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# THE PERCEPTION OF UITM STUDENTS TOWARDS TEACHING AND LEARNING OF JAWI AT VARIOUS LEVELS OF EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA: WHAT SHOULD WE DO TO EXPAND ITS MASTERY?

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## ABSTRACT

*The present study was conducted in order to discover the overall perception of the youth which was represented by 79 UiTM Penang Malay students regarding the actions that could be taken to expand the mastery of Jawi at various levels of education in Malaysia. This research employed a quantitative method via the administration of a questionnaire containing 20 items to each respondent involved. The items were designed to answer the research question of the study, “What is the perception of UiTM Penang Malay students towards the initiatives that can be taken in order to expand the teaching and learning of Jawi at various levels of education in Malaysia?” The results revealed that most of the respondents contributed positive views towards the exposure and practice of Jawi at various levels of education and supported some initiatives suggested for expanding the teaching and learning of Jawi. For example, 33 respondents (41.8%,  $M= 4.24$ ,  $SD= 0.738$ ) strongly agreed with item 9 (“In my opinion, Jawi subject needs to be offered at all levels of learning (primary, secondary and tertiary levels) so that its learning can be more comprehensive”). Obviously, the respondents in majority favor the teaching and learning of Jawi to the point that they think it should be made a subject that is offered at all educational levels.*

**Keywords:** Jawi, Jawi teaching and learning, educational levels, initiatives

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Abdul Hamid and Abdullah (2009) argue that Jawi is no longer favored and regarded as something capable to be mastered impeccably by the younger generation. Their study



exposed that the mastery of Jawi among students and undergraduates were still at the level of concern (Abdul Hamid & Abdullah, 2009). Ismail (2000) argues that the implementation of the national language policy in Malaysia that prescribes the use of Roman script as stated in the National Language Acts 1963 and 1967 has contributed to an educational system that does not support the existence of the Jawi script. As Jawi skills among the Malay youth in Malaysia seem to be considered important to be paid attention to, the present study was performed in order to collect some information concerning the teaching and learning of Jawi at different levels of education in Malaysia and the actions that can be taken to extend the mastery of this writing system.

### ***1.1 Problem Statement***

The teaching and learning of Jawi in primary schools are not continued after this level of schooling and this contributes to the discontinuity of Jawi knowledge when it is no longer taught in secondary schools. The implication of this is that the young generation is relatively weak at the mastery of Jawi reading and writing. As for higher education such as the one in local universities, private colleges and teacher training institutes, Jawi is only taught in the fields of Islamic education and Malay language (Lubis, 2012; Ali & Abdullah, 2015). Such issues obviously indicate that the teaching and learning of Jawi should be enhanced at all educational levels by performing some initiatives. However, it is still uncertain about the actions that could be taken to expand the teaching and learning of Jawi in Malaysia. Thus, the execution of the present study with the objective to investigate the perception of UiTM Penang Malay students towards the things that could be implemented in order to expand the teaching and learning of Jawi at various levels of education in Malaysia, is justifiable.

### ***1.2 Objective of the Study***

This study was conducted for the purpose of basically discovering the opinion of UiTM Penang Malay students regarding the teaching and learning of Jawi at various levels of education in Malaysia. Specifically, the present study intended to achieve the following objective:

- 1) To investigate the perception of UiTM Penang Malay students towards the initiatives that can be taken in order to expand the teaching and learning of Jawi at various levels of education in Malaysia.

### ***1.3 Research Question of the Study***

The present research was performed with the aim to seek the answer to the following research question:

- 1) What is the perception of UiTM Penang Malay students towards the initiatives that can be taken in order to expand the teaching and learning of Jawi at various levels of education in Malaysia?



