

CHALLENGES FACED WHEN STUDYING THE ARABIC LANGUAGE & THEIR SOLUTIONS

**ACCORDING TO SHAHĪDULLĀH
FADL AL-BĀRĪ**

Mahfuj Ahmed
Madani Madrasah, London

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مِفْتَاحُ الْأَرَبِيَّةِ الْخَاتِمَةُ

INTRODUCTION

In this presentation, we will look at the solutions provided by Shahīdullāh in order to assess the challenges faced by non-native Arabic students.

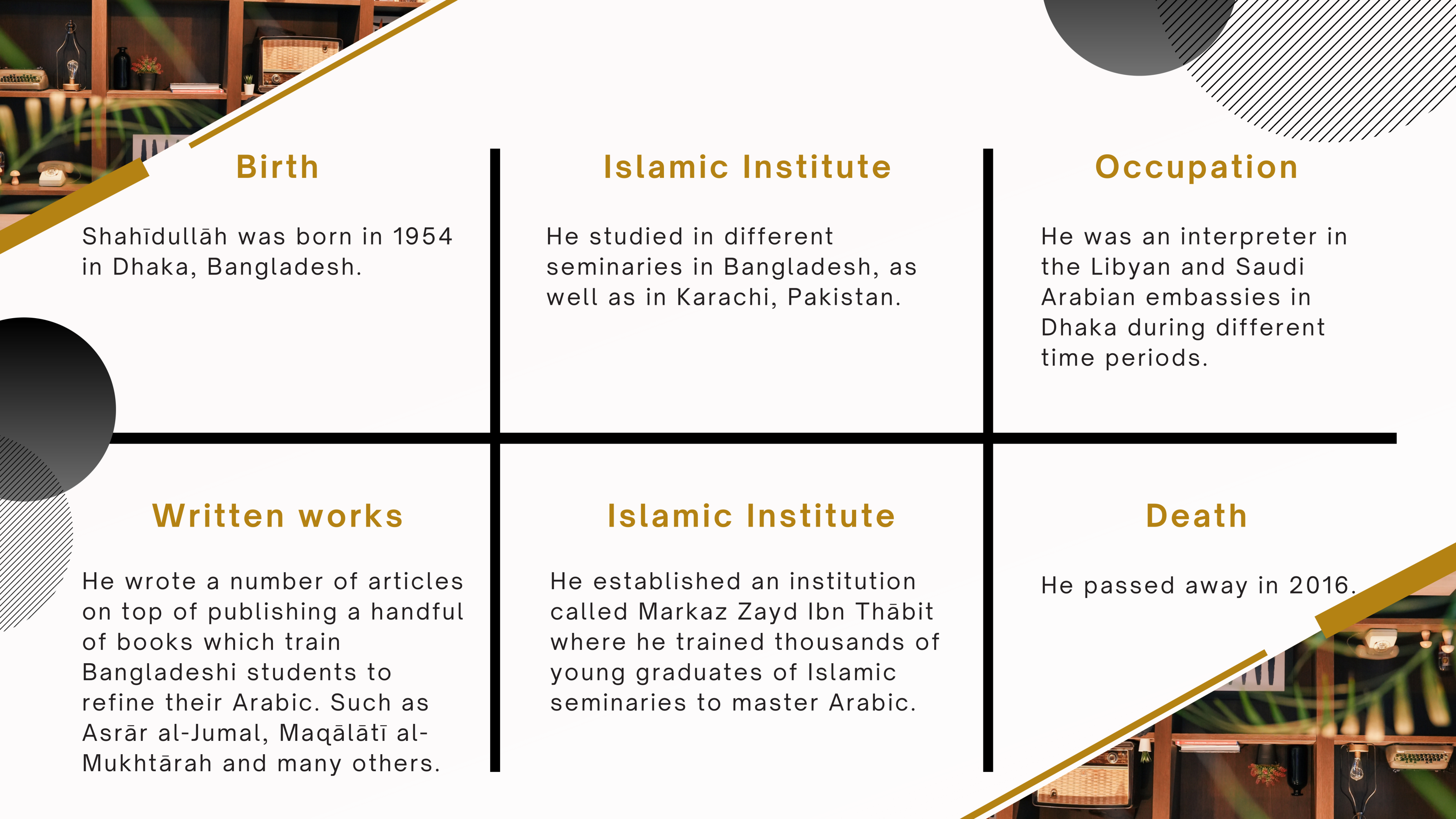
Learning the Arabic language presents various challenges, especially for those in the Indian Subcontinent Traditional Madrasas (Independent Islamic Seminaries). Shahīdullāh Faḍl al-Bārī (1954-2016) was one of the pioneers in the field of teaching Arabic in Bangladesh and served as an interpreter in the Saudi Embassy in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Based on his experience in teaching the Arabic language in those Madrasas, he addresses some of the challenges faced by the students who are also familiar with Urdu language.

