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# Assessment of Curriculum Alignment between Arabic Language Course Content and Students Communicative needs in Tertiary institution: A Case Study of Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel

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## *ABSTRACT*

*This study examines Assessment of Curriculum Alignment between Arabic Language Course Content and Students Communicative needs in Tertiary institution: A Case Study of Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel. The study was guided by four Research Objectives and four Research Questions. A mixed-methods research design was adopted to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Data were gathered through questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations. The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, while the qualitative data collected through interviews and classroom observations were analyzed using thematic analysis., the population of the study consisted of 135 respondents, comprising the students of NCE I, NCE II and NCE III and Arabic Lecturers were used in the study. A sample size of 101 respondents was selected from the total population of 135. The reliability of the research instrument was established through a pilot study, and the data obtained were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to determine the internal*



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*consistency of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 was considered acceptable, indicating that the instrument was sufficiently reliable for data collection. The findings revealed that the Arabic language curriculum is generally adequate in terms of its theoretical content and is reasonably aligned with students' communicative needs. However, the curriculum places greater emphasis on grammar and reading skills than on speaking and listening skills. The study highlights the need for a more communicative, learner-centred curriculum supported by improved teaching resources and educational technology to enhance students' practical language proficiency. The study recommends that curriculum developers, educational administrators, lecturers, and policymakers revise and improve the Arabic language curriculum to strengthen students' communicative competence. Furthermore, the study contributes to the discourse on curriculum development and communicative language teaching in Arabic language education within Nigerian tertiary institutions.*

***Keywords**: Assessment, Arabic Language, Curriculum Alignment, Communicative needs, Course content, College of Education, Tertiary Institution.*

## Introduction

Curriculum alignment is essential to ensuring that educational content reflects learners' academic, professional, and societal needs (Tyler & Richards, 2015). In language education, communicative competence, the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in different contexts has remained a central goal of modern language teaching (Hymes, Canale, & Swain 2018). It emphasizes not only grammatical knowledge but also the ability to communicate meaningfully and appropriately in real-life situations (Widdowson Brown 2014).In recent language education literature, there has been a strong shift toward Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which prioritizes interaction, meaningful communication, and learner-centered instruction (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2017). However, despite these developments, many tertiary institutions in Nigeria still rely heavily on traditional grammar-translation methods in Arabic language instruction, with limited emphasis on communicative application (Amin, 2019; Umar & Abdullahi, 2021).

Therefore, the concept of curriculum alignment refers to the degree of consistency among learning objectives, instructional content, teaching methods, and assessment strategies (Biggs, 2016). Constructive alignment theory emphasizes matching intended learning outcomes with teaching activities and evaluation methods. Hymes (2018) introduced the concept of communicative competence, later expanded by Canale and Swain (2022) into four components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Contemporary language pedagogy emphasizes communicative language teaching (CLT), focusing on meaningful interaction rather than rote memorization. Needs analysis is central to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and foreign language curriculum design (Hutchinson & Waters, 2017). It involves identifying learners' target situations and designing instruction accordingly.

At Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel, Arabic is offered as a major field of study within teacher education programmes. As future educators and professionals, students require functional proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing Arabic for academic discourse, religious scholarship, translation, and international engagement (Graves, 2018; Nation, 2013). This highlights the need for a curriculum that is responsive to students'

communicative and professional needs. Despite these developments, many tertiary institutions in Nigeria still rely heavily on traditional teaching approaches in Arabic language instruction, where emphasis is placed more on grammar, reading, and translation than on speaking and listening skills (Umar & Abdullahi, 2021; Yusuf, 2024). This imbalance often results in students who possess theoretical knowledge of Arabic but lack functional communicative competence in real-life contexts (Ajape & Shittu, 2022). Arabic language holds significant academic, religious, and international importance, particularly for students in teacher education programmes.

However, needs analysis research emphasizes that effective curriculum design must begin with a careful examination of learners' needs in academic, professional, and social contexts Without such alignment, there is a risk that curriculum content may become disconnected from learners' actual communication realities, thereby reducing learning effectiveness.

Furthermore, there is growing concern that the current Arabic curriculum may not fully align with the communicative needs of students. Curriculum evaluation studies have shown that many language programmes in Nigerian tertiary institutions remain largely content-based rather than needs-based, with limited incorporation of learners' communicative requirements (Azeez, 2015; Ajape et al., 2023). This raises questions about the effectiveness of the curriculum in preparing students for real-life communication demands. In Arabic language education, needs-based curriculum development remains underexplored, particularly in Nigerian tertiary institution. Arabic language education in Nigeria has historically focused on religious and classical texts. While this foundation is valuable, modern communicative demands require broader applications, including translation, media communication, diplomacy, and international trade. Nunan, (2015).

