

AMÂLÎ (IMLA) AS ARABIC WRITING TECHNIQUE

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ABSTRACT

Amâlî (Imla) is a methodology used in studying Arabic language and literature that has a very wide scope. *Amâlî (Imla)* itself can be translated as: to dictate, to add, to fill in and etc. *Amâlî (Imla)* may also be interpreted further by the following narration: A teacher (*ustadz*) comes to a place like a mosque, an Islamic school or any learning space in general. In the process of teaching and learning, all that are spoken by the teacher is written down by the students on pieces of paper they had prepared earlier then be compiled into a book which will be preserved. This paper presents a brief summary of *Amâlî (Imla)* as a methodology which is discussed in many *Amâlî (Imla)* related literature works written from the beginning of 7th century until the 14th century. The subject *Amâlî (Imla)* is written in exceedingly diverse manner, unique to each of numerous known authors. This paper also discusses about various meaning of the word *Amâlî (Imla)* that has been interpreted differently among authors. In addition, the method of separating chapters and other minor distinct writing style that each of various groups of *Amâlî (Imla)* authors had developed was presented in this work. And lastly, this paper discusses the fact that *Amâlî (Imla)* related textbook authors were not only originated from the Middle East, but also from regions such as Iran (*Huzistan*) and Andalusia.

Keywords: *Amâlî, Imla, Arabic language and literature, methodology, literature works*

ABSTRAK

Amâlî (Imla) adalah sebuah metodologi yang digunakan dalam mempelajari bahasa Arab dan sastra yang memiliki cakupan yang sangat luas. *Amâlî (Imla)* sendiri dapat diterjemahkan sebagai: mendikte, menambahkan, mengisi dan lain-lain. *Amâlî (Imla)* juga dapat ditafsirkan lebih lanjut oleh narasi berikut: Seorang guru (*ustadz*) datang ke tempat seperti sebuah masjid, sebuah Sekolah Islam atau ruang belajar pada umumnya. Dalam proses belajar mengajar, semua yang diucapkan oleh guru ditulis oleh para siswa di selembar kertas yang telah mereka siapkan sebelumnya kemudian dikompilasi menjadi sebuah buku yang akan dilestarikan. Makalah ini menyajikan ringkasan singkat *Amâlî (Imla)* sebagai sebuah metodologi yang dibahas dalam banyak karya sastra karya *Amâlî (Imla)* yang ditulis sejak awal abad ke-7 sampai abad ke-14. Subjek *Amâlî (Imla)* ditulis dengan cara yang sangat beragam, unik untuk masing-masing dari banyak penulis terkenal. Makalah ini juga membahas tentang berbagai makna dari kata

ditulis dengan cara yang sangat beragam, unik untuk masing-masing dari banyak penulis terkenal. Makalah ini juga membahas tentang berbagai makna dari kata Amâlî (Imla) yang telah ditafsirkan secara berbeda antar penulis. Selain itu, metode memisahkan bab dan gaya penulisan kecil lainnya yang masing-masing terdiri dari berbagai kelompok penulis Amâlî (Imla) telah dipresentasikan dalam karya ini. Dan terakhir, makalah ini membahas fakta bahwa penulis buku teks Amâlî (Imla) tidak hanya berasal dari Timur Tengah, tapi juga dari daerah seperti Iran (Huzistan) dan Andalusia.

Kata kunci: Amâlî, Imla, bahasa Arab dan sastra, metodologi, Karya sastra

Introduction

Most of us, particularly, those who have or are currently studying Arabic language and its literature, recognize *Imla* as a method to drill and rehearse in how to compose words and sentences in Arabic. *Imla* itself is known as a must taken course for studying Arabic in Islamic boarding schools in many countries such as the Middle East countries, Malaysia and Indonesia. However, the history and the origin of *Imla* as a learning method is not yet sufficiently discussed. Prior to further discuss the *Imla* methodology, we must consider the fact that as mentioned in many references regarding Arabic language and literature, the Arabs have already been using Arabic writing long before the birth of Islam. Nevertheless, the development of Arabic writing was very slow and only until the emergence of Islam experienced rapid improvement, especially during the writing of the Holy book of Quran. The Quran itself, until today is regarded as a miracle and used as a guideline of life by all Muslims around the world. Together with the spread of written Quran, Arabic writing also experienced development through its usage as diplomatic letters and invitation letters to call people to embrace Islam and in some other important documents related to historical events.

