EXPLORING THE VALIDITY OF A TEACHER LANGUAGE COMPETENCY SCALE: A CO-VARIANCE BASED APPROACH

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Abstract

Teacher language competency is recognized as an essential component of effective teaching. Teachers must be fluent in the four language modalities: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In Malaysia, Arabic language has been offered to learners earlier in their schooling, prompting a demand for more Arabic language teachers who are competent in Arabic language teaching. Thus, this study aims at investigating the level of teacher language competency as well as the validity and reliability of the instrument used in assessing teacher language competency. The current study applied a stratified random sampling because of the geographical reason and involved 252 teachers out of 487 teachers from 57 National Religious Secondary Schools throughout Malaysia. The means and percentages were used to interpret the level of teacher language competency. A Structural Equation Modeling with AMOS (Analysis of Moment Structures) was employed to investigate the validity and reliability of a teacher language competency scale. The descriptive analysis showed that teachers evaluated themselves at the high level. The results of confirmatory factor analysis supported the adequacy of teacher language competency and found that the teachers' language competency construct is a multidimensional construct with four underlying dimensions.

Keywords: Teacher language competency, Confirmatory factor analysis, National Religious Secondary School, Co-variance based approach

Introduction

Teacher language competency is recognized as an essential component of effective teaching. Teachers as the operators of the education system, need to have competencies and thus be competent enough to achieve effective teaching. They are expected to comply with the requirements of the profession, which most of the time are represented in such competencies required and listed in the official documents of the Ministry of Education and the Council of Higher Education. According to Lange (1990), language competence is the most crucial characteristic of a good teacher. Language is used in the verbal interaction between teachers and students. For non-native teachers, language competency accounts for the basis of the professional confidence. When the teacher's language is poor, his or her confidence in the classroom will be undermined (Doff, 1987). Poor command of the language may influence the teachers' self-esteem and their professional status and also will intervene teaching procedures. Language competency of non-native teachers is an essential variable associated with language teacher's self-confidence.

In Malaysia, Arabic language is considered a foreign language as stipulated in the Education Act 1996. After the Islamic conquest of the Peninsular Malaysia, Arabic language grew actively as the language of the Muslim communities. It is a language to understand Islam and to perform worship. It has been used mostly for religious activities as well for academic discourses. Arabic was then expanded in usage into the Islamic studies centres such as *Pondok* and Madrasa. With the development of modern life today, Arabic language has grown to be the language of communication.

The development of teaching Arabic in Malaysia is impressive with the attention given by the Ministry of Education. This can clearly be seen with the establishment and the development of the National Religious

Secondary Schools which began their operation in 1997. The syllabi were drawn up according to the current needs of Arabic among Malaysian school children. Arabic language curriculum for these schools were officially enacted starting January 1, 1977 with the takeover of 11 State Religious Secondary Schools and People's Religious Schools as experiments. The Arabic language in these schools was more focused on language for communicative purposes (Rosni, 2009) . Although there was only one Arabic subject offered in those schools, some components of language skills as well as knowledge of syntax, morphology, and balaghah (Arabic rethoric) were embedded in the syllabus. To further enhance the experience of Arabic language teacher, the Ministry of Education provided specific training in the 1980's to Arabic language teachers. These trainings were either conducted within Malaysia or in Arabic native language country such as Saudi Arabia and Sudan. In 1984, the Ministry of Education in collaboration with The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) organized a series of courses and services for Arabic language teachers. Through these courses, teachers built a new experience in the field of language education with some exposure to the communicative approaches in foreign language teaching (Rosni, 2009). Arabic language textbooks were also streamlined by using the communicative approach. The process of preparing the textbooks was under the supervision of Arabic experts from ISESCO (Rosni, 2009).

Arabic language was taught in Malaysian secondary schools as one of the subjects. Today, Arabic language is not only taught in the schools that use Arabic as the medium of instruction, but it is also a compulsory subject in some boarding schools and some programs at the higher learning institutions. The teaching and learning of Arabic has expanded with the establishment of the Arabic language departments in the Public Higher Learning Institutions. National University of Malaysia was the pioneer university in establishing the Department of Arabic. It was then followed by the International Islamic University Malaysia, University of Malaya, Putra University of Malaysia, Islamic Science University of Malaysia and the much later was the establishment of Faculty of Language and Communication in Sultan Zainal Abidin's University.