سَيِّدُ الْفُقَرَاءِ
أَسْتَاذُ النَّعْرِ وَالنَّجْمَةِ وَالْخَطِّ الْعَرَبِيِّ

01

WHO IS SHAHĪDULLĀH FADL AL-BĀRĪ?





Birth

Shahīdullāh was born in 1954 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Islamic Institute

He studied in different seminaries in Bangladesh, as well as in Karachi, Pakistan.

Occupation

He was an interpreter in the Libyan and Saudi Arabian embassies in Dhaka during different time periods.

Written works

He wrote a number of articles on top of publishing a handful of books which train Bangladeshi students to refine their Arabic. Such as *Asrār al-Jumal*, *Maqālātī al-Mukhtārah* and many others.

Islamic Institute

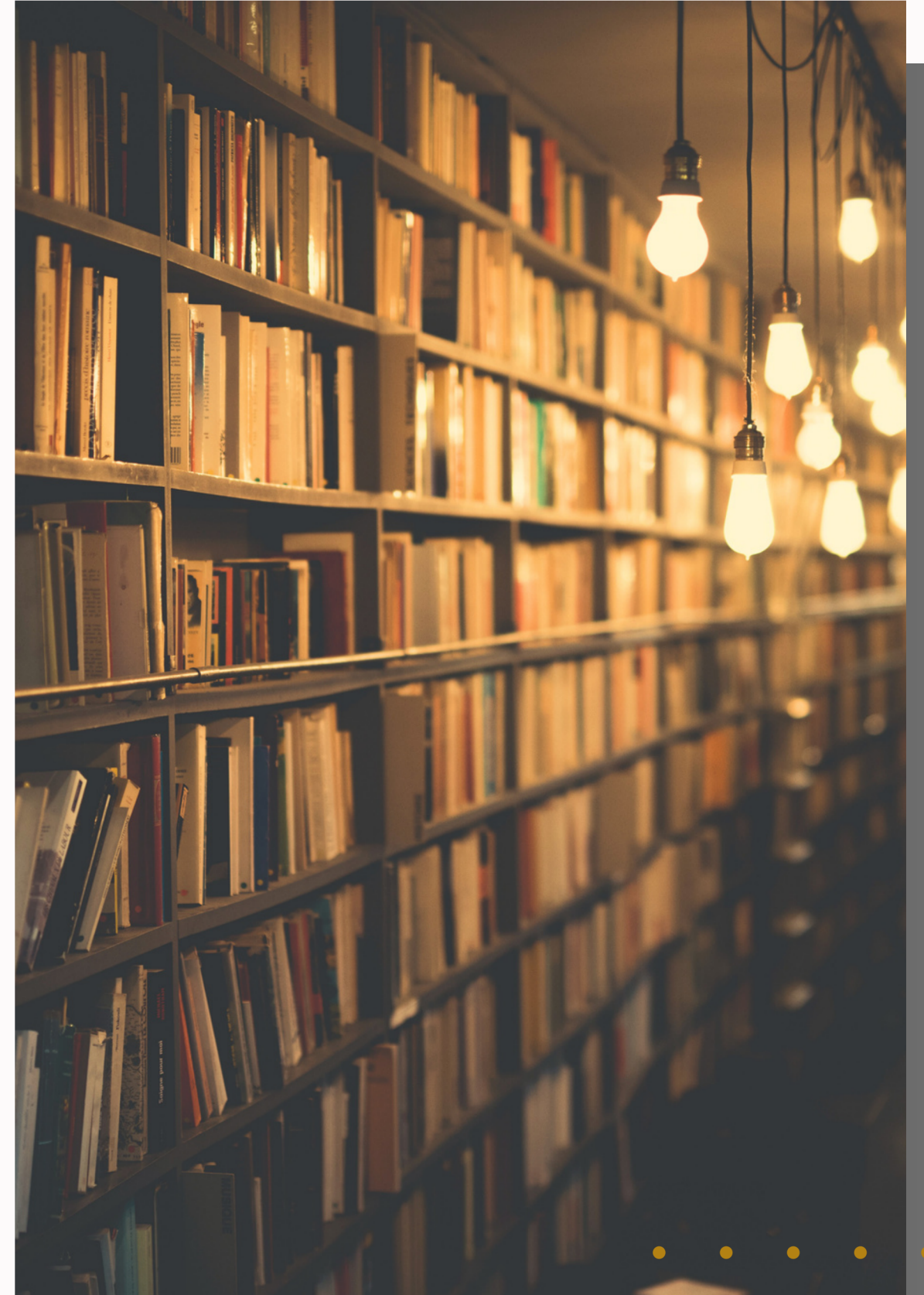
He established an institution called Markaz Zayd Ibn Thābit where he trained thousands of young graduates of Islamic seminaries to master Arabic.

