

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ARABIC IN CHINA

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Abstract: *The main purpose of this study is to elaborate the Arabic language teaching and learning in China. Arabic is a common language of Arab nation and one of the working languages of the United Nations. At the same time, it is the language of the Holy Quran, a main scripture of Islam. Arabic language propagated into China with Islam since Tang Dynasty in 651 years. At beginning with the basic purpose of communication the Chinese people start to learning Arabic language from the Arabic people. With the Arabic language's political statue become more and more important, there are more and more Chinese people start to study Arabic. At the same time, one form of education was founded - Mosque Education. Since the first Arabic school was founded until now, through thousands years development of Arabic teaching, nowadays there are three formal styles of Arabic teaching - University, Islamic college, and Military University. Except these three styles of Arabic teaching, there is another style of Arabic teaching is personal Arabic school. Through thousands years development until now Chinese Arabic teaching had great development and face to a great challenge.*

Keywords : *Arabic language teaching, challenges, teaching and learning*

INTRODUCTION

This study with the purpose of elaborates the Arabic teaching and learning in China. Follow the subtopic as: Arabic language, Arabic language in China: History, teaching and learning Arabic institution in China: modern, and conclusion.

Arabic Language

Arabic is one of the oldest language in the world; it is the common language of Arabic people; it is the official language of 22 Arab country. Arabic is also one of the most important official languages in United Nations, and common religion language of the Muslims in the entire world. (Ding Jun, 2006)
Language is one part of culture. Arabic language also carries the culture of Arab and it is closely with Islamic culture. The languages' propagation and communication is the culture's propagation and communication. The significance of it exceeds only study the language. (Ji Xianlin, 2003) The historical facts proved that Arabic was spread to China since so long time ago.

Arabic in China: History

The earliest Arabic teaching and learning started from two thousand years ago. At beginning use for connect with Arabic country. In Chinese history books <Shi Ji> (Si Maqian) and <Hou Han Shu> has been mentioned. The Arabic teaching in

China constitutes an important part in history of foreign languages teaching in China as well as an important part of Sino-Arab relations, and it has been an active factor to promote friendly exchanges between China and Arabic countries. Tang Dynasty (651), the third Halifa Osmar Ben Afan (577-656) sent envoy to China. That was China and Arab the first time official connecting. After that, until 798 Arab empire sent envoy to China 39 times in 100 years. (Shen Fu wei, Cultural Exchange of China and Westen, 1985). From this we can see during Tang Dynasty Arab and China have frequent exchanges. And after that Arabic language become an important role in exchanges between two countries. After that more and more Arabic people come to China have the business and some of them settle down in China, the same time, they take the Islamic to China. At that time more and more people in China start to study the Arabic language, most of them study for the business at beginning. But more and more people start to study for the religion with the Islamic popularity in China. In Tang Dynasty and Song Dynasty, Arabic language became the main language was used by the people who settle down in China. That time the people who came from Arab called "fan ke" and they settle down place called "fan fang". Most of them stay in "Guang Zhou, Quan Zhou and Chang An". After that until Yuan Dynasty, one famous navigator in China called Wang Dayuan went to red sea and Arabic sea two times (1328—1332, 1334—1339). He wrote a book <Dao Yi Zhi Lue>, in this book record status of the Arabic country and the relationship with China. And also that time started to call that time all Arab, Persian, and the people who are Muslim "XiYu Huihui". In one history book which talk about Ming Dynasty record, "In Yuan Dynasty, Huihui throughout the world." (In this sentence the word "world" point China) From this we can see that time "Huihui" brought the Islamic and Arabic language to all of the China, at that time one new ethnic group was born - HuiHui. When it was during the Yuan Dynasty (1271—1368), Arabic had been widely spread and used and the study of Arabic language was gradually set off. Since then, Chinese people started learning and studying it and the activities had been continuing till today for about thousand years without interruption and has developed and expanded. Chinese Muslim made historical contributions to the Arabic teaching. The Arabic learning has been a tradition of Chinese Muslim culture which ought to be carried on and developed so that they may serve for construction of the country and progress of the nation. (Ding Jun, 2006, Research about Arabic Teaching in China) As this say, Chinese Muslim is pioneer of the Arabic teaching. Arabic people take the Arabic language and Islamic to China, and Chinese Muslim spread them, and develop them.