### ***1.4 Significance of the Study***

This study expects to particularly shed light on the issue of expanding Jawi teaching and learning at various educational institutions in Malaysia. Also, it is expected that the insights obtained from this research can add to the information regarding the issues of Jawi teaching and learning for the enlightenment of Malaysians especially with respect to Jawi sustainability in this country.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***2.1 The History of Jawi Writing System in Malaysia***

Borhan (2012) believes that a Muslim scholar, Ibn Battuta used the term, “al-djawah” to refer to the Malay Archipelago, and the word, “Jawi” to refer to the people living in this region. Jawi writing system has been used by this community since the 13th century after the arrival of Islam to this province (Ismail, 2000). The discovery of the inscribed stone dated February 22, 1303 century AD in Kuala Berang, Terengganu, Malaysia (then “Malaya”) is undisputable evidence of the use of Jawi in the Malay land (Abdul Hamid & Abdul Latif, 2014). Jawi in the old days was used for written communication as in dealing with government affairs like the practice of the Sultan of Aceh who used to write letters in Jawi to Sir. James Lancaster (1601M) for business purposes (Ismail, 2000). Many books in the past before the prevalent use of Roman letters were written using Jawi and one of the books was *Bustan al-Katibin* by Raja Ali Haji (Abdul Hamid & Abdul Latif, 2014). “Akta” (Act) 10/63. s. 2 states that the writing system for the national language of Malaysia is Roman, provided that this does not prohibit the use of Malay writing system, better known as Jawi script, for the language (“Undang-undang Malaysia: Akta 32, Akta Bahasa Kebangsaan 1963/67” or Law of Malaysia: Act 32, National Language Act 1963/67).

### ***2.2 Teaching and Learning of Jawi at Schools in Malaysia***

The “Panduan Pengurusan Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Islam Sekolah Rendah dan Sekolah Menengah” prepared by the Ministry of Education of Malaysia states that the language skills provided through the subject of Islamic Education are in line with the efforts to achieve the objectives of the Islamic Education subject where students should be able to read, and create or write sentences or texts using Jawi and Jawi calligraphy as well apart from loving this writing system as a cultural heritage (“Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia”, 2015).

According to “Panduan Pelaksanaan Kem Cemerlang Jawi” (2017), Jawi subjects are taught in Islamic Education subjects since the execution of Primary School New Curriculum (“Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Rendah”) (KBSR) until the introduction of the Primary School Standard Curriculum (“Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah”) (KSSR). Since then, the mastery of Jawi of the students has not yet reached a commendable level. The Ministry of Education through the j-QAF Program started the Jawi Excellent Camp beginning in 2015 to empower Islamic Education at primary and secondary school levels (“Panduan Pelaksanaan Kem Cemerlang Jawi”, 2017). The mission of Excellent Jawi Camp is to achieve the target of



100% Jawi mastery and to empower primary and secondary Islamic Education (“Panduan Pelaksanaan Kem Cemerlang Jawi”, 2017).

### ***2.3 Learning and Mastery of Jawi at Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia***

In a study by Yusof and Sulaiman (2015), 90% of the total respondents acknowledged that they could write Jawi moderately well (23%) to very good (24%), while 33% used this writing system on a scale of rarely (55%) to the rate of always (15%) for the same purposes, namely, recreation, research and arts or creativity. With the extensive mastery rate among the respondents in their study, Jawi script still has the potential to be holistically developed. They found that the university students still have the desire to learn the history and development of Jawi characters further in various fields either independently or absorbed into some other areas such as history, linguistics, arts and media. In conclusion, there are a number of initiatives which can be undertaken so that Jawi can be used widely at higher learning institutions. In the educational curriculum for example, it may serve as a compulsory subject/module or be given as an option for the students, by putting forward its various sub-fields such as its history and development, its art as either traditional or contemporary calligraphy, or its applications in the new media. At the same time, Jawi can also be promoted as one of the co-curricular activities which do not only involve the students but also the public through outreach programs and so on (Yusof & Sulaiman, 2015). Abdul Hamid and Abdullah (2009) conducted a study regarding the interest of the students of the institutions of higher learning in Jawi and it was revealed that there were a handful of respondents who provided positive response towards Jawi and a few of them were less interested in it. Abdul Rahman (2008) completed a study that focused on Jawi proficiency and it involved 40 undergraduate students who were selected at random from some faculties. In this research, it was discovered that 24 respondents were confident that the undergraduates should continue the Jawi legacy, while 16 of the respondents were in the state of uncertainty regarding this issue.