Hence, this study therefore assesses the degree of alignment between the prescribed Arabic language curriculum course content and students' communicative needs at Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel. Curriculum alignment in this context refers to the extent to which instructional content, teaching methods, and learning outcomes correspond with learners' real-life communication requirements (Richards, 2013; Biggs & Tang, 2011). Against this background, the study examines the existing Arabic curriculum content, identifies students' communicative needs, evaluates the extent of alignment between the curriculum and these needs, and proposes recommendations for improving the curriculum to enhance students' communicative competence.

**Statement of the Problem**

Despite the inclusion of Arabic language programmes in tertiary institutions, there is growing concern that course content may not adequately address students' real-life communicative needs. Yalden, (2012). Anecdotal evidence suggests that students often demonstrate strong knowledge of grammatical rules yet struggle with spontaneous oral communication and practical language use. However, the lack of empirical investigation into curriculum alignment at Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel creates uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of the programme. Without systematic needs assessment, curriculum planners may continue implementing content that does not reflect contemporary communicative demands. Therefore, this study seeks to assess the degree of alignment between the prescribed Arabic curriculum Course Content and students' communicative needs in College of Education Gumel, Jigawa State, Nigeria.

**Objectives of the Study**

The study aims to:

- Examine the existing Arabic language curriculum content in Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel.
- Identify students' communicative needs in academic, professional, and social contexts in Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel.
- Determine the level of alignment between curriculum content and students' communicative needs in Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel.
- Propose recommendations for curriculum improvement based on findings.

**Research Question**

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What are the existing contents of the Arabic language curriculum at Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel?
- What are the communicative needs of students in academic, professional, and social contexts at Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel?
- To what extent does the existing Arabic language curriculum align with the communicative needs of students at Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel?
- What recommendations can be made to improve the Arabic language curriculum to better address students' communicative needs at Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel?

**Methods**

This study was guided by a plan of action as presented below:

**Research Design**

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to obtain comprehensive and reliable data. This approach was considered appropriate as it allows for the collection of numerical data for general trends and descriptive data for in-depth understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to students, while qualitative data were obtained through interviews and classroom observations. This combination enabled a more complete analysis of the alignment between the Arabic language curriculum and students' communicative needs at Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel.

**Population of the Study**

The population of this study comprises Arabic language students and lecturers at Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel. The total population was **(**135) respondents, consisting of NCE I, NCEII, and NCE III Arabic language students, as well as Arabic language lecturers in the College.

**Sample Size**

The sample size for this study was (101) respondents, determined from a total population of (135**)** using Yamane's (1967)sample size determination formula**,** which was considered appropriate for studies with a known and finite population. This formula ensures a

representative sample that is statistically adequate for generalization of findings. The sample includes Arabic language students from NCE I, NCE II, and NCE III**,** as well as Arabic language lecturers at Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel. The sample was proportionately distributed across the three student levels using stratified random sampling, while all Arabic language lecturers were purposively selected due to their small population.

**Table: (i) Sample Size Distribution of the Study**

| CATEGORY | POPULATION | SAMPLE SIZE |
|---|---|---|
| NCE I STUDENTS | 22 | 16 |
| NCE II STUDENTS | 26 | 20 |
| NCE III STUDENTS | 37 | 28 |
| LECTURERS | 50 | 37 |
| **TOTAL** | **135** | **101** |

## Instrumentation

Three instruments were used for data collection which are structured questionnaires for students, Semi-structured interviews with lecturers and, Classroom observation checklist with different sections, therefore,(25) items were developed and the three instruments were validated by experts. In addition, a pilot study was conducted to test the reliability of the questionnaire. The data obtained from the pilot study were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 was considered acceptable for this study and indicating that the instrument was reliable for data collection.

## Data Procedure Analysis

The data collected for the study were analyzed and presented under the following sub-headings: results of the findings and discussion of the findings. The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentages, and mean scores, in order to answer the research questions. Moreover, the qualitative data collected through interviews and observation were analyzed using thematic analysis, the responses were grouped into recurring themes based on the research questions. The findings from both methods were integrated to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the study results.

## Results of the Findings

Total of (101) questionnaires were administered to students, all of which were completed and returned, representing a 100% response rate. Eight (8) key informants participated in the interview while five (5) classroom observations were conducted. The results are presented in tables in line with the research questions raised.

## Section A: Questionnaire Analysis

Research Question One: What are the existing contents of the Arabic language curriculum at Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel?