The Earliest Arabic School in China

Government of Yuan Dynasty (1271—1368) open a school was called "Huihui Guozi Xue" with the purpose of strengthen international exchanges. "Huihui Guozi Xue" is considered the earliest teaching foreign language school in China by field of history. "Huihui Guozi Xue" is the earliest school which teaching the foreign language. (Fu Ke, 2004, History of Chinese Foreign Teaching) Mr. Fu Ke also consider that "Huihui Guozi Xue" was a school which taught Persian. There is no final conclusion about the language which taught in "hui hui guo zi xue". About the

language was taught in "Huihui Guozi Xue" had two views in China – Persian and Arabic. Some historian in China consider that was Persian was taught in "Huihui Guozi Xue". For example, one of the famous historian chenheng (1880–1971) considered that "Huihui Guozi Xue" was a school which taught Persian, and Huihui's language is Persian. (Chenheng, 2000, Literature of Northwest of China) Historian of Yuan Dynasty Han Rulin considered that perhaps Persian was the language was taught by "Hui hui guo zi xue". (Han Rulin, 1982, Qiong Lujun—Research of Northwest history in Yuan Dynasty) Some other historians consider that "Huihui Guozi Xue" was not a school which taught Persian language with two reasons. First, Persian was called "Huihui word" in most of the historical material. But the language was taught in "Huihui Guozi Xue" used another word called "yi si ti fei wen". Easily to see that two of them are not the same language. Second, some courtiers of Yuan Dynasty tell the king of Yuan Dynasty that there is only one or two people proficient in "yi si ti fei wen" but at that time a lot of people proficient in Persian. So definitely "yi si ti fei wen" was not Persian. There are some researcher consider that "yi si ti fei wen" was Arabic. For example, in <Chinese Islamic Encyclopedia> explained the word "yi si ti fei wen" is the official name of the Arabic language in Yuan Dynasty. The pronunciation of "yi si ti fei wen" similar with the Arabic word "Isusifai", the meaning is "choose". And it has the same root with the word "Mustafa" – another name of Muhammad. So they think it point Muhammad's word – Arabic language. But about this explanation don't have enough evidence to support.

Arabic institution in China: Mosque Education

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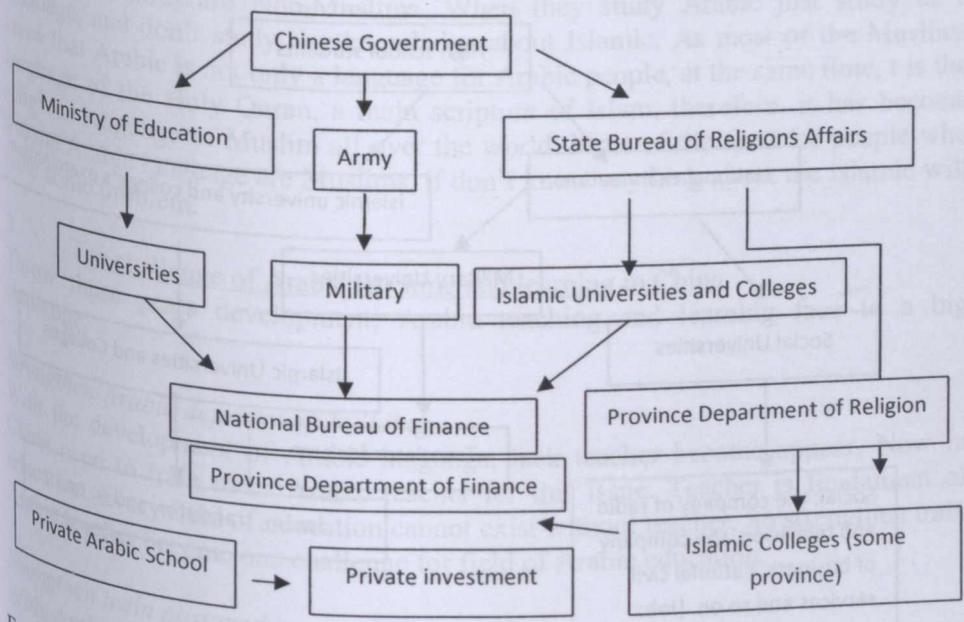
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Tafutajani (1321—1389). (6) <Shelaha Weigaye>, it is a book about jurisprudence of Henafi faction in Islam. (7) <Hutuba>, this book has forty Hadith in Persian explain. This book focuses on Islamic jurisprudence. (8) <Ilbao Nebeweije>, this also has forty Hadith in Persian explain. But this book focuses on explain philosophy views. (9) <Milesad>, this is a philosophy book in Persian. (10) <Isha lmarat>, this is a teaching material talk about belief which was written by author of < Manlia > Ibu Hajibu (1175—1249). (11) <Hawayi Minhaji>, this is a grammar