This article thus aims at investigating the level of teacher language competency as well as the validity and reliability of the instrument used in assessing teacher language competency. As noticed by Doff (1987), language competency affects teachers' confidence level in the classroom. Poor language command may affect the professional status of teachers and it will disrupt the teaching process.

Teacher Language Competency

Learning language formally occurs in school. Therefore, language teachers play a major role in ensuring students to learn the language efficiently. The importance of language competency is more conspicuous in education because language is the main medium of instruction in teaching and learning process. To scrutinize teacher language competency, the dimensions of language competency or competence have to be defined and conceptualized. From the outlook of formal linguists, competence is viewed in term of language structures (grammatical competence or linguistic) (e.g., Chomsky, 1965), whereas sociolinguists take a broader point of view. They view competence as knowledge and the ability to utilize the language. Many researchers looked the language competency based on the four skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Listening Skill

Listening is a skill of language. It is a language modality. Listening skill is key to obtaining messages effectively. It is a fundamental skill in language learning process. Students who have this skill well, usually, can understand the meaning and interpretation of what they heard (Kamarudin, 1986). Listening skill needs a tendency to understand human's point of view and a desire to open one's thought to try and see things from another's viewpoint. Listening skill requires a high level of attentiveness and energy. Wan Izzuddin and Wan Hasni (1991) point the view that many students do not have good listening skills because they do not pay attention to the lessons being taught in the classroom.

Listening requires an active participation of an individual. It requires a sender, a message and a receiver. Tyagi (2013) lists the process of listening in five stages: hearing (receiving), understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding.

Hearing is referred to the response caused by sound waves. It is the first stage in the listening process. People must hear before they listen. At this stage, a person listens to what is said verbally and nonverbally. The second stage of listening is understanding the message. That is, after receiving or hearing the message, a person processes it. In the other words, s/he extracts the meaning from the message. This step assists an individual to know symbols s/he has seen and heard. The interpersonal communication becomes successful when the listener grabs the intended meaning and the context anticipated by the sender. In other word, the receiver or listener may interpret the meaning from the sentences s/he hears from the sender. Another stage of listening is remembering. Remembering is essential listening process. A person has not only got the message and elucidate it, but has also added to his or her mind. An individual is said to have a strong memory when s/he is able to retell something s/he sees or hears.

The following stage of listening is evaluating. Only active listener contributes at this stage. S/he evaluates the proofs, pigeonholes the fact from opinion, and decides the existence or non-existence of bias or prejudgment in a message. An effective listener ensures that s/he doesn't start this evaluating action too soon because when this stage of the process starts before a message is finalized, the listeners are no longer hear and attend to the incoming message, and as a result, the listening process discontinues. The last stage of listening process is responding. This stage involves the receiver finishes the process through verbal and/or nonverbal feedback. For example, when the receiver listens to the song, s/he can write the song s/he hears.

Speaking Skill

Speaking skill is a very important skill, either in the formal or informal situations. It receives the most attention among the four language modalities. This skill is important for an individual to relate to others. The ability to speak a language can accelerate students' understanding, especially when it is related to the interpersonal communication. Teaching and learning of this skill requires a suitable approach especially when dealing with different groups of students. Teachers are required to have capability to use foreign language to explain, ask question, give instruction and restate, reformulate, etc. (Council of Ministers of Education, 2013). In addition, they are required to speak eloquently, pronounce the words precisely, use stress and tone of voice suitable for the circumstance, make speech at rates suitable for classroom communication, and use idiomatic expressions properly (Bowers, Fitts, Quirk, and Jung, 2010; Çakır and Alıcı, 2009).

The success of individual in speaking foreign language is often judged by his or her ability to use that language as a means of communication. This success is identified when an individual can employ the language to convey his or her ideas and, feeling, or the success can be simply noticed when individuals are able to make a conversation with others. Nunan (1991) maintains that speaking is an essential characteristic of language learning regardless of its status whether it is as a second or a foreign language and the success is evaluated by the ability of individuals to execute conversation in that language.

