



# Evaluating The Communicative Approach in Arabic Language Learning: A Case Study at a Secondary School in Indonesia

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## Abstract

**Aim:** Learning Arabic in Indonesia is still focused on traditional methods that pay more attention to language structure (grammar-based) rather than the ability to communicate genuinely. The application of the communicative approach in this study aims to enhance the skill of oral communication. This study is a deep study on the implementation of the communicative curriculum in the two-year credit hour system program at Zain Al-Hassan Qanqoun Model High School. This research was characterized by revealing the limitations and opportunities to apply this curriculum within an intensive time frame, which has not been explicitly discussed in previous research. This study also assesses the difference in students' achievement in a competitive learning environment with a heavy academic load.

**Methodology:** The data was obtained through deep interviews, direct observation, and document analysis.

**Findings:** The results of the research showed that the communicative curriculum is able to drive an improvement in students' abilities in speaking Arabic, but time constraints and imbalance in learning facilities constitute a major obstacle in the overall learning process.

**Implications/Novel Contribution:** This study makes recommendations for improving the communicative curriculum in the context of the credit hour system, through adaptive pedagogical innovations more appropriate to dynamic educational situations.

**Keywords:** Communication Curriculum, Arabic Language Learning, Credit Hour System, Zain El Hassan Qanqoun Model High School, Learning Assessment

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## INTRODUCTION

Learning Arabic in various educational institutions in Indonesia, including in religious secondary schools, seems to tend to indulge in teaching based on language structure and memorization. This method, although still relevant for teaching grammatical foundations, has proven ineffective in equipping students with adequate communication abilities. With the increasing global need for proficiency in applied foreign languages, the communicative approach is starting to gain attention as a more relevant approach.

The communicative approach (oral communicative language education) in learning foreign languages considers language as a means of interaction, not just a grammatical system. The communicative curriculum focuses on the use of language in reality and seeks to develop students' speaking abilities practically in diverse social contexts (Molla, 2018). Herein lies the seriousness of this study. Most previous studies on the communicative curriculum focus on its application in the context of the regular curriculum with a standard learning time, but there has been no in-depth study on the application of this curriculum in the context of the intensive credit hour system as in the case of the model secondary school Zain El Hassan Qanqoun.

The communicative approach has grown as a response to the traditional approach that focuses on language structure and memorization of language structures (Soro, Ermya, & Salman, 2023). The communicative curriculum directs language teaching to focus on the use of language in real interaction, so that students can develop practical communication skills. Importance is given to communication for a deep understanding of grammar. This theory

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focuses on speaking and listening skills, which are often overlooked in traditional teaching methods (Husni & Ratnasari, 2023).

The symptoms of a shift in approach to language learning began in the 1960s, when the auditory oral approach dominated Europe and America. However, various discoveries in linguistics and educational psychology led to a decline in the use of auditory-oral and situational methods, which were based on structural linguistics theory and psychological behavior theory, as happened in the tradition of language teaching in England (Alwasilah & Furqonul, 1996).

The communicative approach was born from the educational situation of the language in England, which began to move towards communication. This approach is based on linguistic traditions and didactic principles that developed in Europe, and its theoretical foundations have been strengthened by learning theories developed in North America. Two main factors influenced the birth and development of this approach: the decline in popularity of oral and postural auditory methods in England due to Chomsky's criticism, and the strengthening of cooperation between European countries in the fields of culture and education (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

The frequency of population movement between countries in Europe has increased due to migration, leading to close cooperation between Western European countries belonging to the European Economic Community and the Council of Europe. Thus, the need for effective foreign language education that can meet the communication needs of States and peoples has become urgent.

At the same time, new currents in language teaching have emerged in North America in reaction to the decline in popularity of audio-oral methods. In Canada, experiments have been conducted in full-immersion language instruction. In the United States, several studies have resulted in the birth of theories of second language acquisition as a process of creative construction (Dulay and Burt, 1974) and observer theory (Krashin, 1981) (Huda, 1987).

These situations were the backdrop for the emergence of the communicative approach, where the need for foreign language communication evolved from a limited scope of users to a wider scope of other users. Therefore, the reason for the shift from an audio-oral approach to a communicative approach is the factor of the need for communication.

English linguist D. A. Wilkins (1972) introduced a functional and communicative definition of language that can be used as a basis for the development of communicative approaches to language learning.

Wilkins' contribution was important in analyzing the communicative meaning that students should understand and master. Wilkins did not explain the essence of language through the traditional concept of grammar and vocabulary, but sought to demonstrate the system of meaning underpinning the communicative use of language (Falaqi, 2020).

Basically, a communicative approach is a language learning approach that focuses more on mastering language skills rather than mastering linguistic structure (Muradi, 2014).

Proponents of this idea include English learning expert Christopher Chandlen and Henry Widson, English functional linguist John Firth and M.A.K. Halliday, American linguist Dale Hymes, John Gomers and William LaBeouf (Jack, 2000), and American philosophy experts John Austin and John Searle. The basic concept advocated by these experts is the necessity of communal competence (Holmes & Wilson, 2022).

