

## Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language: An Overview of Key Word Method

**Assistant Prof. Abdul Saboor Ghafoorzy**

Department of Arabic, Faculty of Languages and Literature  
Nangarhar University, Afghanistan

### Abstract

Teaching Arabic in the context of foreign language through the (Key Word Method) has long history of teaching. The same is the case in the context of Afghanistan schools and colleges. The Key Word Method for teaching Arabic language particularly for building up a powerful vocabulary is quite historical. Therefore, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of the (Key Word Method) in teaching and learning Arabic language in Afghan schools and colleges where Arabic language is treated as a subject in order to fulfill the criteria of foreign language learning. The study is based comprehensive library research and the personal experience of the research in teaching Arabic language starting from secondary school level to B.A. university level. The study finds that Key Word Method is designed to overcome the challenges of learning Arabic, so that they become motivated in achieving their learning target and become innovative in their learning activities.

**Keywords:** Effectiveness, Afghan Context, Key Word Method, Arabic Language

### Introduction

Learning a second language requires hard work, commitment, practice, a correct methodology to help learners understand the basic rules of this language and many other contributing factors. It has been observed that the results of Arabic studies in schools are becoming weaker. While the authorities concerned are impatiently waiting to identify its true cause and are trying to find its way out, in particular by developing and enriching Arabic vocabularies. Indeed, to some extent, the Arabic word can be seen as a difficult task for Afghan learners to remember. At the same time, the evaluation of proven methods is a main responsibility which will be further reinforced in this document. Teachers everywhere strive to use their observations and assessments to improve their teaching effectiveness and are always eager to learn, develop or apply new research-based teaching practices in their teaching methods. Therefore, we hope that this article

will be able to highlight the effectiveness of the keyword method which will facilitate the process of learning Arabic as a foreign language.

### **Review of Literature**

The effectiveness of the keyword method is proven by numerous studies such as Atkinson and Raugh (1975); Hauptman (2004), and others in particular in terms of improving the power of memorization. This is due to the fact that this is not only true from the theoretical point of view, but also from the practical point of view. Many language practitioners have explored and developed this method in various fields and subjects, which leads them to suggest that this method can be used in teaching any abstract or philosophical subject. They call it FACE NAME which is specifically used to memorize the names of people or things. With this method, the learner can easily remember the name of a person or thing once he or she sees them.

### **Methodology**

The study is library or review paper in nature. The study is also based on the personal experiences carried by the researcher personal teaching experience starting from the school level all the way to the university where the researcher at present teach Arabic as a Foreign Language at the Department of Arabic of Nangarhar University, which is the second largest public institution of higher education in Afghanistan. In terms of library, a comprehensive and critical study was made in order to explore the effectiveness and implementation of the Key Word Method especially in the context of Afghanistan.

### **Findings**

#### **The Key Word Method**

Teaching and learning is not an easy process. The quality indicators of its success go to many factors involved in the process. Among them is the adoption of appropriate teaching approaches. In this context, according to Hauptman (2004: 84), when using the keyword method in the classroom, the teacher must guarantee its effectiveness. This will not be achieved without due compliance with its characteristic and operational function.

#### **A. Definition**

The historical origin of the keyword method cannot be traced. However, it has recently been popularized by cognitive psychologists Atkinson and Raugh, who enthusiastically examined interest in the method and claim to successfully structure the operational principle of this approach. In this regard, Atkinson describes the keyword method as:

“By a key word we mean an English word that sounds like some part of the foreign word. In general, the key word has no relationship to the foreign word except for the fact that it is similar in sound. The key word method divides vocabulary learning into two stages. The first stage requires the subject to associate the spoken foreign word with the key word, an association that is formed quickly because of acoustic similarity. The second stage requires the subject to form a mental image of the key word, interacting with the English translation; this stage is comparable to a paired-associate procedure involving the learning of unrelated English words.” (Atkinson, 1975 p.821).

The keyword method is a systematic and practical approach to the teaching process. Its function is to strengthen the memorization process, that is to help learners to remember the information that has been learned, or it is an approach to help the memorization process using certain created images that were stored at an earlier stage in life. See Afnan (1986 p.158). In fact, there are some other methods, such as the Loci Method, the Peg Word Hook Method, the Link Word Method and others, that can be used in the teaching process. The basic idea of the keyword method refers to the conceptual basis of remembering oneself, or the students' self-awareness when dealing with what has been learned, that is, to strengthen the power to remember new words and phrases. Similar discussion can be found in Hall, Wilson and Patterson (1981), and also in Levin, Mcgovern and Pressley (1985), Majid and Rafi (1990), Hall and Fuson (1988), Paivio and Desrochers (1981) and Reed (1982). This method is extremely important because:

1. Observation is instrumental in key word method in teaching new vocabularies. 2
2. Observation deals with active reaction between teaching strategies and memorization.
3. Observation in adapting loose key word method or non-specific transfer.
4. Observation in proving the existence of transformation within classroom exercises.
5. The comparative studies between methods and strategies.
6. Observation which is concerned about images that appears in mind.