Reading Skill

Reading is a cognitive process of deciphering letters and symbols to develop meaning from various media and texts. It involves active involvement from the readers when communicating with written texts, as readers have specific goals to achieve when reading a text, for instance, when an individual reads an office memo, s/he wants to make sure a meeting time (Koda, 2005). Therefore, individuals can be vigorously involved in reading using strategies, whenever they communicate with written texts. That's why, reading is considered as a communication between the reader and the text (Alderson & Urquhart, 1984). It is a compulsory for teachers of all grades and

subjects to have a working knowledge of their subject-specific and general vocabulary. They must have ability to read and understand a number of documents relevant to their obligations and subject areas.

However, teachers of foreign language may not understand every single word of what they are reading compared to someone who is reading his or her first language's text. They also do not have to look at or find out every single word in a text to be able to know it in some measure. There are various ways people read, some readers do not read word by word, but they read in group of words and choose what s/he needs to detect the meaning of the text. This is called as a psycholinguistic guessing game (Goodman, 1967). It requires an interaction between reasoning and language. Efficient reading does not yield from accurate perception and recognition of all words or elements, but from the skill in choosing the most productive signs required to result guesses which are right the first time. This does not signify random guessing, but led by two main sources – the text and what the reader brings to it. The ability to contribute that which has not been understood, of course, is essential in reading, just as the ability to expect what has not yet been heard is important in listening.

Writing Skill

Writing is a means of human communication that clarifies language through the wording or recording of signs and symbols and also as a means to express and cultivate the self. In most languages, writing is a supplement to spoken language and has long been noticed as a support skill for learning grammar in foreign language and used to strengthen the acquisition of grammar, as in the grammar-translation method (Homstad & Thorson, 1994). In a language system, writing depends on many of the same structures as speech, such as vocabulary, grammar and semantics. Hines and Basso (2008) elucidate that "writing is first and foremost a thinking process. It involves communicating ideas by first assembling supporting evidence, carefully analyzing an audience, and tailoring a message to achieve a desired outcome" (p. 297).

Writing skill is an individual's ability to write words and sentences, as well as produce ideas related to science of knowledge and personal experience through a variety of creative and non-creative writing. According to McCutchen (1984) a high level of verbal ability is required to produce cohesive text that clearly states the ideational content.

Research Method

Measure

Teacher language competency is a multidimensional construct. It is designed to measure the teachers' self-reported level of Arabic language competency in teaching Arabic. Self-reported have gained much interest in recent years because the field of language learning and teaching has increasingly emphasized learners' autonomy (Patri, 2002) and because self-reported are efficient and relatively easy to administer; they can take less time, for example, than other types of competency assessments (LeBlanc & Painchaud, 1985).

This instrument comprises of 23 items consisting of four (4) dimensions: listening skill, speaking skill, reading skill and writing skill. A few items were adapted from Chacón (2005) and others were self-constructed based on the conceptualization of teacher language competency. The instruments consist of a seven point Likert type. The respondents are required to rate the statements ranging from *very strongly disagree (1)* to *very strongly agree (7)*.

Sample

There are a number of literatures that proposed a large sample size when conducting factor analytic procedure especially for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using structural equation modeling (SEM) (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Whereas, Hoelter (1983) and Garver and Mentzer (1999) suggested a 'critical sample size' of 200. According to Schumacker and Lomax (2010) after reviewing several published SEM research, they found that the sample size between 250 to 500 subjects is enough for the effective use of SEM where the complexity of the

model enhances the required the sample size. Hoe (2008) concluded, as a general rule of thumb, any number above 200 is understood to provide adequate statistical power for data analysis. The sampling frame of this study is 487 Arabic language teachers from 57 National Religious Secondary Schools in Malaysia. Based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, the proposed sample size for the 480 population is 214 (at 95 confidence interval and 5% margin of error). However, due to the complexity model of this study, 250 respondents are required as suggested by Schumacker and Lomax (2010). Stratified random sampling is applied because of the geographical reason. Therefore, the bias issues can be eliminated by confirming the sample to represent the population. The population is stratified into 5 zones or realms namely north, south, east, central and east Malaysia. To determine the number of the sample of the present study, this study employs proportionate random sampling to suit the population of the five zones. The sample size of each zone in this technique is proportionated to the population size of the zone against the entire population. This means that each zone has the same sampling portion ratio.