book in Persian which was translated by Chinese Islamic scholar Chang Zhimei (1610—1670). (12) <Qulesiye>, this is a poem literature was written by Persian famous poet Said (1200—1290) in Persian. (13) <Quran>. In advance class did not limited the time for study, some student finished it in three years, some of them finished in four years. Normally in the class the student will don't allowed to note just can learn from Imam explain and memorize on the class. When student finish the advance class, they can go to the mosque to be Imam and open the class to do the Mosque Education. During hundreds years development, Mosque Education separate a few academic factions. There are a few famous academic factions: (1) Shan Xi Academic Faction, this faction was created by Hu Dengzhou, and focus on Arabic language. In this faction the class focus on teach student Arabic language. So, normally the students will be good at connect with Arabic people. (2) Jin Ling Academic Faction, this faction was created by Wang Daixing (1584—1670). In this faction, they focus on translate the traditional literature to Chinese and use the Chinese to explain them. (3) Shan Dong Academic Faction, this faction was created by Chang Zhimei. In this faction, they focus on Arabic and Persian study together. The student in this faction should be proficient in both Arabic and Persian. (4) Yun Nan Academic Faction, this faction focus on Arabic and Persian learn together and at the same time should learn Chinese with them. All these faction have the different emphasis. But the main purpose is teaching Arabic to let student grasp it. For this purpose, Chinese traditional Mosque Education emerged a special phenomenon – “Mosque Education Language”. “Mosque Education Language” is one kind of language which use in traditional Mosque Education in China to translate and explain the Arabic language. (Wang Huaide & Ma Xiping, 1999, 4) “Mosque Education Language” is a special language which uses to translate Arabic literature in the mosque, for example, Quran, Hadith and so on. In early period of Islamic came to China, there were a lot of Muslims understand Arabic. After that more and more Chinese become Muslims. So have one issue was “how to taught them Arabic?” At that time Chinese people didn't have high education, if taught them in Arabic or Persian they could not understand; if taught them only in Chinese they didn't understand the grammar. So after the teacher get a lot of experience little by little. In Mosque Education take shape the special language “Mosque Education Language”. The basic structure of Mosque Education language is the same as Chinese. But the grammar is a little different. It translates the Arabic word by word to explain the Arabic will show the meaning and grammar of Arabic together. The word of Mosque Education Language used which include some dialect and the grammar is a little different as Chinese. If the people who didn't study the Mosque Education Language, maybe they will not easily to understand it. From these course

