in this field, the real and large-scale interest has only emerged recently. This was clear after showing that Chomsky theory has reached a certain level of abstraction so that only specialists can understand it, and after clear failure in benefiting from principles developed by the scientists of this school in teaching language. These principles have only been limited to what can be said by means of language. They have not included what can be said in certain time, place, by certain speaker, to a certain hearer, with a certain way, or in certain social conditions, to achieve certain purpose. They were inclusive to language itself, isolated from any surrounding in which it is used. Hence, the mere teaching that is based on these principles has very limited benefit. Accordingly, a new school emerged to consider these matters, with studies in this field. This school was called *Social Linguistics*. (Hussein, Mokhtar Altaher, 2011, p.278).

A human being acquires language from the surrounding community regardless identity of this language. It cannot, or is impossible to, acquire it if he/she is isolated from human society, in spite of having linguistic instinct and biological ability to speak. This sociability of language makes it inevitable, during teaching it, not to adhere to teaching rules and principles only, but social principles should be also taught because language is not used in vacuum world, but it is used in a certain world with its own principles that control individual behaviors (Abellah, Omar Al Seddik, 2008, p.13).

The issue of linguistic uses is a part of general social behavior that do not differ from other social behaviors, such as habits, traditions, building houses system, clothes design,..etc. Accordingly, judging what is accepted and what is not linguistically became stemming from linguistic activity that is a part of social behavior, the same as other social behaviors. Hence, the concept of right and wrong is looked at as a social concept rather than a linguistic one. The linguistically right is what can be accepted by the language society, and the linguistically wrong is what is refused by the language society (Kherma and Haggag, 1988, 118).

One of the biggest mistakes that the traditional teaching methodology has experienced is its perspective for the concept of "correct". It has dealt with this term from pure linguistic perspective without relating it to its social reality. This perspective has controlled out view to Arabic language so that we look to it as a set of abstract linguistic rules and principles. To correct this wrong perspective, we should adopt a social approach when studying or teaching the Arabic language. Fortunately, a number of new methodologies of teaching foreign languages have emerged recently in which the traditional view to language was avoided. More interest is given to the issue of language functions and uses. According to this new perspective, we should train learners on how to use language. We should also clarify to him that the determination of word meanings and expressions is not by checking them up in dictionaries only but learners should absorb the social context or situation in which the speech is undergoing, and to know the relationship between speakers and hearers, their personalities, and the physical environment surrounding the situation (Hussein, Mokhtar Al Taher, 2011, p.279).

### **Conclusion:**

In brief, learning a language is related to the cultural heritage of the nation and the social context. Accordingly, we should be cautious of teaching Arabic away from its cultural and social context. It is better to relate the learner of Arabic language to its cultural and social components. This is at the educational level, but at the evaluation level, it is not enough for a student to get high marks in language proficiency. His cultural performance should be evaluated as well.

There should be cultural tests to measure learner's understanding of the culture of the foreign language he/she is being taught (Hussein, Mokhtar Altaher, 2011, p285). For the close linkage between culture and language, it has become necessary to teach culture and its language to the foreign students. The language if taught without culture, it becomes as merely signs without meanings that may be used incorrectly (NECD, 2003).

Since teaching a language is considered as a means for recognizing a culture, not vice versa, we have the right to orient others towards knowing our cultures. This should be done in an interesting, smart and objectives ways that do not evoke any kind of sensitivity. When presenting our culture, we should choose the good, because every culture has its own advantages and disadvantages. So we should present useful lessons about our proverbs, wisdom, and stories, which indicates cooperation, bravery, generosity..etc. The principle for our cultural prototypes presented should be the respect to learner's mind and culture in order to guarantee his/her respect to our minds and culture.

When looking at the Arabic language, we find it as the container that carries the patterns of Arabic and Islamic culture. This is the fact that we should consider. We teach Arabic to non-native speakers, so we must introduce our Arabic and Islamic culture. This should be done with smart, wise and honest methods. In that way, we can gain new friends. (Hussein, Mokhtar Al Taher, 2011, 285).