## **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

### ***3.1 Research Design***

The present study employed a descriptive, quantitative research design using a questionnaire survey on the perception of the UiTM Penang Malay students towards the teaching and learning of Jawi at various levels of education in Malaysia, specifically the initiatives that could be taken to expand its teaching and learning.

### ***3.2 Participants/Respondents***

79 Malay students aged between 21-23 years old from UiTM Penang participated in the research as the respondents who contributed to the data of the study. The number of the respondents eligible for the present research was decided after eliminating the questionnaires returned with missing data. The respondents were the students who were completing their diploma program at the university during the period of the implementation of this study. Their demographic details such as their gender, age or fields of studies were not the variables



investigated or measured in the study, thus such data was not utilized for the discussion of the research question posed.

### **3.3 Instrument**

The questionnaire developed and used in this research consisted of 20 items which were self-reporting statements. Each item was measured mainly in the form of percentages in terms of the respondents' levels of agreement or disagreement with the statements (whichever that applied to the respondents) and those levels were represented by the 5-point Likert scale as follows: Strongly disagree= 1; Disagree= 2; Undecided= 3; Agree= 4; and, Strongly agree= 5.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

The data was firstly collected from the questionnaires administered to 30 respondents for the pilot test prior to the commencement of the main study for testing the reliability of the items of the instrument employed. Next, the data from 79 respondents for the primary study was obtained using the same procedure. Besides, the data was collected in one phase only and this means there was no test-retest involved in this research.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

A software, Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20 was used to analyze the findings statistically. The participants' responses to the items in the questionnaire were calculated in terms of percentages, frequencies, mean scores and standard deviation values apart from kurtosis and skewness scores. The respondents' perceptions towards the teaching and learning of Jawi at various levels of education in Malaysia were analyzed numerically for an overall trend to be concluded.

## **4.0 FINDINGS AND ANALYSES**

### **4.1 Internal Consistency Data of the Main Study**

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient for the Instrument

N= 79

<b>Reliability Statistics</b>		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
0.934	0.935	20



In terms of reliability statistics obtained, the alpha coefficient value for the 20 items was 0.935, suggesting that the items had relatively high internal consistency. Any score of at least 0.7 or higher is considered “acceptable” in most social science studies. Nunnally (1978) proposed 0.7 to be an acceptable reliability coefficient score.

#### 4.2 The Mean, Standard Deviation, Kurtosis, Skewness Scores and Percentages of the Main Study

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation, Kurtosis, Skewness Scores and Frequency (f) Distribution (in percentages) for the Respondents’ Perception towards the initiatives that can be taken in order to expand the teaching and learning of Jawi at various levels of education in Malaysia