**Table: (ii) Existing Contents of the Arabic Language Curriculum (Items 1–3)**

| Response | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Strongly Agree** | 35 | 34.7% |
| **Agree** | 40 | 39.6% |
| **Undecided** | 10 | 9.9% |
| **Disagree** | 12 | 11.9% |
| **Strongly Disagree** | 4 | 4.0% |
| **Total** | 101 | 100 |

**Mean =** 3.89 **Decision:** Agree

The mean score of (3.89) indicates that respondents generally agreed that the existing Arabic language curriculum contains the essential components required for language instruction. The majority (74.3%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the curriculum includes relevant course contents.

Research Question two: What are the communicative needs of students in academic, professional and social contexts?

**Table: (iii) Students' Communicative Needs (Items 4–6)**

| Response | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Strongly Agree** | 45 | 44.6% |
| **Agree** | 30 | 29.7% |
| **Undecided** | 18 | 17.8% |
| **Disagree** | 6 | 5.9% |
| **Strongly Disagree** | 2 | 2.0% |
| **Total** | 101 | 100 |

**Mean =** 4.09 **Decision:** Agree

The result shows that respondents agreed that they possess important communicative needs across academic, professional, and social settings. About (74.3%**)** of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that communication skills are essential for their studies and future careers.

Research Question Three: To what extent does the existing Arabic language curriculum align with students' communicative needs?

**Table: (iv) Curriculum Alignment with Students' Communicative Needs (Items 7–9)**

| Response | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Strongly Agree** | 36 | 35.6% |
| **Agree** | 49 | 48.5% |
| **Undecided** | 10 | 9.9% |
| **Disagree** | 5 | 5.0% |
| **Strongly Disagree** | 1 | 1.0% |
| **Total** | 101 | 100 |

**Mean = 4.13Decision:** Agree

The mean score of (4.13) suggests that students generally agreed that the current curriculum aligns with their communicative needs. However, interview and observation findings indicate that improvements are still needed in practical language communication.

Research Question Four: What recommendations can improve the Arabic language curriculum?

**Table: (v) Recommendations for Curriculum Improvement (Items 10–12)**

| Response | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Strongly Agree** | 41 | 40.6% |
| **Agree** | 46 | 45.5% |
| **Undecided** | 8 | 7.9% |
| **Disagree** | 3 | 3.0% |
| **Strongly Disagree** | 3 | 3.0% |
| **Total** | 101 | 100 |

**Mean =** 4.18 **Decision:** Agree

The respondents strongly supported the need for curriculum improvement. Approximately (86.1%) agreed that more communicative activities, modern teaching methods, and instructional materials should be incorporated into the Arabic curriculum.

**Section B: Semi-structured interviews with lecturers**

Eight respondents comprising Arabic lecturers, the Head of Department, curriculum developers, and academic staff were interviewed. The responses were analysed using thematic analysis.

**Research Question One: Theme i: Current Curriculum Components**

Participants indicated that the curriculum includes:

- Arabic grammar (Nahwu and Sarf
- Reading comprehension
- Literature
- Translation
- Composition
- Islamic texts

“Most respondents noted that the curriculum is comprehensive in theoretical content”.

**Theme ii: Coverage of Four Language Skills**

“Most interviewees agreed that reading and writing receive adequate attention, while listening and speaking receive comparatively less emphasis due to inadequate language laboratories, limited instructional resources, and insufficient classroom time”.

**Research Question Two: Theme i: Students' Communicative Needs**

"Respondents identified student's needs as"

- Academic presentations
- Classroom discussions
- Teaching practice
- Translation
- Public speaking
- Professional communication
- Social interaction in Arabic

**Theme ii: Communication Skills Students Find Difficult**

Most respondents agreed that students experience greater difficulty in:

- Speaking fluently
- Listening comprehension
- Pronunciation
- Interactive conversation

"Reading and writing were considered relatively stronger skills".

**Research Question Three: Theme i: Curriculum Alignment**

"Participants generally agreed that the curriculum moderately addresses students' communicative needs but remains more grammar-oriented than communication-oriented".

**Theme ii: Challenges Affecting Curriculum Implementation**

"The Common challenges identified include"

- Lack of language laboratories
- Inadequate instructional materials
- Large class sizes
- Limited ICT facilities
- Insufficient teacher training on communicative language teaching
- Inadequate practical language activities

**Research Question Four: Theme i: Suggested Curriculum Improvements**

"Respondents recommended"

- Greater emphasis on communicative competence
- More speaking and listening activities
- Integration of technology
- Regular curriculum review
- Increased practical exercises
- Use of authentic Arabic materials

**Theme ii: Improving Teaching, Learning and Assessment**

**"**The Suggestions include"

- Role play
- Group discussion
- Language clubs
- Audio-visual materials
- Continuous assessment of speaking skills
- Interactive classroom teaching

"Overall, respondents believed these measures would significantly improve students' communicative competence".