### **Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers, in brief:**

#### **Interest in Arabic in Sultanate of Oman:**

Recently, Arabic language is acquiring special importance in various fields of study and programs presented by educational institutions in our contemporary world. This represents a response to the increasing need of students who want to learn Arabic language. This also may be due to the world openness to other different cultures of which Arabic culture is an important one. In addition, there is an increasing attitude towards exchanging and communication between Arab peoples and other world peoples. This has led to giving language knowledge such importance. Arabic language acquires special importance also in the general cultural and civilization trends in Sultanate of Oman, at both the local and world universal levels. One manifestations of such interest is obvious in His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Ibn Said's interest in Arabic language issue and in anything that can reinforce its existence and its dissemination all over the world. This was reflected in establishing a number of chairs for studying Arabic language in a number of foreign universities. It is not surprising since Arabic language in the Sultanate is the formal national language. It is also the language of education, and communication between the Sultanate and all other Arab countries. It is also the language of the Holy Koran. The royal desire of His Majesty- God bless him- in establishing a college for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers was supporting to his general interest in Arabic, and as a response to contemporary requirements and the world openness among peoples of the world.

#### **College Vision:**

**Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic Language to Non-Native Speakers** strives to become a regional and international leader in the teaching of ASL, through its high quality programs that depends on the latest technologies in teaching foreign languages and contribution in building communication and cultural bridges with other non-Arabic speaking nations.

#### **College Mission:**

The mission of the **Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic Language to Non-Native Speakers** is to contribute to the production of graduates with high linguistic and cultural competency in MSA. We strive to enable the students to communicate and interact effectively in any Arab society and to allow them to continue further studies in educational institutions where Arabic is the medium of instruction.

#### **Goals:**

##### ***The college aims to:***

- 1- Introducing orientation programs about Arabic for non-native speakers within a genuinely linguistic and cultural environment.

- 2- Preparing learners that have good knowledge of basics and skills of Arabic: in listening, speaking, reading, and writing; and to enable them to communicate with the contemporary Arabic culture.
- 3- Disseminate awareness of the importance of learning Arabic for non-native speakers to extend bridges of cooperation and cultural exchange among peoples of the world.
- 4- Providing opportunity of for non-Arabic speaking people to acquire this language and to enable them to communicate culturally with the society; and to facilitate their continuity of studying in Arabic within the Arabic-based educational institutions that use Arabic as a means of education.
- 5- Contributing in disseminating Arabic among peoples, and orienting those peoples about the civilizations of Arab and Islamic countries from genuine resource of heritage, which reinforces the human links between Arabic speakers and other non-Arabic speakers.

### **College Location:**

The college is located in Manah in the interior of Oman. It is indeed the perfect place for learning Arabic as it maintains its original Omani character in terms of language, traditions and lifestyle. Manah is surrounded by many historical and natural tourist destinations.

### **Basic Acceptance Conditions:**

#### **The following conditions are considered in admission to the college:**

- a. The age of the student should not be less than 18 years
- b. The student should have acquired the high school diploma or its equivalent.
- c. The student should be in good health and should not have any diagnostic or infectious diseases.

### **Courses of Arabic:**

The faculty presents short courses on Arabic language through six levels:

- Lower beginners
- Upper beginners
- Lower intermediate
- Upper intermediate
- Lower advanced
- Upper advanced

Each level consists of 160-hours offered over an eight-week period. Each course contains a certain number of Standard Arabic lessons, in addition to Omani dialect and cultural workshops.

### **Number of Students in the College:**

Since its openness in 2012, the college organized 13 courses. The number of students in these courses is 297 students from different countries in the world: United Kingdom, Australia, USA, Mexico, China, South Coria, Ethiopia, Germany, Russia, France, Singapore, Spain, Denmark, Turkey, Kazakhstan and Czech. For the parties with which the college cooperated to receive their students, they included: Friendship British-Omani Association, Turkish Marmara University, The British Military University, Al Amana Center, Deakin University beside some graduates who came on their own.