Data collection

In order to obtain a sufficient response rate, the questionnaires with self-addressed stamped envelopes were mailed to 300 teachers throughout Malaysia through the school principal. Before mailing the questionnaires to the participants, a selection procedure was done to get the right sample so that it be generalized to the population. The participants were randomly selected based on the list of teachers given by the Islamic Education Department.

Data Analysis

The proposed model is estimated by Covariance Based SEM, which is a powerful multivariate technique for analysing measurement model. The measurement model is estimated using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test whether the latent variables possess sufficient construct validity.

CFA is used to validate Teacher Efficacy scale in terms of convergent and discriminant validity (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). Convergent validity measures the extent to which indicators of a specific construct share a high proportion of variance in common (Hair et al., 2010). According to Hair et al. (2010), there are three statistical measures in determining the convergent validity: (a) standardized factor loadings, (b) average variance extracted (AVE), and (c) construct reliability (CR). Standardized factor loading signifies the correlation between the variables and the factors. Meanwhile, AVE is a measure of convergence among a set of items denoting a latent construct in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). It is computed as an average percentage of variance explained among the items of a construct (Hair et al., 2010). CR refers to a measure of reliability and internal consistency of the items that represent a latent construct in SEM. The adopted cut-off values of these three statistical measures are as follows: (a) Standardized factor loading (λ) is .50 and above, AVE is .50 and above, and Composite Reliability is .70 and above. All the cut-off values are recommended by Hair et al (2010).

Analysis and Result

Respondents' background

The number of female teachers is larger (60.3%) than the number of male teacher (39.7%). This seems to reflect the current phenomenon of female teachers outnumbering their male counterparts in the Malaysian secondary school setting. According to the *Basic School Information* by Ministry of education, Malaysia, the total number of teachers working in Malaysian public secondary school as of December 2014 was 181,747. Seventy percent of them were female and 30% were male. Lastly, in terms of age of the respondents, the majority of the respondents are below 46 years old (80.1%).

More than half of the respondents who are Bachelor degree holders graduated from Arabic speaking country universities and majority of them specialized in Arabic language as shown in Table 4.7. However, the number of

Arabic teachers who specialized in non-Arabic program were quite high (47.2%). This is likely to influence the process of teaching and learning Arabic.

Level of Arabic Language Competence

Teachers' language competency was measured based on four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Means and standard deviation were used to look at the rank of the responses, whereas frequencies were taken into account to see the responses from a different approach.

Overall, teachers evaluated their competency in teaching Arabic at the high level (M=5.00, SD=1.310). The scores of the four subscales indicate that teachers rated their Arabic language competency at the high level in reading skill (M=5.20, SD=1.286) and speaking skill (M=5.07, SD=1.278), and moderate level in listening skill (M=4.95, SD=1.295) and writing skill (M=4.82, SD=1.398).

Arabic Listening Skills

The descriptive statistics for the teacher competency in listening skill showed that item "I can explain the meaning when two Arabic speakers talk" showed the highest mean (Mean = 5.54, SD = 1.188, 77.4% of agreement), followed by item "I can narrate when watching Arabic films without subtitles" (Mean = 5.08, SD = 1.292, 65.5% of agreement). The results also showed that the percentage of agreement of both items exceed 60 percent. It means that the percentage of agreement is relatively high. The other three items demonstrated the moderate level of speaking skill competency where the mean of the three items has the value of below 5.00. From the results it can be seen that the overall means for the teachers' listening skill was at moderate level (Mean = 4.95, SD = 1.295).

Arabic Speaking Skills

Overall, the result indicated that teacher competency in Arabic speaking skill was high (Mean = 5.07, SD = 1.278). The findings showed that almost 80 % of teacher agreed that they know the Arabic terms to use in regular classroom interaction with students. The result indicated that this item had the highest mean (Mean = 5.53, SD = 1.131). Over 75 percent of the teachers agreed that they can use intonation (التنغيم والنبر) correctly when speaking Arabic (Mean = 5.44, SD = 1.208). The ability of teachers to communicate well with Arabic-speaker (Mean = 4.95, SD = 1.420) and express their opinions in Arabic when speaking about general topics (Mean = 4.95, SD = 1.420) have moderate levels of mean (mean value was below 5). These findings were supported by teacher's agreement level indicating that both items have 60 percent level of agreement. These results showed that not more than two-third of teachers agreed that they can communicate well and express their opinions in Arabic. In addition, teachers also were found to least use Arabic to communicate with their students (Mean = 4.65, SD = 1.286). Only 54.8% of the teachers agreed that they use Arabic language to communicate with their students.