**Section C: Observation Checklist Analysis**

Five classroom observations were conducted.

**Table: (vi) Observation Checklist Results**

| Observation Item | Yes | No | Percentage (Yes) | Percentage (No) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Speaking and listening activities included** | 4 | 1 | 80% | 20% |
| **Lecturer uses communicative teaching methods** | 2 | 3 | 40% | 60% |
| **Students actively communicate in Arabic** | 3 | 2 | 60% | 40% |
| **Teaching materials support practical communication** | 3 | 2 | 60% | 40% |
| **Lesson reflects students' communication needs** | 2 | 3 | 40% | 60% |

**Observation Findings**

The observation results indicate that classroom instruction incorporates some communicative activities, particularly speaking and listening exercises (80%). However, only 40% of observed lessons employed communicative teaching methods such as role play, pair work, and group discussions. Likewise, only 40% of lessons fully reflected students' academic, professional, and social communication needs. These findings suggest that although elements of communicative language teaching exist, classroom implementation remains inconsistent and continues to rely substantially on traditional instructional methods

**Summary of Findings**

The combined questionnaire, interview, and observation findings revealed that:

- The Arabic language curriculum contains relevant theoretical content and is generally perceived as adequate by students (Mean = 3.89).
- Students have substantial communicative needs in academic, professional, and social contexts (Mean = 4.09).
- The curriculum demonstrates a reasonable level of alignment with students' communicative needs (Mean = 4.13), but practical communicative competence requires greater emphasis.
- Respondents strongly support curriculum improvements (Mean = 4.18), particularly through increased communicative activities, improved instructional resources, technology integration, and learner-centred teaching methods.
- Interview and observation data reinforce the quantitative findings by showing that grammar and reading receive greater emphasis than speaking and listening, highlighting the need for a more communicative and practice-oriented Arabic language curriculum.

## Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

- The existing Arabic language curriculum at Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel contains relevant course content and generally provides students with the foundational knowledge required for Arabic language learning.
- Students have significant communicative needs in academic, professional, and social contexts, particularly in speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills necessary for effective communication.
- The current Arabic language curriculum moderately aligns with students' communicative needs. However, it places greater emphasis on grammar, reading, and writing than on practical communication skills, especially speaking and listening.
- The implementation of the curriculum faces several challenges, including limited use of communicative teaching methods, inadequate instructional resources, lack of language laboratories, and insufficient opportunities for practical language use.
- Enhancing the curriculum through regular review, communicative teaching approaches, improved learning resources, and practical assessment methods will strengthen students' communicative competence and better prepare them for academic, professional, and social communication in Arabic

## Contributions to Knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge in the following ways:

- It provides empirical evidence on the level of alignment between the Arabic language curriculum and students' communicative needs at Jigawa State College of Education, Gumel.
- It identifies gaps in the current Arabic language curriculum, particularly the limited emphasis on practical communicative skills such as speaking and listening compared to grammar and reading.
- It highlights the communicative needs of Arabic language students in academic, professional, and social contexts, thereby providing useful information for curriculum planning and development.
- It contributes to the existing literature on Arabic language education by demonstrating the importance of integrating Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches into tertiary institution curricula.
- It provides practical recommendations that can guide curriculum developers, educational administrators, lecturers, and policymakers in revising and improving the Arabic language curriculum to enhance students' communicative competence.
- The study serves as a reference for future researchers interested in curriculum evaluation, Arabic language teaching, communicative competence, and language education in colleges of education and other tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

## Recommendations from the Study

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- Regularly review the Arabic language curriculum to better address students' communicative needs.
- Adopt communicative, learner-centred teaching methods such as role plays, discussions, and group activities.
- Place greater emphasis on developing students' speaking and listening skills.
- Provide adequate instructional resources, including language laboratories, audio-visual materials, and ICT facilities.
- Organize regular training for lecturers on modern communicative language teaching approaches.
- Improve assessment methods by including oral presentations, listening tests, and other practical communication tasks.
- Encourage extracurricular activities such as Arabic language clubs and debates to enhance language practice.
- Continuously evaluate the curriculum with input from students, lecturers, and other stakeholders to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to students' communicative needs.

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