### **Tuition and Accommodation Fees:**

The academic fees are considered as nominal costs. They are divided as the following:  
 Omani Rial (RO) 25 registration fees,  
 RO 200 tuition fees,  
 RO 15 health insurance, and  
 RO 34 for single bedroom, 17 for shared bedroom, monthly.



## **Methodological Framework of the Study:**

### **Type of the Study:**

The study is considered one of the analytical descriptive studies. It works on describing the educational and cultural contents of the program that the student will study at the college.

### **Method of the Study:**

The study used the content-analysis approach. The researcher reviewed all related topics that are used in teaching at the college. He also reviewed the cultural program with its elements of cultures, forums and events. In addition, the researcher analyzed the impressions of students about these programs.

### **Fields of the Study:**

- a. **Human Scope:** The human scope is divided into two parts; the first is interviewing officials, professors and employees who work directly with students, and participate in policy development related to choosing topics of both programs – the academic and the cultural programs.
- b. **Place:** Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers
- c. **Time Scope:** The study continued from April 2015 to June 2015.

#### **Tools of the Study:**

- 1- An Interview guide for professors and college officials
- 2- An Analysis Guide for the implications of students impressions.
- 3- An Analysis Guide for the educational and cultural programs at the college.

### **Method of Analysis:**

The study depended on the quantitative method in most analyses. It is the most suitable method for studies that are based on the content analysis approach.

### **Analysis of the Study Results:**

The researcher identified the contents of the educational program taught to students at the college, with its different levels. He found that the college, in its program, has focused well on social and cultural objectives quite well. This was obvious in being careful when developing a program for each admission year. The researcher found that specialists at the college designs topics of the program according to nationalities, cultures and needs of the new students each year. This connotes a deep view seeking to give the student the knowledge that achieves his/her goal of learning Arabic. Through researcher's review of curricula used in some institutes that teach Arabic Language to non-native speakers focus on the main goal, i.e., teaching Arabic Language skills such as speaking and writing, and teaching grammatical rules, without taking into consideration the needs and culture of the student or other goals. These other goals may be orienting the student about the Arabic and Islamic culture, nature of life, systems of life, thought, literature, habits and arts existing in Arab peoples. The researcher found that this college focuses on orienting the learner about the Omani, Arabic and Islamic cultures through the subjects used for teaching the Arabic language. It is noteworthy that the program has six levels. Each level has its own topics with different levels of depth according to the level of the course, as shown in the following table:

**Table (1)**

Levels	
Lower beginners	Greetings, self-introduction, introducing each other, family and home, school, organs of human body, colors, numbers, directions.
Upper beginners	Health, job and work, means of transportation, vacation and travel, weather, an Arabic city (habits and customs), marketing, hobbies.
Lower Intermediate	Issues of study and work, feasts, food and health, a contemporary political Arab personality, media (journals and magazines).
Upper Intermediate	Historic Arab personalities, demonstrations and expressing opinions, youth issues, countries and surface features, UN and world issues, Arab women, literary texts.
Lower Advanced	Human rights, about people's cultures, Arab spring, violence phenomenon, world economics, about contemporary Arabic literature, an Arab personality (woman), proverbs and wise sayings,
Upper Advanced	Minds immigration, environmental issues, globalization, minorities in the world, values of Islam, non-profitable organizations, modern scientific innovations.

We can notice that the table has an obvious grading of the level of topics according to students' absorption of Arabic language. Topics are general and not related to Omani society. Some of them are universal rather than Islamic or related to Arab nations. It may be more appropriate to select themes related to Arab and Islamic world in order to let learners get into depth of these topics, so that they can form nicer picture. Hence, generally the most topics achieve this objective. For example, topics of Islamic values, human rights, violence phenomena, habits and customs, and models of Islamic Arabic personalities can make learners form a sound idea about Arab countries; and remove some ambiguity disseminated by some western media in a way that distort their idea about Islam or describing Islam as terrorism. In addition, some western media has related Arab man to extremism and violence. It is known that unless the learners' passive ideas are corrected, the knowledge of Arabic language would become a tool for conveying passive picture to their societies about Arab countries. The program has not ignored topics related to Omani society, and this will be explained later.