The existence of *Imla* dates back to the “Dark Period” or more familiarly known as *Jahiliya* Period. The term *Jahiliya* Period is commonly described by the Arab as the episodes of history where Arab society was not yet civilized and largely uneducated. Nonetheless, Arabic linguists of the time established sharp memorization method as reading and writing were not yet widespread during the *Jahiliya* Period. An unfortunate fact which was deplored by researchers because a lot of Arabic language and literature will be lost without a trace throughout the *Jahiliya* Period due the lack of literate people.¹ *Jâhila* (جَاهِلِيَّة) can be translated as “Stupidity or ignorance”.² *Jahiliya* period is also commonly narrated as “*al-Jâhiliyah*”, “*al-Asru'l-Jâhili*”, “*Asru ma Qabla'l-Islâm*” and as many more terms.

Historically, *Imla* methodology first appeared when it was mentioned in one of the hadiths that states Prophet Muhammad once dictated several diplomatic letters to neighboring empires with the purpose to invite them to embrace Islam as the true religion of Allah. This dictation method was also reportedly performed after the Prophet's death and applied in the writing one of that period's most

¹ Yûsuf, Muhammad Khairu Ramazan. *Devâfiu 'l-Bahsi ve 't-Telif İnda 'l-Müslimîn*, Dâru İbnu Hazem, Beirut-Lebanon, 1426/2005. p. 5-9

² Demirayak, Kenan. *Arap Edebiyat Tarihi Câhiliye Dönemi*, Bizim Buru Basımevi Yayıncılık, Ankara Turkey 2009, p. Pendahuluan.

studied science branches which was called hadith studies. In many Arabic language and literature books, the earliest written book of *Imla* or in other words *Amâlî* or *Majlis*, can be traced back to one of the works of Lays b. Sa'd Abdurrahman al-Fâhimi al-Misrî Mavlâ Khâlid b. Sâbit b. Zâi'n, (d. 175/791) entitled *Majlis min Favâid Lays b. Sa'd* or also known as *Juz'u-l-Lays b. Sa'd*, *Favâidu'l-Lays b. Sa'd* dan *Majlis min Amâlî Lays b. Sa'd*. In addition, a hadith narrator from Andalusia (now modern day Spain) named Abu Bakar Muhammad b. Sulaimân al-Bâgandî (d. 243/896) also published a work around the same period entitled "*Amâlî al-Bâgandî*".

Amâlî (Imla)

Imla has other names such as *amâlî*, *majlis* dan *nawâdir*. All of the aforementioned synonyms can be concluded and translated as dictating, filling in or adding. The term *Imla* can be further explained in the following narration: "A teacher (*ustadz*) comes to a place to teach, this place can be called as a mosque, a prayer room or even a religious school. The teacher meets the students in that particular place. During the lecture, students are equipped with complete stationery such as pen and paper. During the process of teaching and learning, all that is spoken by the teachers is written down by the students on their paper without having the teacher writing it on a board"³.

There is only a slight distinction between *Amâlî (Imla)* and *Majlis* in which Arabic language and literature researchers consider them as insignificant. The followings are several differences and similarities between the two: In terms of differences, in the teaching process of *Majlis*, a teacher (*mumli*) does not have the need to have an assistant or a trusted clerk (*mustamlî*) to write or to keep record of what had been delivered or dictated to the pupils during the lecture which is the opposite of *Amâlî (Imla)*; In *Amâlî (Imla)* teaching process, the lecture generally takes place in a large room or hall such as a Mosque. Whereas in *majlis*, the size of the lecturing place does not matter. At some teaching process of *majlis*, more scientific explanation is presented during the class which is in contrast when compared to the less scientific *Amâlî (Imla)* lecture. In terms of similarity, *Amâlî (Imla)* and *Majlis*, both require religious related place such as mosque or Islamic boarding school to take place. Beside that, both methods require students to take note of everything that had been delivered or dictated by the teacher during the lecture.

