

Suitability of Huruf al-Ma'ani Study in Mughni al-Labib 'an Kutub al-A'arib as Reference for Students Majoring in Arabic Language

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Abstract: In Malaysia, there are widespread opportunities for studying Arabic language, beginning from pre-school, primary school to secondary school and university level. There are public universities in Malaysia which offer relevant programs specializing in Arabic language such as *Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia* (UKM) and *Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia* (USIM). Among the core courses for specialization in Arabic language are courses relating to Arabic grammar. Courses on grammar encompass various aspects, among which is *huruf al-ma'ani*. Past prominent Arabic grammarians emphasized very much on study of *huruf al-ma'ani*. Various works on it were written by many Arabic grammarians. One of them was the distinguished 8th Century Hijrah Ibn Hisham al-Ansari. He contributed much to Arabic grammar development, particularly through his famous writing which is still relevant for application even today. Among his works is *Mughni al-Labib* which is considered as a masterpiece acclaimed and regarded as unique by many lovers of Arabic language who wish to explore Arabic language, especially on the aspect of *huruf al-ma'ani*. The objective of this study is to review Ibn Hisham's endeavour to simplify learning of grammar, particularly through his study of the *huruf al-ma'ani* aspect in his book *Mughni al-Labib* and its suitability as part of reference for Arabic specialization syllabus in Malaysian universities. This article is based on descriptive study of the methodology in *Mughni al-Labib* contained in the chapter relating to *huruf al-ma'ani*. It is found that Ibn Hisham endeavoured to simplify learning of Arabic grammar through his study of Arabic *huruf al-ma'ani*. It is hoped that the use of his book, *Mughni al-Labib*, as part of syllabus reference may benefit students, particularly those majoring in Arabic language in university.

Keywords: Huruf al-ma'ani, Mughni al-Labib, Suitability, Students of Arabic language Specialization

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I. INTRODUCTION

Mastery of various languages is very important in facing today's challenges of globalization of the world which has become so small due to the explosion of new era technology. In the context of Malaysia, the opportunity to learn Arabic language is widespread open, beginning from pre-school, primary school to secondary school and university level. At university level, there are various universities which offer programs related to specialization in Arabic language such as *Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia* (UKM) and *Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia* (USIM). At this level, various courses or subjects teach Arabic language in-depth. Among the core courses of Arabic language specialization are courses on Arabic grammar.

Knowledge of Arabic grammar has evolved by various developmental stages through time. Study of this knowledge covers various topics and aspects, among them *huruf al-ma'ani*. Past grammarians emphasized very much on its study. At the initial level of grammatical knowledge, *huruf al-ma'ani* was studied as an aspect of Arabic grammar together with other grammatical aspects. At this stage, it was not studied in isolation from grammar itself. This may clearly be seen in *al-Kitab* by Sibawayh (Sibawayh 1988) and *al-Muqtadab* by al-Mubarrid (al-Mubarrid 1994). Later, in the developmental era of Arabic grammar, certain aspects of Arabic syntax began to be studied in isolation and given specific attention. One of these aspects was *huruf al-ma'ani* which began to be studied in isolation and given deep attention. Thus, were born books which discuss in-depth *huruf al-ma'ani* such as *Mughni al-Labib* by Ibn Hisham. *Huruf al-Ma'ani* in this article means particles which indicate a specific meaning in other words and not *huruf al-Mabani* which do not contain specific meaning. Among the inherited books relating to *huruf al-Ma'ani* are *Ma'ani al-Huruf* by ar-Rummani, *Sirr Sina'at al-*

Huruf by Ibn Jinni, *Rasf al-Mabani fi Sharh Huruf al-Ma'ani* by al-Maliqi, *al-Jana al-Dani* by al-Muradi and *Mughni al-Labib 'an Kutub al-A'arib* by Ibn Hisham ('Awad 1982). In addition, other Arabic grammar books also give attention to study of *huruf al-ma'ani* such as *Sharh al-Tashil* by Ibn Malik, *Irtishaf al-Darab* by Abu Hayyan al-Andalusi and *Ham' al-Hawami'* by al-Suyuti as well as *Sharh Ibn 'Aqil* by Ibn 'Aqil. Students of Arabic are required to know more in-depth information on Arabic language sources, especially for university students majoring in Arabic language.

The objective of this article is to review Ibn Hisham's endeavour to simplify learning of Arabic grammar, specifically through study of *huruf al-ma'ani* in his book *Mughni al-Labib* and its suitability as part of reference for the university syllabus of specialization in Arabic language. Among the universities in Malaysia which use this book as reference are *Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM)* for students of Bachelor in Arabic language and Communication (SMBAK) through the course *Nahu Gunaan II (Applied Arabic Grammar II)*. In this context, this book is chosen as reference due to the elements of *naqli* and *aqli* found in the selection of Arabic grammar materials, which are appropriate to the aspirations of USIM.