### 1- Linking the program to the Omani Environment:

By reviewing the academic and cultural program with its evening activities such as forums, lectures, entertaining visits, and tourist visits, the researcher found that the program enables the learner to recognize the Omani environment by orienting them about:

#### a. *Habits and customs:*

Omani family habits are as an important issue that is presented by the program for reading or speaking practice. This issue includes habits of wedding, Omani prose and poetry, and public arts. This is not done theoretically only, but the learners are driven to these events, for example, to wedding. In addition, some folklore bands are invited to present some shows at some celebration evenings dedicated for this activities, where learners participate in repeating some artistic shows.

#### b. *Folklore and public heritage:*

The educational and cultural program includes and observes the orientation of learners about the Omani public heritage. They are oriented about public games and Omani proverbs, religious occasions with its shows and celebrations, and taking learners to visit public markets of historic or heritage nature. In addition, visits to castles and forts spreading over places near the college are organized.

#### c. *Omani dialect:*

The responsible for the college developed a part dedicated for Omani dialect to be issued within the educational program. Issues with Omani dialect are presented to enable learners to deal with others in different Arabic places. One of these issues are Omani dialect related to greetings, how to introduce yourself, asking about health, dealing with taxi, restaurant, market, weddings, religious events and public artistic occasions. One of the reasons for teaching the Omani dialect is to facilitate more interaction and understanding between the learner and the surrounding community. Hence, it may work on the distortion of his/her study of standard language. In addition, it may not be helpful in dealing with other dialects in other Arab countries.

Accordingly, the researcher sees that concentration on the standard Arabic language only may be more contributing to the perfection of Arabic language and its uses in all places, rather than learning the Omani dialect that may be important but in the case that the learner will stay for a very long time or will spend his/her life and work in The Sultanate of Oman.

## **2- *Linking the subjects of the program to Arabic Islamic topics:***

We noticed that the educational program contained subjects reflecting and expressing the Arabic Islamic world, and varied to cover culture, literature, art, autobiographies, and religious occasions. For example, we found topics discussing Arab women, and others for Arab personality, Arab spring, Arabic literature, models for Arab cities, proverbs and wise sayings, and Arab minds migration. We found also some topics about Islamic occasions and feasts and others about the Islamic values.

It is clear that these topics are of more cultural than social nature. Concentration on the topics that cover the Islamic religion and Arab achievements, and History of Arabs and Muslims were on at the desired levels, taking into consideration that these topics are more important for the achievement of the objectives desirable of teaching Arabic Language to non-native speakers.

## **Second, Content-Analysis of the Cultural Program presented for Students:**

The students are subjected to a cultural program accompanying to the educational program. It takes 8 weeks presenting various activities. It includes the following sections:

### **1- A schedule for entertaining visits and trips:**

The schedule includes visits to Nizwa, its fort, its public market; visit to Muscat governorate, the Biggest Mosque of Qaboos (considered as the biggest mosque I the Sultanate. It includes libraries, lecture rooms, with Islamic architectural nature); visits to museums (e.g. Alzubir House Museum, Albranda House, Opera Huose of the Sultanate); spending the night in Muscat governorate. The tour includes visiting the Muttrah market and a marine tour on Muscat's beaches. The visits continue at weekends in other places, such as, the Green Mountain, Misfat Al Abriyeen village, and Hota Cave in Aldakhelya governorate. Then, in another week, a visit is paid to AlBatna governorate at the South toward the state of Al-Rustaq (Ain Al kasfa), Walayah of Nakhl (Ain Al-Thowar),then, a trip to The Musandam Governorate or Salalah. The trips continue to the other governorates to include Ash Sharqiyah Region by visiting SinawSouq (market), and the Marine Museum, Ships Factory, HaweyetNegm (Sinkhole Park) and WadiShab (Shab Valley).

In addition, the cultural program includes visiting one of the camel keepers, holding a meat grilling party in a farm. The program ends with a final part in which the students present their talents and innovations, types of food in their countries, and an exhibition for their public heritage.

### **2- Lessons on Calligraphy:**

The cultural program includes weekly-based lessons on Arabic Calligraphy to teach learners Arabic writing skills and learning types of Arabic calligraphy or handwriting types.