N= 79

	Items	Mean	Std. Dev	Kurtosis		Skewness		Response options											
				Stat	Std. Error	Stat	Std. Error	SD		D		U		A		SA			
								f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
1	Jawi needs to be made a school exam that is mandatory for students to pass in order to strengthen their knowledge of this writing system.	4.06	.740	.108	.535	-.491	.271	0	0	2	2.5	13	16.5	42	53.2	22	27.8		
2	Jawi writing lessons need to be started since pre-schooling.	4.65	.532	.281	.535	-1.136	.271	0	0	0	0	2	2.5	24	30.4	53	67.1		
3	Jawi needs to be studied at institutions of higher learning so that it can be continuously practiced.	4.16	.706	-.058	.535	-.469	.271	0	0	1	1.3	11	13.9	41	51.9	26	32.9		
4	Learning Jawi should be open to non-Muslim students as well so that Jawi script can be more universal.	4.35	.699	-.752	.535	-.617	.271	0	0	0	0	10	12.7	31	39.2	38	48.1		
5	Jawi learning needs to be in line with the learning of Roman writing system.	4.23	.715	.881	.535	-.798	.271	0	0	2	2.5	7	8.9	41	51.9	29	36.7		
6	Jawi teaching should be paid serious attention by the Ministry of Education.	4.16	.669	-.743	.535	-.201	.271	0	0	0	0	12	15.2	42	53.2	25	31.6		
7	The schools should expose Jawi more through Jawi clubs or associations.	4.35	.556	-.766	.535	-.086	.271	0	0	0	0	3	3.8	45	57.0	31	39.2		
8	Jawi script should be used alongside the Roman script for Malay subjects.	3.97	.698	-.900	.535	.034	.271	0	0	0	0	20	25.3	41	51.9	18	22.8		
9	In my opinion, Jawi subject needs to be offered at all levels of learning (primary, secondary and tertiary levels) so that its learning can be more comprehensive.	4.24	.738	-1.049	.535	-.417	.271	0	0	0	0	14	17.7	32	40.5	33	41.8		
10	The government through the Ministry of Education needs to make a long-term plan that is complete on Jawi teaching and learning in the Malaysian education system.	4.16	.608	-.357	.535	-.093	.271	0	0	0	0	9	11.4	48	60.8	22	27.8		
11	In my opinion, other than the Malay Language and Islamic Education subjects that should use Jawi, other subjects like History and Malay Literature can also use Jawi script in teaching and learning of them in schools.	3.61	.912	-.188	.535	-.276	.271	1	1.3	7	8.9	27	34.2	31	39.2	13	16.5		
12	The learning of Malay language by foreign students in higher learning institutions should involve learning Jawi to the point the students become proficient in using it.	3.97	.640	-.485	.535	.021	.271	0	0	0	0	17	21.5	47	59.5	15	19.0		
13	The learning of Malay language by local students in higher learning institutions should involve learning Jawi as well.	3.97	.679	-.777	.535	.031	.271	0	0	0	0	19	24.1	43	54.4	17	21.5		
14	The learning of Malay literary in secondary	3.96	.741	-1.153	.535	.061	.271	0	0	0	0			36	45.6	20	25.3		



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	schools should require the learning of Jawi too.											23	29.1				
15	Students in higher learning institutions should be given the opportunity to join Jawi clubs or associations.	4.23	.598	-.421	.535	-.123	.271	0	0	0	0	7	8.9	47	59.5	25	31.6
16	Jawi learning needs to be continued when students move to institutions of higher learning according to the needs of the students.	4.08	.764	-.138	.535	-.484	.271	0	0	2	2.5	14	17.7	39	49.4	24	30.4
17	The government should provide special instructors who are not teachers of Islamic Education in schools to teach Jawi.	3.92	.781	-.199	.535	-.363	.271	0	0	3	3.8	18	22.8	40	50.6	18	22.8
18	Jawi lessons in schools need to involve a lot of khat writing skills.	4.11	.734	-.396	.535	-.382	.271	0	0	1	1.3	14	17.7	39	49.4	25	31.6
19	Jawi should be encouraged to be used in languages other than Malay language such as English in schools in order to expand its usage.	3.81	.833	.936	.535	-.719	.271	1	1.3	4	5.1	18	22.8	42	53.2	14	17.7
20	The "spelling bee" competitions in schools need to involve Jawi spelling as well apart from Roman spelling.	4.13	.628	-.448	.535	-.097	.271	0	0	0	0	11	13.9	47	59.5	21	26.6

The 20 items in the questionnaire were analyzed numerically for the mean, standard deviation, kurtosis, and skewness scores to be generated apart from percentages and frequencies. The data showed that for Skewness values, they ranged from -1.136 to 0.061, while Kurtosis values ranged from -1.153 to 0.936. These values indicated that the Skewness and Kurtosis scores were within the recommended values of -2 to 2.