Arabic Reading Skills

The results indicated that the overall mean was at the high level (Mean=5.20, SD=1.286). Specifically, the teachers showed a tendency to agree with all of the statements. The strengths of agreement varied considerably depending on the item. For example, almost 76 % of teachers agreed that they can figure out the meaning of unknown words in Arabic from the context (Mean = 5.42, SD = 1.206), 73.8% of them can draw conclusions from what they read from Arabic textbooks (Mean = 5.33, SD = 1.290), and 71.4% of them can read Arabic materials in academia without using a dictionary (Mean = 5.11, SD = 1.301). Although the overall mean was at the high level, there were a few teachers who have relatively low reading competency. For example, 12.7% of the teachers who cannot read Arabic materials in academia without using a dictionary, 11.9% of teachers cannot read and

understand Arabic magazines without using a dictionary, and 10.3% of teachers cannot explain the Arabic newspaper headlines.

Arabic Writing Skills

Overall, the findings indicated that teacher skill in writing Arabic was at moderate level as shown by overall mean (M=4.82, SD=1.398). Only 64.7% of teachers agreed that they can write a short essay in Arabic related to their interest (Mean = 4.93, SD = 1.346), 62.3% of them can summarize important information from reading texts (Mean = 4.95, SD = 1.344), and 61.1% of them can write advertisements in Arabic (Mean = 4.91, SD = 1.374). Conversely, almost one quarter of teachers (23.4%) agreed that they cannot write reports in Arabic to support or argue some opinions and they also are not able to write any letters in Arabic without errors (25%).

CFA for Multidimensional Constructs of Teacher Language Competency

Teacher language competency has four underlying dimensions; competence in listening skill, competence in speaking skill, competence in reading skill and competence in writing skill. With the exception of the listening skill dimension, each dimension has six indicators. The competent in listening skill has five indicators. The result from the generated CFA model of teacher language competency indicates a poor model fit.
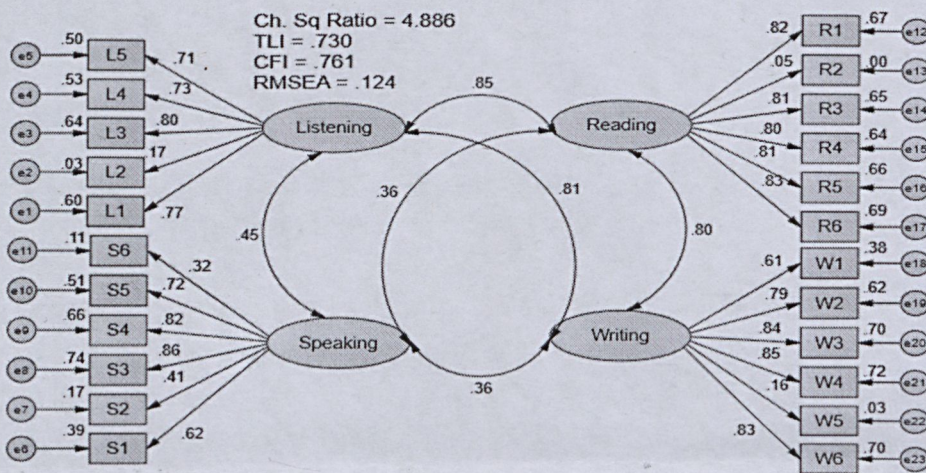