### **3- Cultural Lectures:**

The cultural programs include a set of lectures, one per a week. In these lectures, specialists in history, culture, literature and art are invited. The lectures have various themes according to different courses at the college. Some courses are dedicated for students from the same country, others for students from some associations or other universities. Accordingly, the theme of the lecture is chosen depending to culture and needs of learners. It also may be a general lecture in Omani and Islamic history.

### **4- Meetings with a Language Partner:**

One of the positive ideas in the cultural program is to assign a language partner for each student. Selecting a partner is based on criteria since the partner is interviewed and tested to make sure that he/she has the necessary abilities that will support the learner.

The language partner becomes responsible for holding some sessions and social/cultural dialogues about the Omani society. The partner can take the students to visit some Omani families and educate him about the culture of the society. He/she also answers all students' questions whether in the area of learning Arabic language or of the society and its culture or customs. This idea is important for establishing the social and culture aspects of the society in learners. It is useful for correcting a lot of concepts that the learner may ignore about the Sultanate of about the Arabic Islamic world.

To comment on the content of the cultural program presented to the college students, we can notice the variety and interest in different cultural components using different means to orient the student about the culture of the society. This issue is not only presented through curriculum, a book or a lecture, but it was presented also through visiting and sightseeing of reality. This reality may be historical represented by museums or forts, lived reality represented by tourist settings and public markets "Souq", or through what is conveyed and explained by the language partner to the learner. In addition, the learner sees this reality embodied in art shown in occasions (e.g. weddings) or cultural nights.

Accordingly, the learner forms a clear picture about the Omani culture. The researcher wished if there is a kind of focus through the cultural program activities on the Arabic and Islamic culture in general so that the learner has a wide background about other Arab societies.

### **Third, Analyzing Students' Impressions about the Society and the College:**

The researcher reviewed students' impressions which they reported at the end of the course through an evaluation form used by the college to evaluate its programs and services. The form present impressions and opinions of students at the end of the language course. By analyzing these impressions, the researcher noticed comfort and praise of students towards the college and the way people had dealt with them. They also showed their admiration to what they had seen in the Omani society, such as cultural and heritage views.

When get deeper in the students' impressions, we find that they expressed their impressions through phrases and sentences which indicate their high level of perfection of Arabic language. One of them said "The program was wonderful and excellent. I enjoyed every minute I spend in Oman". Another student said "Students should know the culture and laws of Oman before they come here. At the beginning they should know about the culture of costume (clothes) and relationship between man and woman in order to interact easily". This indicates that he/she was affected by and respectful to culture and habits which he/she had seen in the society; and that he wished if he had known it before coming to Oman in order to respect this culture without errors.

Another student showed that he wishes if there are more specified dialogues about the culture. He suggested more meaningful dialogues about culture". Another student said " I suggest that there can be extra evening lessons about Oman". This shows how much he wishes to know more about the society and its culture. Another one expressed his love of Oman and comfort towards people he had met, he said "I love Oman and each person in it is wonderful, friendly and cooperative". Another student reported that the course provided him with knowledge about Arab and Middle Eastern culture. He said "We got much benefit from the course and the experience which gave us a lot of information about Arab culture and overview about the Middle East". Another said: "We enjoyed meeting Omani people and learning about the Omani culture".

One of students expressed his admiration of the country and his desire to come back again. He said: "Oman is a beautiful country. All people are kind here. We enjoyed our time and learned a lot about Arabic. I learned the Omani culture and Ibadetes life, and people's life. I want to come to Oman for another time if God permits". Another student shares this opinion and prefers not to go his home country and to stay in Oman. He said: "I like study in the college. I loved Oman too much. I don't want to go back to my country. People of Oman are wonderful. Another student expressed similar feelings by saying: "I very happy because I came to Oman to learn Arabic language. I benefited alot from learning and knowing their culture".