The items are explained in this section according to their specific topics. In terms of the teaching and learning of Jawi at school level, 53.2% (M=4.06, SD= 0.740) of the respondents agreed that Jawi should be made a school exam that is mandatory for students to pass for the purpose of strengthening the knowledge of the students about this type of writing system (item 1). A massive number of respondents (53 individuals or 67.1%, M=4.65, SD= 0.532) selected "strongly agree" as their response to item 2 ("Jawi writing lessons need to be started since pre-schooling."). Nevertheless, a small number of the respondents (31 participants or 39.2%, M= 3.61, SD= 0.912) that represented the majority of them agreed with item 11 about using Jawi in subjects like History and Malay Literature in teaching and learning them at schools. 45.6% (M= 3.96, SD= 0.741) of the respondents assigned "agree" to item 14 ("The learning of Malay literary component in secondary schools should require the learning of Jawi too"). Most of the respondents (49.4%, M= 4.11, SD= 0.734) agreed that Jawi lessons in schools need to incorporate a lot of "Khat" writing skills (item 18).

As for the teaching and learning of Jawi at tertiary level, the majority of the respondents, 51.9% (M= 4.16, SD= 0.706) believed that Jawi should be studied at higher learning institutions for it to be continuously used (item 3). 47 (M= 3.97, SD= 0.640) respondents agreed that foreign students learning Malay language at institutions of higher learning should also learn Jawi until they become proficient Jawi users (item 12). 54.4% (M= 3.97, SD= 0.679) of the respondents agreed with item 13 ("The learning of Malay language by local students in higher learning institutions should involve learning Jawi as well"). Most of the respondents, 59.5% also agreed that higher learning institution students should be given the opportunity to be members of Jawi clubs or associations (item 15).

With regard to the issues with Roman writing system, the respondents (51.9%, M= 4.23, SD= 0.715) mostly chose "agree" as their response option for item 5 ("Jawi learning needs to be in line with the learning of Roman writing system"). The same percentage, 51.9% (M= 3.97,



SD= 0.698) that made up the majority of the respondents also agreed with item 8 about using Jawi alongside Roman script for Malay language subjects. Besides, a large number of respondents, 47 (or 59.5%, M= 4.13, SD= 0.628) agreed that spelling bee competition in schools should include Jawi spelling as well (item 20).

With respect to the role of the government in strengthening the teaching and learning of Jawi, most of the respondents had the idea that the the Ministry of Education should pay serious attention to Jawi teaching as 42 respondents (53.2%, M= 4.16, SD= 0.669) agreed with item 6. The participants in majority, 60.8% (M= 4.16, SD= 0.608) also believed that the ministry should have a comprehensive long-term plan for Jawi teaching and learning in the education system of Malaysia (item 10). As for the teaching of Jawi, 40 respondents (M= 3.92, SD= 0.781) agreed that special instructors (the ones not attached to teaching Islamic Education) for teaching this type of writing system should be provided by the government.

## **5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Based on the data obtained, the respondents apparently possess positive views towards the exposure and practice of Jawi at various levels of education. They also seem to believe in the idea of promoting Jawi to students other than the ones at schools for more extensive use of Jawi. Besides, to put the position of Jawi on a par with Roman script is apparently welcomed by most of the respondents. This shows that the respondents perceive Jawi as a writing system that should possess the same status as Roman script and be widely used.

The respondents also have the opinion that the government should play its roles with respect to the teaching and learning of Jawi that this indicates their belief in the capability of the government as an authoritative party in making changes to Jawi educational system. Jawi is not merely about a type of writing system. In fact, the ability to read and write Jawi is vital for a student in understanding and mastering the learning of Islamic education (Che Man, 2006). Realizing such importance of Jawi, perhaps the initiatives discussed in this research could be executed for the sustainability of Jawi in Malaysia as a precious treasure of its people.

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