Amâlî (Imla) Methodology in Arabic Classical Textbooks

Numerous *Amâlî (Imla)* classical textbooks, which are almost entirely written in Arabic, have unique sequences in their introduction part which always started by "In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful" or more commonly known as "*Bismillah*". This writing is then followed by a paragraph mentioning "*shalawat*" and greetings to the presence of the great Prophet Muhammad PBUH as the last prophet sent down by Allah SWT, the fact that is believed by Muslims

³ al-Yazîdî, Abî Abdillâh Muhammad b. al-Abbâs b. Muhammad İbni Abî Muhammad Yahyâ İbni Mubarak *Kitâbu'l-Amâlî al-Yazîdî*, Matbaatu'l-Jamiyya Dâiratu'l-Maârif, Istanbul. p. ya (٥); al-Marzûkî, Abî Alî Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Hasan. *Emâlî el-Merzûkî*. Dâru'l-Garbi'l-Islâmi, Beirut-Lebanon 1995. p. 5; az-Zujjâjî, Abî'l-Qâsim Abdurrahmân b. Ishaq. *Amâlî az-Zujjâjî*, Daru'l-Jayl, Beirut-Lebanon, p. 14; al-Hâshimî, İbrâhîm b. Abdus-Samad. *Amâlî Abî Ishâk*, Maktabatu'r-Rushdi, Riyadh 1999. p. 8; Abu Bakar, Utsmân b. 'Amrû b. *Amâlî İbni Hâjib*, Daru'l-Jayl, Beirut-Lebanon 1989. p. 37; al-Askalânî, Hâfiz b. Hâjar. *Amâlî İbni Hâjar*, Muassatu Riyân, Beirut-Lebanon 1996. p. 6; *Kaşfu'z-Zunûn*, V.1, p.161.

around the world. Afterwards, it continues with a section containing good prayers addressed to the Prophet's family and his companions. Then the introduction part is closed by the verse *ammâ ba'du* (أما بعد) or *wa ba'du* (وبعد).

A narration mentioned that Ali b. Abi Thalib once claimed that when the Prophet's companion decided to write a book, they would always start with imprinting the verse "*Bismillah*". This narration was further supported by another narration by Suheil b. 'Amru who upon completing his book also had his name and his father's name written in that work as a form of tribute towards his parents.⁴ This type of example is also observed in various *Imla* (*Amâlî*) works such as that of Abî Alî Ismâil b. al-Qâsim b. 'Aydûn b. Hârûn b. Isâ b. Muhammad b. Salmân (d.356/967) entitled "*Kitâbu'l-Emâlî*". Other than that, imprinting of "*Bismillah*", "*Shalawat*", *ammâ ba'du* (أما بعد) atau *wa ba'du* (وبعد), the reason for writing a book, *shahadat* and even other verses from al-Quran may also be mentioned in the works of *Imla* (*Amâlî*). The following table lists the possible Islamic related words that are commonly added into the works of *Imla* (*Amâlî*):