The students assert the importance of the culture and that their final benefits were not only learning a language but also learning about the culture. One of them said: "I gained information that I've never known. For example, I learned about the Sultanate's culture, habits, media and new things. I see that the Sultanate of Oman is the most appropriate for learning Arabic". Another student felt grateful that he was given the opportunity to study in Oman, he said: "The experience was very beautiful. I learned about Oman and its culture, and benefited too much from this program... I thank Sultanate of Oman for building such a college".

Another student expressed how he benefited more from the external program, he said "There a lot of programs that were very useful, especially the external programs and things that we've learned outside the class". It is observable by reviewing these comments and impressions, we gave examples for, that students' goals were not only focused on learning Arabic language, but also to learn about and get deeper knowledge about the culture and habits of the society. Most praising comments focused on cultural and social programs that let them acquire wide knowledge about habits, customs and culture of the Omani society.

If we want to identify the passive impressions which were very little comparing to positive ones, we will find that they assert some points which students wished to be available to get more benefits. For example, they wished if the host building (students residence) is nearer from the people houses in order to interact with the surrounding community. One of the said: "the location of host building is not good because there are no buildings near it". Another one said "the location of host house is not good enough. It would be better if it is in Nizwa or Manah". Another student asserted the same idea by saying "We were isolated in Manah and there was no communication or interaction with people". Another student pointed to the same problem when he said: "The residence is isolated which passively affected our practice of Arabic language". He suggests the residence to be with Omani families by saying: "I think that it is necessary to find Omani families which we can live with them". Another said: "We need in the host house people who speak with us since the supervisor was not enough".

Some of the students asserted the importance of increasing dialogue program especially in area of culture, he said: "I suggest more meaningful dialogues about culture". Another said: "We would like to know about the population density of Oman and in the area and to do a lot of conversations in Arabic". Some of them expressed their wish if the time spent with the language partner is better to be used in discussion some issues rather than merely reading some texts. He said: "We need to spend time with the language partner discussing some issues. This would be better than only reading some stories or doing some activities". Another one in the same context said: "The time spent with the language partner is much and there is nothing much to speak about". We can notice that observations from the students focused on only two sides: first, the location of residence and that there is no opportunity to interact with the people of the community surrounding the residence. The second was their wish to increase conversations and dialogues to get more knowledge about the society and its culture. We can see that both the observations did not focus on learning Arabic language but more attention was paid to the social side of communication with population and speaking with them in discussions about culture and the nature of living in the community.

In meetings with the college officials, they clarified that they have attempted to overcome this problem through finding the prepared and qualified language partner; the language partner has the right to accompany the student to the community and to his own family if he wishes. In addition, since the program is concentrated in both the morning and evening periods, there is limited free time. The added that the duration of the course is too short to provide an opportunity to let the student stay in a family, beside the responsibility of the college for providing meals based on culture of the learners. This may be difficult to be available in families.

From my own point of view as a researcher, I think that the weekend can be used to achieve this kind of visits. There can be a kind of agreement with the language partner to accompany the learner to visit the families who accept that. In addition, the people of village neighborhoods can be allowed to play with learners in their place of residence during the evening as a part of a pre-determined program to achieve both goals of learning Arabic language through practicing conversations, and getting more knowledge about the culture of the society.

### **The General Results of the Study:**

- 1- The educational program of the college has flexible and changeable subjects according to the goals of the learners and the institution that send the mission, and also according to the learner's level of language, taking into consideration his society's culture in general.
- 2- By reviewing the content of the educational program of the college, the researcher found that it is not limited to the general goal, i.e. learning Arabic, but also obviously focused on achieving other goals such as orienting the learner about the culture and habits of Omani culture; and also linking the program with topics related to Arab and Islamic world.