II. IBN HISHAM AL-ANSARI

Ibn Hisham al-Ansari's full name was 'Abd Allah ibn Yusuf ibn Ahmad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Hisham al-Ansari. He was a distinguished and renowned Arab grammarian (Ibn Hisham 2000). Born at the beginning of the 8th Century Hijrah, in the year 708H (al-Suyuti 1979; Makram 1990), he first learnt various religious sciences and Arabic language from teachers as well as famous figures, such as *Ibn al-Murahhal*, *Taj al-Din al-Fakihani* and *Ibn Saraj* (Makram 1990). Among his works which are still being learnt and studied even today are *Mughni al-Labib 'an Kutub al-A'arib*, *al-I'rab 'an Qawa'id al-F'rab*, *Qatr Nada wa Ball al-Sada*, *Sharh Shudhur al-Dhahab* and *Awdah al-Masalik* ('Abd al-Rahman 1990). *Mughni al-Labib 'an Kutub al-A'arib* by Ibn Hisham, is a grammar book which gives attention to discussion of *huruf al-ma'ani*, apart from other aspects of Arabic grammar. This book was twice compiled by Ibn Hisham in the years 749H and 756H ('Awad 1987). It begins with an introduction and contains eight chapters with the following topics, *Fi Tafsir al-Mufradat*, *Fi Tafsir al-Jumal wa Dhikr Aqsamiha wa Ahkamiha*, *Fi Dhikr ma Yataraddadu Bayn al-Mufradat wa al-Jumal*, *Fi Dhikr Ahkam Yakhthuru Dawruha wa Yaqbah bi al-Mu'rab Jahluha*, *Fi Dhikr Awjuh Allati Yadkhulu 'ala al-Mu'rab al-Khalal min Jihatih*, *Fi al-Tahzir min Umur Ishtaharat Bayn al-Mu'rabayn wa al-Sawab Khilafuha*, *Fi Kayfiyat al-I'rab* and *Fi Dhikr Umur Kulliyah Yatakharraj 'alayha ma la Yanhasir min al-Suwar al-Juz'iyah*. The first chapter relates to *huruf al-ma'ani*. Ibn Hisham died in the year 761H (Makram 1990) leaving a legacy of various priceless and still applicable works to lovers of Arabic language even today.

III. METHODOLOGY OF MUGHNI AL-LABIB IN THE STUDY OF HURUF AL-MA'ANI

This article discusses the suitability of *Mughni al-Labib* as a reference for students of Arabic language from the methodology aspect of *Mughni al-Labib* in the study of *huruf al-ma'ani*. The aspect which will be discussed encompasses the *muqaddimah* (introduction) of the book, all of *huruf al-ma'ani*, the arrangement, selection of topics, comprehensive analysis as well as the stated sources of reference.

Objectives in The *Muqaddimah* and Its Beautiful Language Style

In the *muqaddimah* of *Mughni al-Labib* is stated the main purpose or objectives of writing the book. Among the main objectives are to facilitate understanding of al-Qur'an al-Karim and to explain the rules of grammar and the problems which make understanding difficult for students (Ibn Hisham 2000). This shows the noble intention of the book's author, Ibn Hisham, who was more focused on the goal of understanding al-Qur'an and facilitating learning of Arabic language among students. Indeed, al-Qur'an al-Karim and learning of Arabic language are closely related. The outlined goal also shows how past scholars had long endeavoured to simplify learning of Arabic language, specifically, Arabic grammar. The goal to assist students in understanding the difficulty of *i'rab* (grammar analysis) problems, makes it suitable for students majoring in Arabic language at tertiary institutions. The stated objectives in the introduction before the contents, as found in the book, *Mughni al-Labib*, is important to inform the reader or student who wishes to explore the book, the objectives of writing it. Students also may study the contents in line with the outlined goal. Further, the *muqaddimah Mughni al-Labib* is written beautifully as in the language style of *al-khutbah al-masju'ah* (Shu'ayb 1986). Indeed, the eloquence and beauty of the language expression may attract the attention of students, particularly those majoring in Arabic language, to continue reading this highly priceless book.