No	Author/Writer	Book Title	Bismillah	Shalawat	Ammâ Ba'd	The reason	Others
1.	Lays. B. Sa'd	<i>Majâlis min Favâid Lays b. Sa'd.</i>	√	-	√	√	<i>Shahadat</i>
2.	Ībni Kutaiba	<i>Adabu'l-Kâtib</i>	√	√	-	√	-
3.	Ībni Dureyd	<i>Ta'lik min Amâlî Ībni Dureyd</i>	√	√	√	√	-
4.	Ali al-Kâlî	<i>Kitâbu'l-Amâlî</i>	√	√	√	√	-
5.	Ībni Shajari	<i>Amâlî Ībni Shajari</i>	√	√	√	√	-
6.	Ībni Hâjib	<i>Amâlî Ībni Hâjib</i>	√	√	√	√	-
7.	al-Bâgandî	<i>Amâlî al-Bâgandî</i>	√	-	-	-	-
8.	al-Jâhiz	<i>al-Bayân wa't-Tabyîn</i>	√	-	-	-	-
9.	Sa'lab	<i>Majâlisu Sa'lab</i>	√	-	-	-	-
10.	Ībrâhim Sayrî	<i>Amâlî</i>	√	-	-	-	-
11.	az-Zujjâjî	<i>Amâlî az-Zujjâjî</i>	√	-	-	-	-
12.	al-Marzûkî	<i>Amâlî al-Marzûkî</i>	√	-	-	-	-
13.	al-Anbârî	<i>Kitâbu't-Tanbîh alâ Awhâmi Abî Ali fî Amâlihi</i>	√	-	-	-	-
14.	Mubarrid l-Kâmil	<i>al-Kâmil fî'l-lughah wa'l-adab</i>	√	√	-	-	-
15.	Sayyid Murtadhâ	<i>Amâlî al-Murtadhâ</i>	√	√	-	-	-
16.	al-Yazîdî	<i>Amâlî al-Yazîdî</i>	√	√	√	-	<i>Shahadat</i>
17.	Abî Ishâk	<i>Amâlî Abî Ishâk</i>	√	√	√	-	-
18.	as-Suhailî	<i>Amâlî as-Suhaylî</i>	√	√	-	-	-
19.	al-Askalânî	<i>Amâlî al-Halbiyya</i>	√	√	√	-	3 ayat of Koran

⁴ as-Samâ'nî, Imâm al-Hâfiz Abî Sa'd Abdul Karîm b. Muhammad *Kitâbu Adabi'l-Imlâ wa'l-Istimlâ*. Matbaatu al-Mahmûdiyya, 1993. p. 79, 140 & 156.