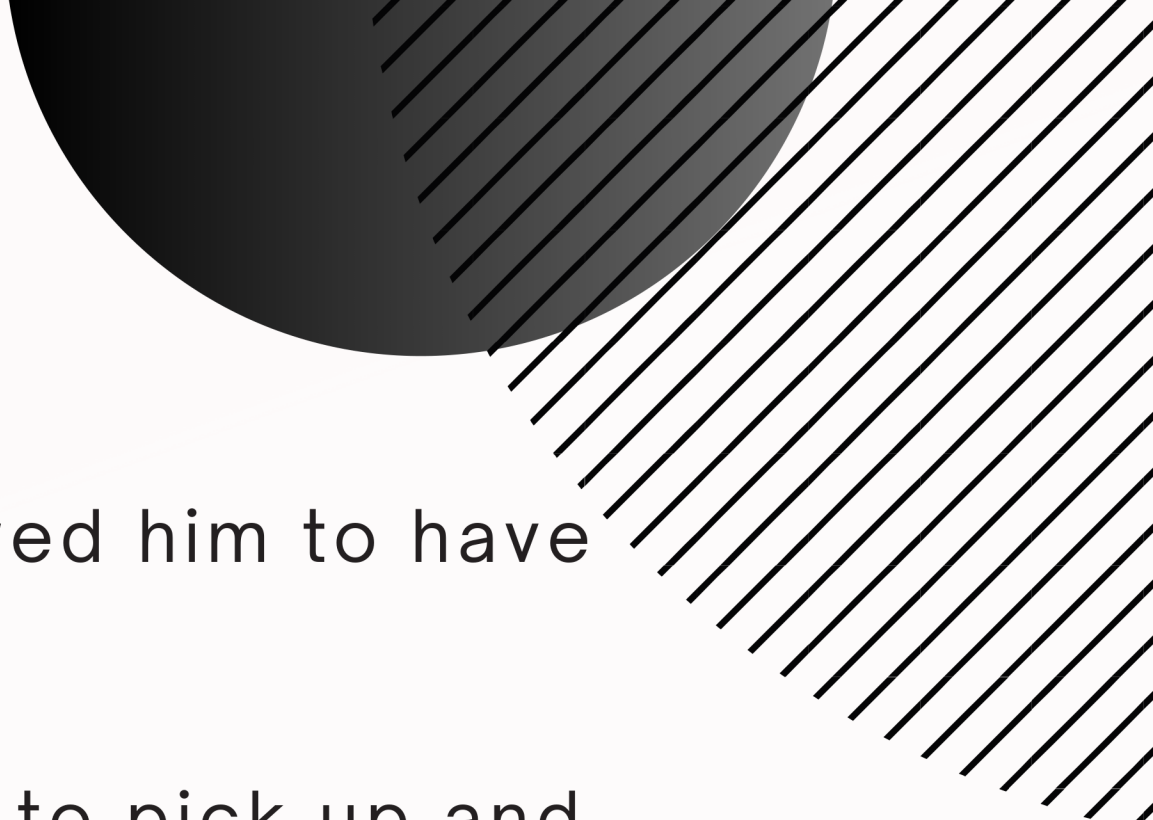
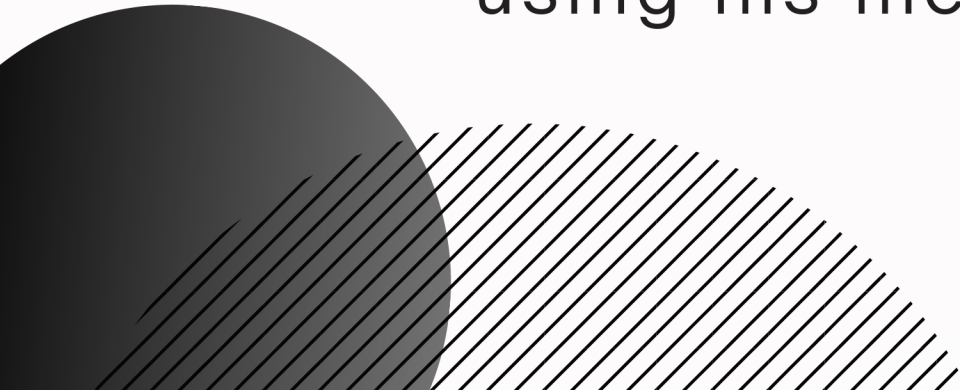
Death