Figure 1: CFA Model of Teacher Language Competency

Figure 1 shows the initial CFA model for teacher language competency. The normed chi square (χ^2/df) = 4.886 falls beyond the proposed range of ≤ 3.0 indicating an insufficient value to show good model fit. Other fit indices were also found to have insufficient value. The TLI = .730, CFI = .761, fall further the threshold value of ≥ .90. The RMSEA is 0.124, above the threshold value of ≤ 0.08. The loadings are between .048 to .858. According to Byrne (2010), loading or the parameter estimates should not be below .5. Therefore, the initial CFA model did not fit the data and needed to be revised. Further detail investigation was performed by viewing the standardized residual covariance of each indicator and modification indices. Results indicated that a number of items had excessively high values. Therefore, the decision was made to remove those items that have standardized residuals covariance greater than 10 and the CFA model of teacher language competency was revised.
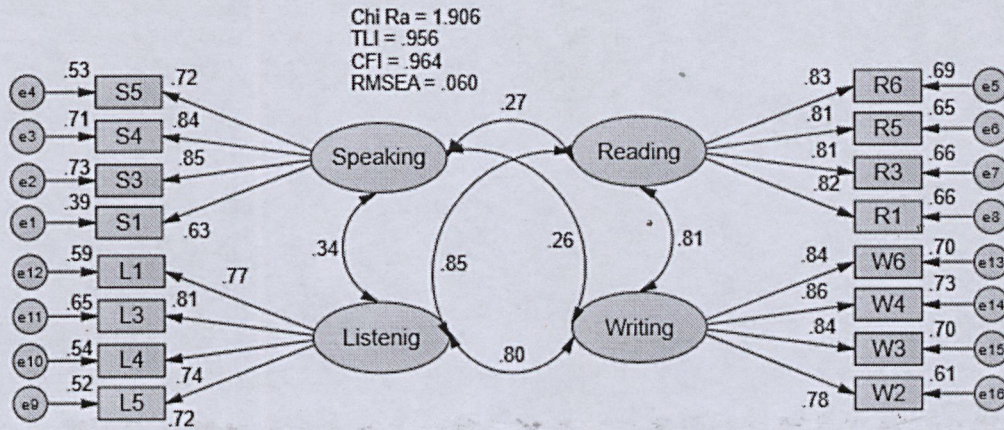
Figure 2: The Revised CFA Model for Teacher Language Competency

Initially, there were 23 items for four dimensions. Each dimension has six items except for the dimension of speaking skill which has five items. One item was removed from the dimension of speaking skill and two items were removed from other three dimensions. Overall, out of the 23 items, 7 items were removed to obtain a model fit. The overall revised model displays an improved model fit which was compatible with the data. Figure 2 depicts the revised CFA model of teacher language competency and Table 1 summaries the result of the fit indices and compares the recommended cut-off value against the generated model and revised model.

Based on Figure 2 and Table 1, the normed chi-square (x^2/df) = 1.906, and RMSEA = .060, fall within the acceptable range of ≤ 3 and $\leq .08$ respectively indicating a good model fit for the revised model. The other fit indices were also found to have sufficient value indicating a good model fit. The TLI = .956 and CFI = .964 were above the cut-off value of $\geq .90$. Furthermore, the inter-correlation between the dimensions is below 0.85, indicating good discriminant validity (Kline, 2011).

Table 1 Summary of the Fit Indices of The Multidimensional Constructs of Teacher Commitment

Fit Indices	Accepted Fit	TLC Generated Model	TLC Revised Model
CMIN/DF	≤ 3	4.886	1.906
TLI	$\geq .90$	.730	.956
CFI	$\geq .90$	.761	.964
RMSEA	$\leq .08$	.124	.060

Figure 2 depicts that the revised CFA model of teacher language competency fits the data. Further analysis is required to investigate the internal reliability and convergent validity of the model. Table 2 summarizes the internal reliability and convergent validity for the revised CFA model of language competency.

Table 2 Summary of the Internal Reliability and Convergent Validity for the Revised CFA Model of Teacher Language Competency

Construct	Item	IR	Convergent Validity		
		α	FL	CR[a]	AVE[b]

Construct	Item		IR		AVE
Listening	Listening 1	.834	.77	.84	.58
	Listening 3		.81		
	Listening 4		.74		
	Listening 5		.72		
Speaking	Speaking 1	.848	.63	.85	.59
	Speaking 3		.84		
	Speaking 4		.73		
	Speaking 5		.72		
Reading	Reading 1	.887	.82	.89	.67
	Reading 3		.81		
	Reading 5		.81		
	Reading 6		.83		
Writing	Writing 2	.893	.78	.90	.69
	Writing 3		.84		
	Writing 4		.86		
	Writing 6		.84		

Note: [a] Composite reliability (CR) = (square of the summation of the factor loadings)/ {(square of the summation of the factor loadings) + (square of the summation of the error variances)}