The methodology of writing *Imla* (*Amâlî*) in many classical Arabic textbooks is almost identical, although there are few distinctions when it is applied in practice. In terms of content, these works include many disciplines such as verses of al-Quran, hadiths, tafsir, Arabic language and literature, grammar of Arabic language, Arabic proverbs etc. Several distinct sentences are used by authors of classical *Imla* (*Amâlî*) in giving titles and chapter names inside their books, examples for these may be observed in the works of *Imla* authors such as Abu Bakar Muhammad b. Sulaiman al-Bâgandî (d. 243/896), Abî's-Sâdât Ziyâuddîn Hibbatullâh b. Alî b. Muhammad b. Hamzah el-Hâshimî al-Alavî al-Hasanî al-Baghdâdî (d. 542/1148) or better known as ash-Shajari dan ash-Sharîf Abî al-Qâsim Alî b. Tâhir Abî Ahmad al-Husein (d. 436/1045) or also known by the name Sayyidu'l-Murtadha. The three of them wrote the word "*Majlis*" (مجلس in plural form مجالس) as a sign to separate chapters in their works. Whereas *majlis* itself can be interpreted as seats, residences, conference rooms; meetings panels, study rooms; councils, consulates, committees, commissions: leader of delegations; courts, disciplinary institutions etc. Later on Abî Utmân 'Amrû b. Bahri al-Jâhiz (d.255/869) and Abu'l Abbâs Muhammad b. Yazîd al-Ma'rûf al-Mubarrad (d.285/898) selected the word "*Bâb*" (باب) to divide chapters in their books. The word "*Bâb*" (باب) can be interpreted as part, section, chapter, category, room and group.⁵ As for Abî'l-Abbâs Ahmad b. Yahyâ b. Yasâr ash-Shaybânî (d. 291/904), he chose the word "*Juz*" (جزء in plural form أجزاء) to split chapters in his books. "*Juz*" (أجزاء in plural form أجزاء) can be translated as parts, fractions, chapters, volumes, divisions, shares, separates, regions; complementary; separators; territories, cutters; 30 chapters in the al-Quran.⁶ Whereas Abî Alî Ismâîl b. al-Qâsim b. 'Aydûn b. Hârun b. Isâ b. Muhammad b. Salmân (d. 356/967) or more commonly known as Ali al-Kâlî and Abî al-Qâsim Abdurrahmân b. Ishâk az-Zujjâjî (d. 340/952) depicted the word chapters as "*Matlab*" (مطلب in plural form مطالب) which can be interpreted as researchs, reviews, demands; pleas, problems or *masalah* (مسألة), problematics, titles; purposes or intentions or *maksud* (مقصد أو غرض).⁷ as-Suhayli wrote chapters as "*Mes'ele*" (مسألة in plural form مسائل) which can be translated as questions; complex problems, problematics, problems; events, problems, circumstances, conditions; wishes, pleas; events.⁸ As for al-Hâcib, he wrote "*Imla*" (إملاء), a word which has the meaning of dictating; dictated writings, to write titles.⁹ Ibnu Dureyd in writing his book titles chose the word "*Ta'lîk*" or in the Arabic language *at-Ta'lîkatu* (التعليقة in plural form تعليقات). This word has the meaning of notes, aggregations or informations.¹⁰ al-Marzûkî wrote the word "*Fasel*" (فصل in plural form فصول) to separate his chapters which can mean separators, cutters; separates; decisions, laws; sections, class; curtains, areas; papers; school classes; seasons, decisions etc.¹¹ Other *imla* (*Amâlî*) authors such as Abû Abdillâh Muhammad b. al-Abbas b. Muhammad İbni Abî Muhammad Yahyâ İbni

⁵ Mutçalı, Serdar. المعجم العربي الحديث *Arapça – Türkçe Sözlük*, Dağarcık Yayın, Eğitim ve Reklamcılık Hizmetleri Şti. İstanbul, 1995. p. 36 & Atabik, Ali. & Mudlor, Zuhdi. *Kamus Kontemporer Arab-Indonesia*, Multi Karya Grafika. Indonesia 1996. p. 288 & 289.

⁶ *ibid*, p. 116.

⁷ *ibid*, p. 525 & p. 1751.

⁸ *ibid*, p. 371 & p. 1705.

⁹ *ibid*, p. 224.

¹⁰ Sarı, Mevlüt. *el-Mevârid Arapça-Türkçe*, İpek Yayınevi, İstanbul. 1984. p. 1040 & *ibid*, p. 590.

¹¹ *ibid*, p. 663 & *ibid*, p. 1395.

Mubarak al-Yazîdî (d.310/923) and İbrâhîm b. Abdus-Samad al-Hâshimî (d. 325/937) did not write any of the aforementioned words such as *majlis*, *matlab*, *masa'lah* dan *juz*. In their works, they prefer to write down numbers for each section of a new discussion heading instead.

Closing

The thoughts I have presented and the simple title of *Amâlî (Imla)* given in this paper is aimed especially for those who are going to learn or even for those who have studied courses related to *Imla* as a reminder of the importance of *Imla* methodology in studying Islam as religion, as well as Arabic language and literature. From all of those who studied *Imla* related courses, only few are actually informed about *Imla*'s brief history, its numerous classical methodologies and other minor characteristic of such works. As in the case of Indonesia, where *Imla* is taught in almost every religious schools and Islamic boarding schools in nearly every city throughout the country, *Imla* unfortunately is only used as a method to improve student's listening and writing ability in learning Arabic language. Of course it is a shame, because in the past, many lavish scientific works written by well known authors like Alî al-Kâlî, al-Yazîdî, Sa'lab had been produced based on the *Imla* methodology.

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