- 3- The analysis showed the educational program has 6 levels. The degree of deepening into subjects comes gradually according to the level.
- 4- The analysis of the topics of the program showed good concentration on topics related to the Omani society. Although this is importance the learner needs to be discussed about topics shows the reality of Arabic and Islamic world in a positive way to contribute in changing the prototyped picture held by the learners from the western countries about Islam and Arab peoples.
- 5- The researcher found that the educational program links the learner to the social and cultural side to a great extent. This was obvious through the following:
  - a. The program includes topics about habits and customs.
  - b. The program includes about folklore and public heritage.
  - c. It includes special part about the Omani dialect and how to be used in daily life like greetings, markets and occasions..etc.
- 6- The researcher found that the college developed a cultural program covering all the period of the course (two months). This program includes a set of events as the following:
  - a. A program for visits and trips to tourist and heritage and cultural places all over the governorates of the Sultanate.
  - b. Weekly lessons on Arabic calligraphy (Arabic handwriting) by calligraphy specialists.
  - c. Various cultural lectures whose topics are appropriate for learners' interests in the course.
  - d. Weekly meetings (2 hours per a meeting) with the language partner who had been chosen according to special tests and interviews and is handled a schedule to be applied with the learner.
- 7- The researcher, according to his analysis of learners' impressions, found that most of them appreciated what they knew about the Omani culture. Their benefits are not limited to learning Arabic language but also what they learned about the habits and culture of the society and its historic landmarks.
- 8- The researcher found that there are some observations by the learners about the place of residence. They wished if they can interact with the near villages and get more knowledge about the people there.
- 9- The researcher found that the learners wished to enhance the conversations program whether with the language partner or with the community in order to get more knowledge about the society.
- 10- The researcher found that there is no Oman book or a book written by the college but they depend on books written in other Arab countries and adding some topics to them to cover the Omani society.

#### **Recommendations of the Study:**

- 1- The researcher recommends that it is important to write a book by the college to include all academic levels at the college. The topics of the book should be selected carefully to vary in a way that gives positive and real picture about the Omani heritage, culture, Islamic and Arabic thoughts. Each student should have a copy of this book and keep it permanently even after the end of the course. This would achieve the social and cultural objective of teaching Arabic language to non-native speakers. The themes of the book should suit the circumstances and goals of the students in each course.
- 2- The researcher recommends that it is important to develop a form to be filled in by each student as soon as he/she comes to the Sultanate. The form consists of questions about previous impressions and ideas of students about the Sultanate, Arab nations and Arabic language, Islam and Moslems; and identifying their goals of studying Arabic, how they will use it in your life. According to these forms, a plan can be developed for each one to be applied during the course in order to remove any ambiguity about the Sultanate, Arab countries or Moslems in general. In addition, the language partner can be assigned to work on implementing this plan with the learner by conversations, discussions and providing the learner with texts and evidence that can develop clear and obvious opinion in the student.
- 3- The researcher recommends that the residence (host house) should be provided by playgrounds, sports halls for both genders, where an agreement with youth from the surrounding community to come and play with students in certain hours at the evening period. This can break the obstacle of isolation and increase the social interaction between the students and the social community. It is important for girls to participate in these events so that a kind of interaction and introduction can be achieved between female students and Omani girls who should be chosen the same way as the language partner is chosen.

- 4- The researcher recommends decreasing the teaching of Omani dialect to students so that they are not subjects to interruption with the standard Arabic language that they should use it accurately; and because the standard Arabic can be used everywhere. On the other hand the Omani dialect may not be useful when dealing in other Arab communities or countries.
- 5- The researcher recommends a permanent exhibition at the college to present the heritage, thought, habits and customs that matches the values of the society and Islam. This exhibition may be supported by wall pictures, handcraft models, booklets, video films and monitors. It can represent the social and cultural life of the Omani society and the Arab societies in general. The college can cooperate with the Omani Agency for Craft Industries, Ministry of Heritage and Culture, and The Literature Club and other institutions related to art, literature and heritage to establish this exhibition.
- 6- To establish a system of communication with students after they go back home. This can be done through forums or by means of social media, in order to continue their benefits and to provide them with clear picture about the Sultanate and the Arab and Islamic World. Such a project is considered as an accumulating project that guides students in distant after they had absorbed the basics of Arabic language; and to provide them with resources, e-resources and brochures from time to time to achieve the ultimate benefit.
- 7- The researcher recommends that the educational and cultural program should be invested in providing students with a clearly positive picture about Islam and Arabs. It should assert the values of tolerance, dialogue, co-living, respecting others, avoiding extremism and violence, civilized interaction with human beings whatever man's religion or creed is.

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