[b] Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = (summation of the square of the factor loadings)/{(summation of the square of the factor loadings) + (summation of the error variances)}

FL=Factor Loadings, IR=Internal Reliability, α= Cronbach's Alpha

The values for composite reliability (CR) and average variance expected (AVE) are required to acquire the convergent validity. We can see from Table 2, all the composite reliability values are above 0.70 and the average variance extracted (AVE) is above 0.50. Therefore, the revised CFA model of teacher language competency has the proof of internal reliability and convergent validity. Therefore, it can be concluded that convergent validity and internal reliability for the revised CFA model of teacher language competency has been established. Based on the fit indices, internal reliability and convergent validity of the revised CFA model of teacher language competency, the analysis showed that the construct of teacher language competency are valid and reliable. Therefore, we can proceed to explore the second-order factor that could possibly substantiate the construct of teacher language competency.
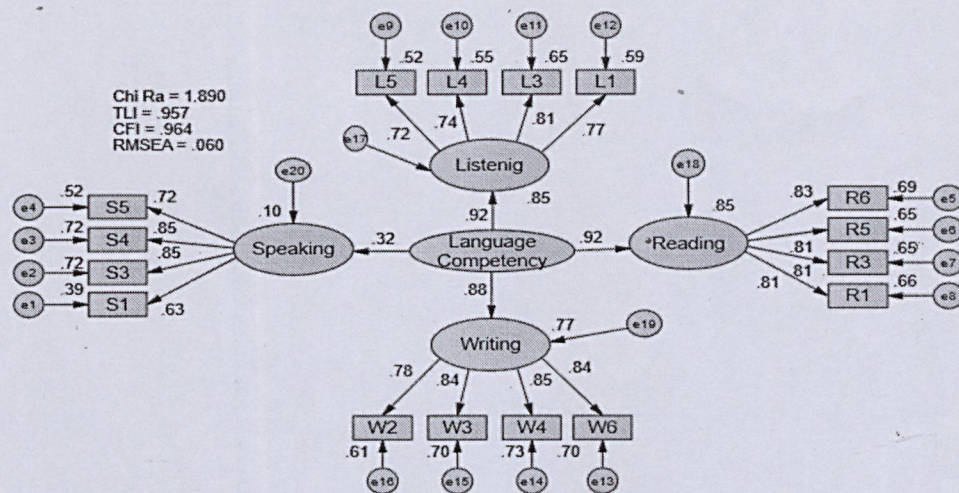
Figure 3 Second Order of CFA Model of Teacher Commitment

The results for the second order are shown in Figure 3. Overall, the model was adequately fit with CFI = .964 and TLI = .957 which go beyond the threshold value. In addition, the value of RMSEA = .060 is below the cut-off point and the normed chi-square (χ^2/df = 1.890) is within the proposed range of ≤ 3. Therefore, the existence of the second-order factor would allow the researcher to justify a rather strong relationship showcased by the first-order factors.

Discussion and Conclusion

Level of Teacher Language Competency

The teacher language competency item was adapted a few of them from Chacón (2005) and the others were self-developed questionnaire. Teacher language competency was measured based on four constructs namely listening skill, speaking skill, writing skill and reading skill. The average means for the four subscales assessing teacher language competency demonstrated that the respondents measured themselves from moderate to high level of competency. Teachers rated themselves to be more competent in reading skill and least competent in writing. In other words, teachers seem to feel that they were more competent in reading skill than speaking, listening and writing skills. The result is understandable, because Arabic is used mostly for religious activities as well as for academic discourses. The participants have quite a number of Arabic book to access, so they can enhance their reading skill and therefore their language competency. This findings are in contradiction to Ghasemboland and Hashim's (2013) findings. According to Ghasemboland and Hashim's (2013), teachers are more competent in writing skills and less competent in listening skills because English is only used in school and not in the teachers' daily lives. Besides, teachers also have a limited number of access to English in their daily lives, so they cannot increase their listening and speaking skills and their language competency.