and teaching materials we can see that the basic knowledge in Mosque Education is Arabic, it is very important in Mosque Education. Mosque Education disseminates Arabic to throughout of China; it has very important position in Arabic teaching in China.

Teaching and learning Arabic Institution in China: Modern
Framework of Arabic teaching in China

Figure 1 : The relationship of Arabic teaching in China

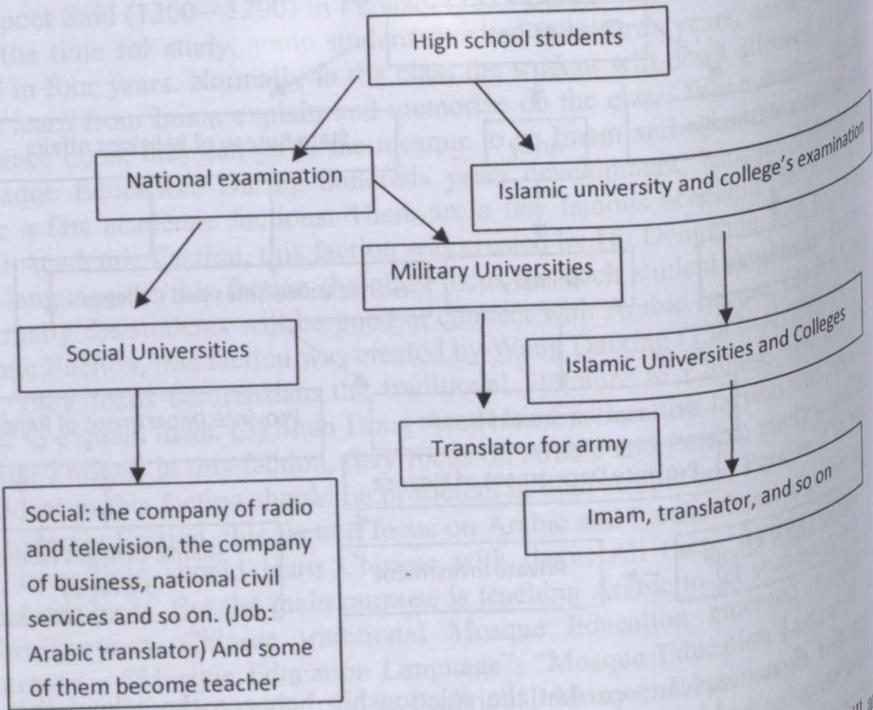


From this figure we can see that the relationship between the school that have Arabic teaching and government. Under the government, there are three big parts to ministry of education. First and the biggest are the social universities which belong to teaching. Another important part of Arabic teaching is military universities. These universities are different as social university it specially trains personnel for the army. So, the students who study Arabic in these universities when they graduated will work in the Army. Except these two part, another big part of Arabic teaching in China is the universities or colleges which under State Bureau of Religions Affairs. These universities or colleges with the purpose of train Imam for the Mosque in China and open the course include Arabic. All these parts of universities and colleges' sources of funding come from National Bureau of Finance. There is another part have Arabic teaching in China -- Private Arabic School. Most of these schools open in Northwest of China and with the purpose of train the translator for the company and propaganda Islamic. These are the main form of the Arabic teaching in China. The Mosque Education in China now still presence but because

of some reasons it less and less. These four forms Arabic teaching the scours of student come from different way.

As figure 2 shows that the main scour of student from the high school. The social universities and military universities recruit the students with scour of national examination. But Islamic universities and colleges recruit students from the exam that they hold by themselves, and the students must be Muslims.

Figure 2 sources of students and direction of student employment



2. Issues of Arabic Teaching in China

Nowadays Arabic in China already developed thousands years, but it is still an unpopular language as English in China. With the reasons of war and some other reasons the Arabic language real development time only around 50 years. Inevitable, there are a lot of issues in Arabic teaching. For example:

Issue 1: Communication

During Arabic teaching and learning, one issue is communication. Chinese students are not good at speaking Arabic. When students study the Arabic most of the time they don't have the language environment, most of time they study in Chinese and when teacher teach the Arabic focuses on grammar. Because of these reasons the students a little weak on speak.

Issue 2: Instrumental

As describe in above, Arabic language afferent in China almost two thousand years but real development time only around 50 years. So the instrumental are incomplete

yet. For example, now in China the literature of the Arabic language is not too much. Most books that talk about Arabic language teaching and learning write in Chinese. Arabic newspapers and Arabic magazines are treasure for the students who study Arabic. Audio and video materials are not as much as English. Most of the time, the students cannot find the audio and video in Arabic. It more or less has some effect in teaching and learning Arabic.

Issue 3: Knowledge (Islamic)

According to incomplete statistics, now almost all the students who study Arabic in social universities are Non-Muslims. When they study Arabic just study as a language, and don't study any knowledge about Islamic. As most of the Muslims know that Arabic is not only a language for Arabic people, at the same time, it is the language of the Holy Quran, a main scripture of Islam, therefore, it has become the religious language of Muslim all over the world. Most of the time the people who use the Arabic language are Muslims, if don't know anything about the Islamic will have some problem.

3

The challenge of Arabic teaching and learning in China

Throw these years development, Arabic teaching and learning face to a big challenge:

Strengthen Arabic department building.

With the development of Arabic language, lack teacher become appear. Now in China need to train more Arabic teacher for this issue. Teacher is fundament of education. Every field of education cannot exist without teacher. So strengthen train Arabic teacher become one challenge for field of Arabic education.

Strengthen train postgraduate students.

With Arabic's rapid growth, China need more high level talented person. Train more postgraduate students become one important thing. In the current, China need more comprehensive talented person in Arabic field: language, literature, culture, teaching research, Arabic translate research and so on.

Strengthen develop the teaching material and instrument of teaching.

Teaching material for teacher as a gun for soldier, the soldier cannot fight without the gun. Now in China Arabic teaching material is a little obsolete. They need the teaching material with the developing of the time. The good teaching material will has a lot of benefit for the teacher and students.

Strengthen communication with other country.

Communication with other country is an important for develop Arabic teaching and learning. In the current, Arabic in china faces to rapid development time. Take other country's successes experiment of Arabic teaching can let it faster and faster.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, since Arabic income to China with Islamic in Tang Dynasty, Arabic develops little by little, a lot of issue appear. Nowadays, Arabic become 22 countries' two hundred seven million people's language, one billion Muslims' religion activities' language, and one of the most important official language in United Nations. The importance of it becomes pay attention by the entire world. (Research report of Arabic teaching present situation, 2004) In China Arabic teaching and learning pay attention more and more. Most of the issues start to solve. Develop the teaching material, train more postgraduate students, and research the teaching method, and so on. With Arabic rapid development, and Arabic teaching and learning face to a big challenge in the current.