He passed away in 2016.

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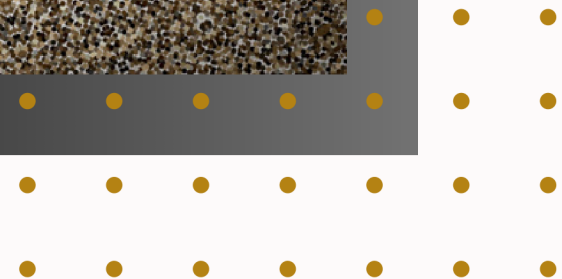
WHY IS HE IMPORTANT?



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- He studied in traditional Islamic seminaries which allowed him to have access to classical ancient Arabic texts.
 - He worked with different embassies which allowed him to pick up and improve his language skills. Therefore, his solutions are likely to be more effective for any students, including non native Arabic students.
 - He established his own institute where he worked with non-native Arabic students, and hence developed an expertise in the field.
 - His methods are sufficient to be applied and utilised by students from a variety of institutions which have been proven to be effective. For example, the institute, Jāmi'at al-Ustādh Shahīdullāh Faḍl al-Bārī, has been using his method. This institute trains hundreds of students every year.

03

THE CHALLENGES AND THEIR SOLUTIONS



Challenge 1

Expressions (التعبير): Understanding the nuances of ancient and modern expressions, with metaphorical phrases in the former making interpretation difficult.

Solution:

Students should familiarise themselves with both ancient and modern literature. He recommended that the students read the books of Manfalutī, Ḥusayn, Rifāʿī, ʿAlī Ṭanṭāwī and Abul Ḥassan ʿAlī Nadwī amongst others.