Besides this, the concept of teaching strategy in using key word method comprises two important steps:

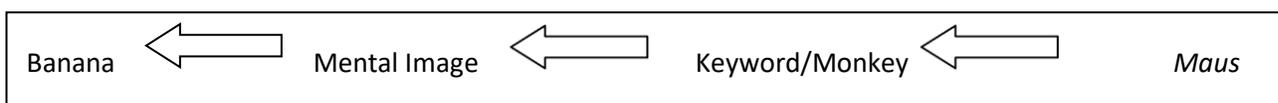
1. To form a connection between foreign words with any word in the mother tongue. The nature of this connection is fully based on the physical basis, where Raugh and Atkinson (1975) regarded it as key word. The only condition for this connection is the existence of similarities and reasonable matching that can relate the two words together in the mind of learners.
2. To form a semantic connection between the two words. In this step, learners have to design a semantic mental image in his/her mind that relate the two words together and become interactive in certain way in the mind.

Actually, the first step is the most important, since it represents the starting point for the establishment and effectiveness of this method as a strategy in the process of memorizing and remembering foreign words. In fact, this will not be achieved without meeting the following three conditions:

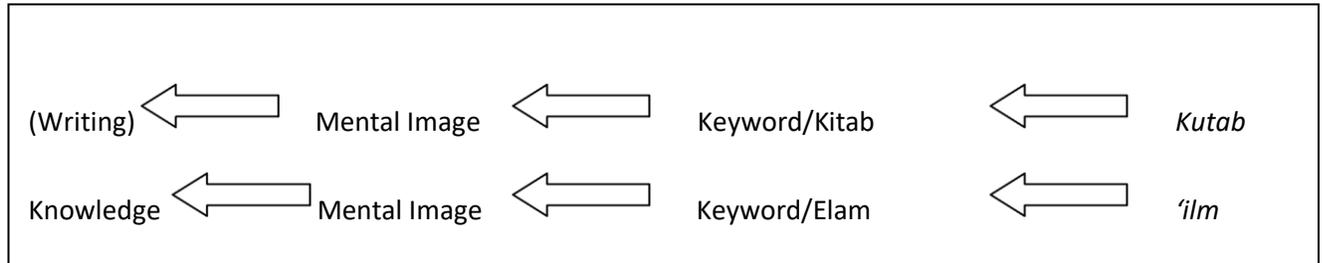
1. The degree of similarities between the two words should be very high.
2. The key word should be designed specifically for a specific word which should be learned.
3. The semantic mental image should be functioning interactively between the two words and should be spontaneous in nature.

### Implementation of Key Word Method

For the purpose of introducing key word method, we can assume that an English speaker wants to learn an Arabic word {mauz} which means banana, where the word (monkey) can be used as a key word in memorizing the word {mauz}, with the condition, that the student can create the semantic mental image of monkey that loves eating banana so much. This process can be summarized as follow:



Another example is to introduce a Pashtu speaker to an Arabic word such as (*kutab*) which means “writing”. For this purpose, the Pashtu word “*Kitab*” can be used as a key word because the word KITAB has plenty of writing. Similar is the Arabic word (*‘ilm*) It is best projected as follow:



From the previous discussion, we agree that the process is not simple, but requires serious effort. Therefore, you need training, skills and teacher support to allow the method to be completely viable. In this case, the student has to go through all the steps to design an effective keyword method.

## Conclusion

It is recommended that using appropriate methods and strategies, such as the keyword method that is essential in the teaching and learning process. In the comparative study conducted in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama Sultanah Bahiah, Kedah Darul Aman, it was shown that the method can improve vocabulary learning among Arabic students. The additional concern of this test was to understand and identify the causes of difficulties in teaching and learning Arabic as a second language. Finally, an evaluation of any educational strategy and learning effectiveness is a vital job of each instructor. It is your duty that must be done continuously and cannot be delivered or neglected. The method was successful in teaching Afghan students the Arabic language. Therefore, it is recommended that the Keyword Method will be applied to teach an effective Arabic language.

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