Study Inclusive of All *Huruf al-Ma'ani*

The study of *huruf al-ma'ani* in *Mughni al-Labib* is not limited to only *al-harf* (one of the Arabic word categories consisting of *al-Isim*, *al-Fi'l* and *al-Harf* (Sibawayh 1988). In fact, it also involves particles, including *al-Zarf* (Ibn Hisham 2000). Information which covers all *huruf al-ma'ani* in a single book such as contained in *Mughni al-Labib* makes it easier for students to search for needed materials relating to *huruf al-Ma'ani*.

Arrangement of *Huruf al-Ma'ani* for Easy Understanding

Huruf al-Ma'ani in the book is arranged according to the basic order of *huruf hija'iyah* (Shu'ayb 1986). For example, particle *Hamzah* is discussed before particle *al-Ba'* (Ibn Hisham 2000). However, this arrangement is guided only by the first letter (*huruf*) in a *huruf al-ma'ani*, without looking at the arrangement of the second letter in the word. For example, Ibn Hisham discusses the particle *An* before the particle *Am*, even though in terms of *huruf hija'iyah* order, *harf al-Mim* comes before *harf al-Nun* (Shu'ayb 1986). Such arrangement actually facilitates students in making a search as well as avoids the methodology from becoming too complex.

Apt and Accurate Selection of Topic and Sub-Topic

Ibn Hisham named the topics and sub-topics aptly and accurately in line with discussion of their contents (Shu'ayb 1986) with careful classification of chapters ('Awad 1987). For example, the first chapter given as topic *Fi Tafsir al-Mufradat wa Dhikr Ahkamiha, Wa A'ni bi al-Mufradat al-Huruf wa ma Tadammana Ma'naha min al-Asma' wa al-Zuruf* (Ibn Hisham 2000), contains discussion of *mufradat huruf al-ma'ani* which covers *al-Harf* as well as *al-Ism*, including *al-Zarf*. Thus, by reading the topic properly, aptly and accurately given, the student is able to expect the contents of the chapter. This then helps the student to focus on the topic of discussion and not get side-tracked from it. Such focus on a topic is very helpful for students, particularly those who major in Arabic language at tertiary level, as it helps them in their endeavor to master the topic.

Comprehensive Analysis of *Huruf al-Ma'ani*

Discussion of *huruf al-ma'ani* in *Mughni al-Labib*, covers various aspects such the meaning of *harf* and rules of grammar (Ibn Hisham 2000). Ibn Hisham discussed the meaning of *huruf* in detail, cited the names and views of Arabic grammarians concerning *wujud ma'na al-huruf* (Ibn Hisham 2000), and even cited changes in a certain grammarian's views (Shu'ayb 1986). It is customary for students who major in a certain discipline at university level to master the field comprehensively and in detail as compared to other students. Such is also the case with students who specialize in Arabic language in university. Based on this, it is felt that the book *Mughni al-Labib* is suitable for use as part of syllabus reference in the learning of Arabic language for students who major in Arabic language.

Transparency in Stating Sources of Views

Ibn Hisham in his discussion of *huruf al-ma'ani*, often cited the views of the proponents. The sources of reference for *Mughni al-Labib* consist of al-Qur'an, hadith, Arabic poetry and prose cited in his discussion relating to *huruf al-ma'ani* (Shu'ayb 1986). The evidence, mostly from al-Qur'an, in his study of *huruf al-ma'ani*, is very conducive to achieving the objectives of writing *Mughni al-Labib*, that is, to understand al-Qur'an and assist students to understand the rules of grammar. This shows his transparency in collecting sources of information relating to his study. Such transparency in gathering sources of information promotes students' confidence in *Mughni al-Labib*. Additionally, it also helps students to know the original source of a view on Arabic grammar.

IV. CONCLUSION

The conclusion which may be arrived at is that, Ibn Hisham al-Ansari was a highly esteemed figure who contributed immensely to the development of Arabic grammar. His work, *Mughni al-Labib* is among the leading works, specifically in discussion of the *huruf al-ma'ani* (grammatical prepositions or particles), in addition to other aspects of grammar. The objectives of *Mughni al-Labib* are stated in its *muqaddimah* (introduction), among which, are to facilitate understanding of al-Quran and to simplify student learning of grammatical rules and problems. Further, the methodology used by Ibn Hisham in *Mughni al-Labib* helps students, particularly those who major in Arabic language, to understand its contents. The methodology used include suitable selection of topics, simplified arrangement of *al-huruf* order, wide and detailed discussion, and accuracy of information. It is hoped that his book, *Mughni al-Labib* continues to receive the attention deserved in view of the abundant benefits gained from it, and that it continues to be part of the reference for the existing syllabus, specifically for students who major in Arabic language at tertiary level in Malaysia, so as to, at least, assist students in expanding their knowledge regarding the legacy of past scholars.

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