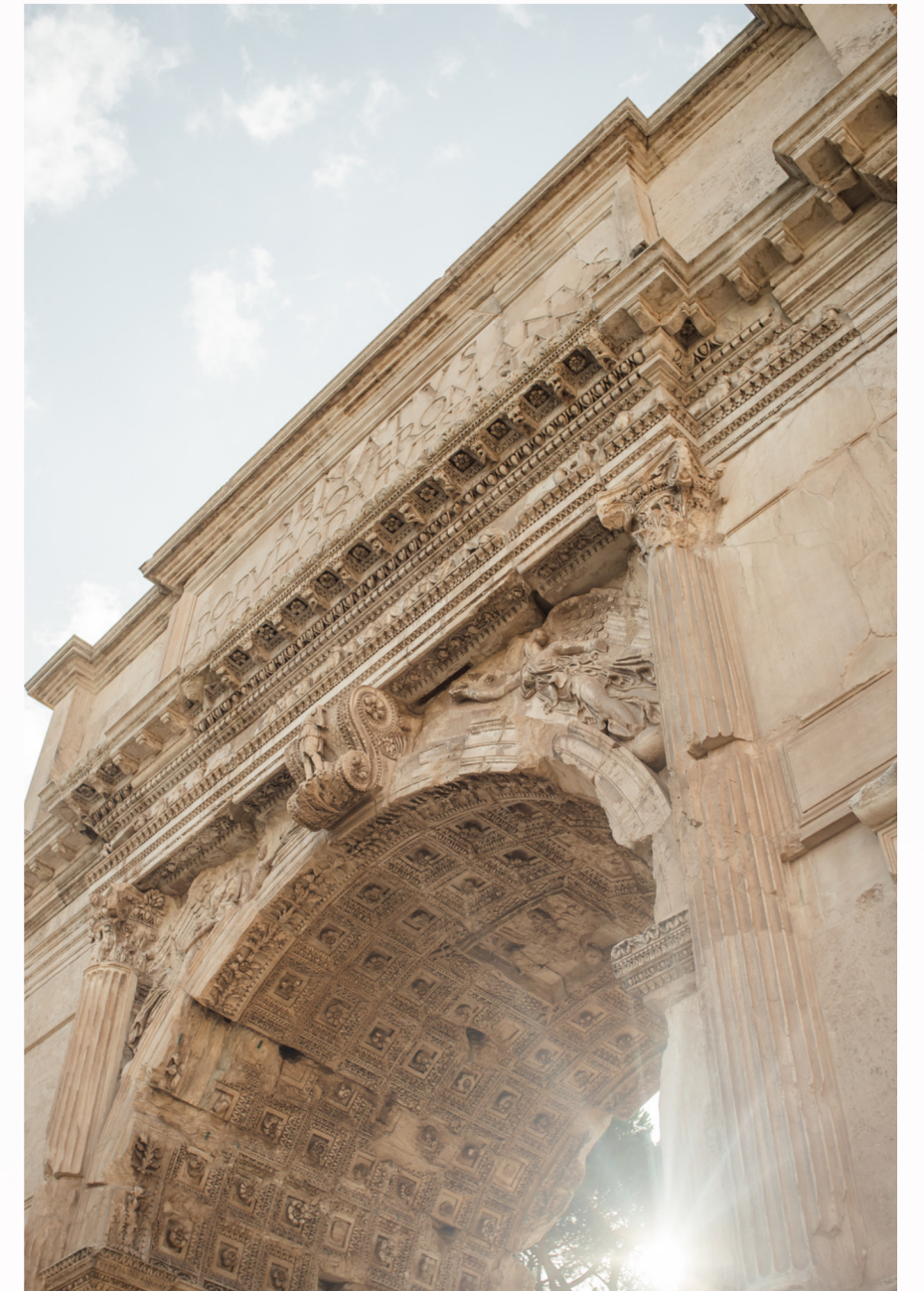


Challenge 2

Styles (الأساليب): Navigating through diverse writing styles based on context, such as religious, academic, journalistic, literary, lecturing, and storytelling styles.

Solution:

Despite the importance of students familiarising themselves with different styles, it is ideal and befitting for them to choose one style which they want to master and have an expertise in. In order to adopt a good style, students should read the literature of the respective style and experiment with it in order to excel in that style by writing and speaking in it as well.



Challenge 3

Meanings of Vocabulary (معاني المفردات): Dealing with shifting meanings of words based on context, leading to potential misinterpretations. or instance, the word رسم which was used in the meaning of آثار (marks and traces) in ancient texts. However, we now have different meanings for this word, such as tax, fee, design. In addition to that, the words رسمي (official) and مراسم (protocol) are derived from this word.

Solution:

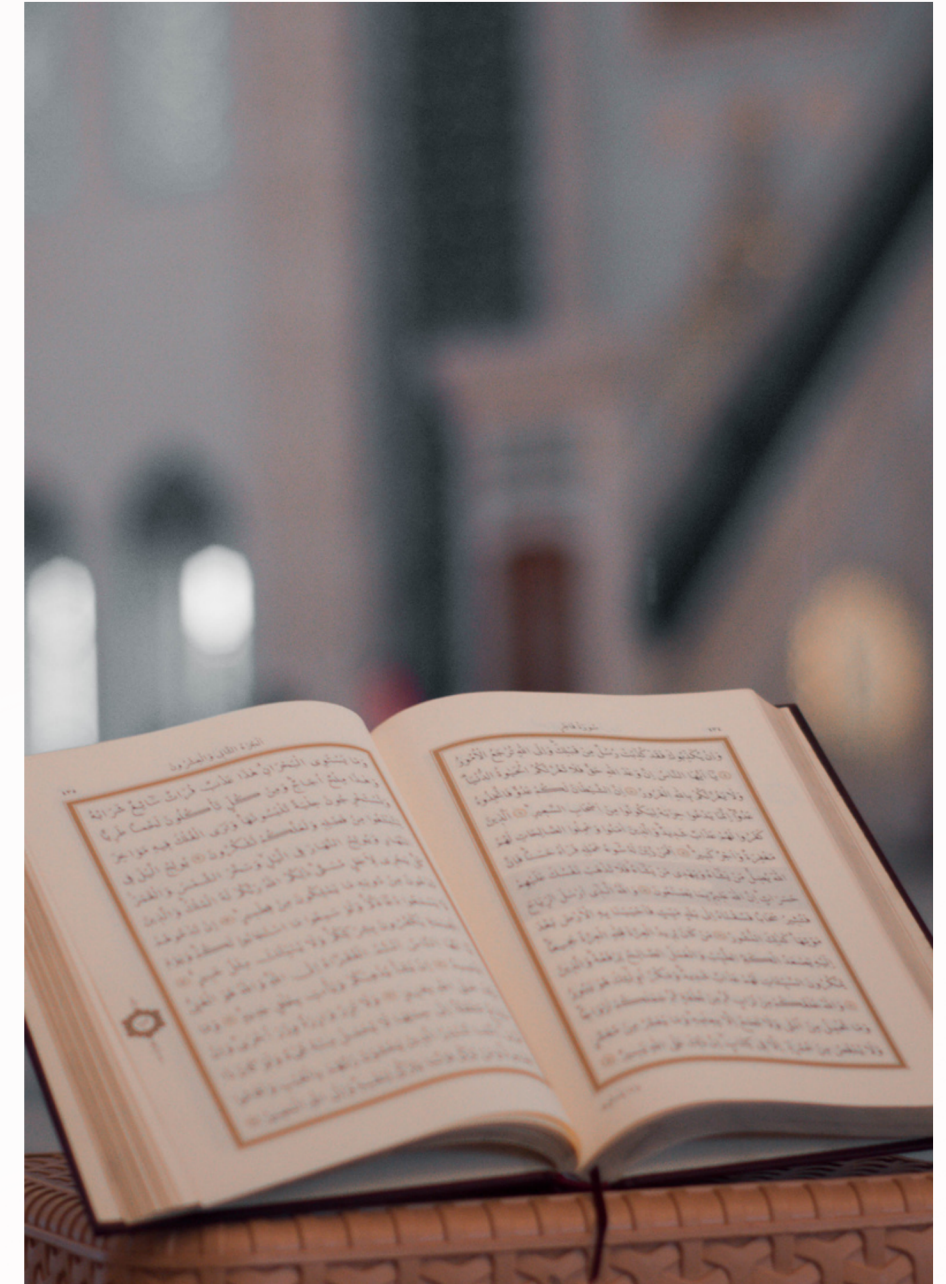
Students should refer to the correct dictionary in order to find the word. One should not only rely on modern dictionaries or ancient dictionaries. It will not be suitable for him to look at a modern dictionary in order to find the meaning of an ancient word. However, students should also pay mind to the specific terminology used in their subjects of interest, as these can vary greatly based on the given context.

Challenge 4

The confusion which arises amongst Urdu speaking students learning Arabic words (تأثير اللغة الأردية على اللغة العربية). For instance, the word خدمة may be confused with the word خدمت. Likewise, the word صورة may be confused with the word صورت.

Solution:

Students should be mindful of the pronunciation of Arabic words and should take heed to ensure that they adopt the Arabic pronunciation lest they confuse it with Urdu, which is very similar. They should also ensure they utilise the right phrases and expressions. He recommended that students listen to Arabic radio channels and to read Arabic newspapers and magazines.



Challenge 5

Handwriting (الخط): Recognizing the unique styles and appearances of Arabic handwriting, distinguishing it from Urdu.

Solution:

A student of knowledge should learn the Rasm al-Quran - the manner in which Quranic words are written - as well as learn Rasm al-‘Arabī so that they can visibly see the differences between how they are written and thereby adopt a style similar to that.