Teachers' language competency in listening skill were at moderate level. The findings from teachers' level of agreement show that only three quarter of the teachers agreed that they could explain the meaning of Arabic words when they are listening to the Arabic speakers talk, two third of them can narrate to the students when they watch Arabic film without subtitles. The findings also showed that teachers moderately have listening skills competency where there were only 50 percent of teachers who can explain the meaning of common idiomatic expressions used by Arabic-speakers and also can write Arabic song lyrics. It is worth to note that a quarter of teachers cannot write Arabic song lyrics they heard. This occurs possibly because some of Arabic teachers come from Islamic studies background and they graduated from local university. Because of their background, they

might not be able to catch up the languages used in the Arabic song. In addition, Arabic idiomatic and Arabic song are not easy to explain and write.

In terms of speaking skills, the result shows that teachers know how to use the Arabic terms in regular classroom interaction with students. They are able to use intonation correctly when they speak Arabic and also are able to communicate well with Arabic-speakers. Teachers felt comfortable of using Arabic as the language of instruction in Arabic classes and they can express their opinions in Arabic when they speak about general topics.

However, teachers seem to be least use of Arabic language to communicate with their students. The finding indicates that only 54.8 percent of teachers use Arabic as a language of conversation with their students. In other word, teachers prefer using student first language rather than using target language when communicating with their students. This finding is in line with the views of Al-Nofaie (2010) and Salah and Farrah (2012). This occurs because students seem to feel more comfortable when teachers talk to them in their own language.

In term of reading skill, in general, the findings showed that teachers were competent in reading skill. The mean value of the teachers' agreement was in the range of 5.06 – 5.42. Teachers are assumed to have high reading skill because that they can understand Arabic materials in academia and Arabic magazine without looking at dictionary. More than three quarters of teachers can figure out the meaning of unknown words in Arabic from the context. They also were competent in reading skill as they can narrate the Arabic story after reading it without using a dictionary and also can explain the Arabic newspaper headlines and draw conclusions from what they read from Arabic textbook. However, there were at least 12.7% of teachers were not able to read Arabic materials in academia. This aspect need to be concerned because it will affect the credibility of Arabic teachers.

Arabic writing skill can be assessed through teachers' capability in writing whether they could write any letter, formal or informal letter, report, short essay, advertisement or summarize an important information from the texts. The findings showed that the level of teachers' writing skill were moderate. The mean value of the teachers' agreement was in the range of 4.63 – 4.95. The findings indicate that teachers can write a short essay in Arabic related to their interest. They can summarize important information from reading texts, and write advertisements and reports in Arabic to support or against some opinions. There were one quarter of teachers who cannot write letters in Arabic without error, one quarter of them cannot write reports in Arabic to support or against some opinions and almost 20 percent cannot fill in the different kinds of application in Arabic. These values are quite high. These aspects need to be of concerned. How can teachers teach Arabic writing skills if they are found to be not capable in writing skills? These aspects will tarnish the teacher's reputation.

Validity of the CFA Model of Teacher Language Competency

A series of confirmatory factor analyses was performed to examine the relationship among the variables. The findings confirmed that teacher language competency dimension is a valid and reliable multidimensional construct. The measurement model of teacher language competency produced four inter-correlated dimensions namely Arabic speaking skill, Arabic listening skill, Arabic reading skill and Arabic writing skill.

Arabic listening skill dimension is explained by four indicators namely the ability to explain the meaning when two Arab speakers talk, the meaning of common idiomatic expressions used by Arab speakers, the ability to interpret the Arabic words when listening to the Arab news and the ability to write Arabic song lyrics. Arabic speaking skill dimension is identified by four indicators related to capability of teachers to communicate well with Arabic speakers, use Arabic language to communicate with students, feel comfortable when using Arabic as the language of instruction, and know the Arabic terms to use in classroom.

Arabic reading skill is represented by four indicators which are related to teachers' ability in reading and understanding Arabic magazines and materials in academia without referring to a dictionary, drawing conclusions from Arabic textbook, and figuring out the meaning of unknown words in Arabic based on the context.

Lastly, Arabic writing skill dimension is signified by four indicators that are related to teachers' ability in writing a short essay in Arabic, filling the applications form in Arabic, summarizing the important information from Arabic text, and writing the advertisements in Arabic.

The result confirmed that the four dimensions of teacher language competency and the sixteen observed variables or indicators were found to represent the teacher language competency dimension. The dimensions were represented by the indicators assessing the teacher language competency for listening skill, speaking skill, reading skill and writing skill. It was also proved by the existence of the second order factor that justify a strong relationship represented by the first-order factors.

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