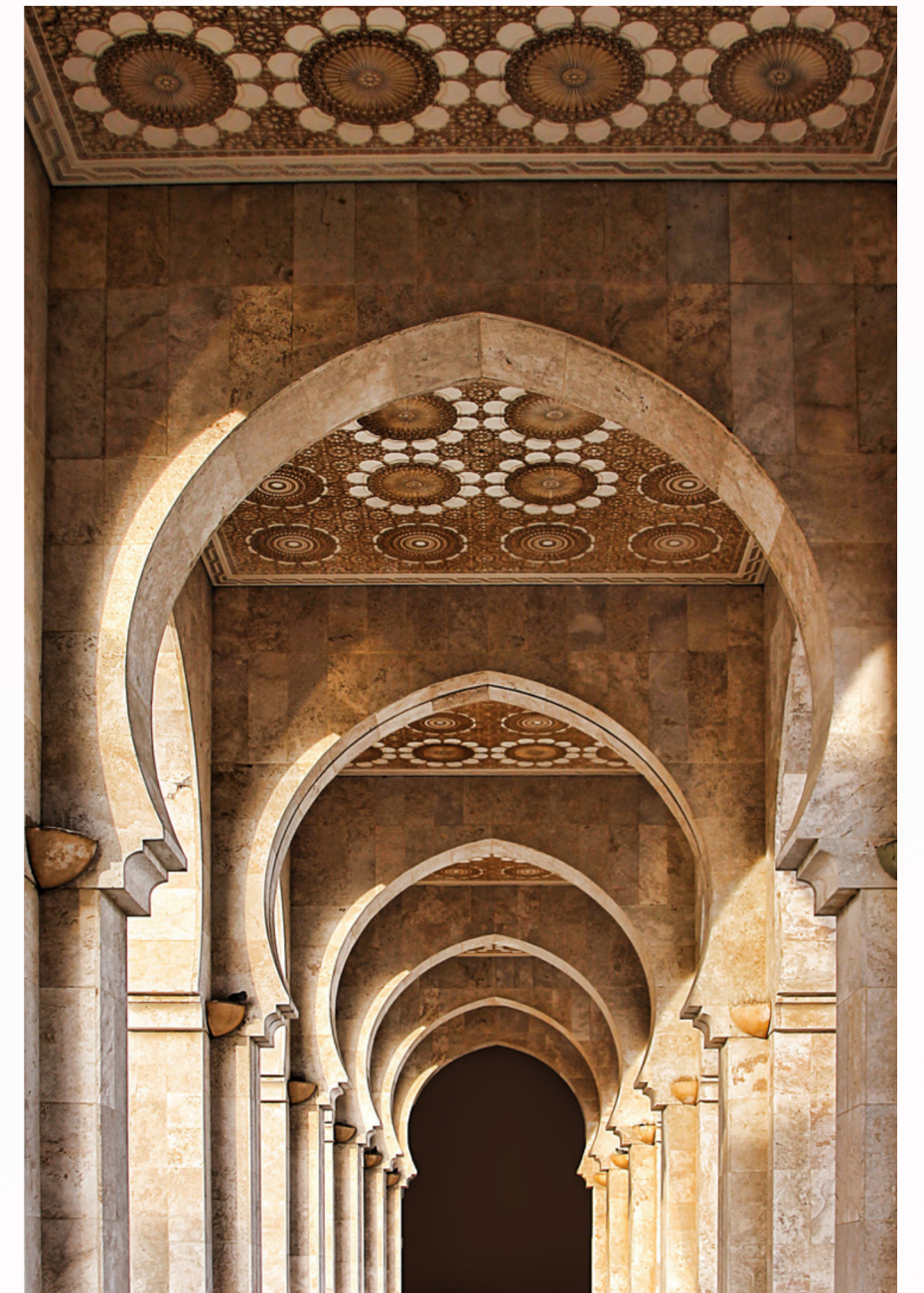


Challenge 6

Different Accents and Dialects (تعدد اللهجات): Coping with various Arabic dialects and accents that may compromise authenticity and understanding.

Solution:

It is sufficient for a non-native Arabic speakers to learn fuṣḥā (standard) Arabic as it is near to impossible to learn all the dialects that are widely used around the world. However, if an individual intends to settle in an Arab land, it would be of benefit to them to learn the local dialect of that region.





CONCLUSION

- In conclusion, Shahīdullāh Faḍl al-Bārī's strategies for overcoming the challenges of learning Arabic are practical and grounded in extensive experience.
- While his solutions effectively address issues like vocabulary, pronunciation, and dialects, their success depends on consistent implementation and learner dedication.
- Though proven effective in his institutions, these methods may need adaptation for broader application and evolving educational contexts.
- Overall, Shahīdullāh's contributions provide a valuable foundation, yet ongoing innovation is essential to meet the dynamic needs of non-native Arabic learners.