The two-year credit hour program provides flexibility for students to organize their study loads according to their individual academic abilities. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulations No. 158 of 2014 (Andri, 2023), the credit hour system in high schools is designed to offer acceleration to outstanding students. This program allows students to graduate in a shorter time with a more intensive study load distribution (Zainuri, 2022). However, these circumstances raise new challenges regarding the quality of proficiency acquisition, especially in language learning that requires constant time and practice.

The two-year credit hour program allows students to complete the course of study they must go through over a period of three years in only two years. This program provides an opportunity for outstanding students to accelerate their studies, but at the same time face challenges such as intense academic stress.

Previous studies appear, such as Ahmed Moradi's study entitled "The Communicative Approach in Teaching Arabic," published in the journal "Al-Arabiya: Journal of Arabic Language Teaching and Linguistics" at the Sharif

Hidayatullah Islamic State University in Jakarta (Arifin, Nisa, & Suparno, 2023), Rika's study by Lotfiana Otami entitled "The Concept of Teaching Arabic with a Communicative Approach in the Seventh Grade at Mahmoudia Preparatory School 1 in Debek " (Hidayat & Anggraini, 2020), and Eng. Hosni Irshad's study entitled "Methods of Teaching Arabic Based on the Communicative Approach to Increase Language Proficiency" The communicative approach in teaching Arabic excels in improving students' communication abilities. Most of these studies were conducted in the context of regular education with a longer duration. Their results generally suggest that a communicative approach can improve students' speaking skills more effectively than traditional grammar-based methods.

However, previous studies rarely explore the effectiveness of a time-intensive communicative approach, such as the two-year Accreditation System (SKS) program at Zain El Hassan Gengong Model Preparatory School. This research is new in assessing how the communicative approach is applied in the acceleration program, where a short time is a key challenge. The main focus of the research is on understanding how to develop Arabic communication skills optimally in an intensive setting, as well as identifying the supporting and hindering factors in its implementation in an intensive program.

Moreover, you will find the research problems of this research, which are: 1. Can the communicative approach be applied effectively at this specific time?, 2. How the curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of students in a shorter time frame, 3. What are their effects on their learning outcomes?

The research objectives of this research are then completed, which are: 1. To know the effectiveness of the application of the communicative approach in teaching the language during the specified time period, 2. Identify how to adapt the communicative curriculum to meet the needs of students in a shorter time frame, 3. Analyze the effects of applying the communicative curriculum on student learning outcomes.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This case study and assessment research is an approach frequently used in social, educational and business research, focusing on a deep analysis of specific phenomena in a specific context (Gunawan, 2023).

**Case study** The case study method is used to explore one or several unique or represented cases in a real-world environment (Arikunto, 2010). In this paper, the researcher tries to understand contextual factors and how the phenomenon develops in a given situation. The case study allows rich qualitative data to be investigated through diverse sources of information such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, providing a deep understanding of the issues studied. This approach focuses on answering the questions "how" and "why" the phenomenon occurs.

**Evaluation** On the other hand, an evaluative approach aims to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of a particular program, policy, or intervention (Nasution, 2022). Evaluation is used to measure whether goals have been achieved and to determine the successes and failures of the program. There are different types of assessment, such as formative assessment (for improvement at work) and final evaluation (for evaluating final results).

This study relied on a case study with a quality approach. In-depth interviews were conducted with 4 Arabic teachers participating in the two-year credit hour program, in addition to 30 students pursuing the program. In addition, direct monitoring was conducted during the classroom learning process to monitor the implementation of the communicative curriculum and the interaction of students with the teacher. Learning documents such as curriculum, instruction implementation plans, as well as student assessment results were analyzed for a deeper understanding about curriculum implementation and learning outcomes. that have been achieved.

This curriculum was chosen because it provides a space for researchers to deeply understand the experience of teachers and students, as well as the factors that affect the effectiveness of the communicative curriculum in the credit hour program.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Implementation of the Communicative Curriculum in Teaching Arabic**

The results of the research showed that the communicative approach was well applied at Zain El Hassan Qanqoun Model School, although there were significant challenges in terms of time and facilities. Teachers strive to create an interactive classroom environment where students engage in discussions, simulate conversations, and

perform role-playing games. Learning aids used include original videos, real texts, and audio recordings relevant to students' daily lives. This explanation is illustrated as follows:

| نتائج البحث في المنهج التواصلي في تعليم اللغة العربية  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| ١. فعالية تطبيق المنهج التواصلي  |  |   |
| الاستنتاج  | النتائج  | الجوانب   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>المنهج التواصلي فعال</li> <li>في برنامج نظام الساعات المعتمدة لمدة سنتين</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>نسبة النجاح ٨٥ %</li> <li>تحقيق الأهداف في الوقت المحدد</li> <li>قدرة الطلاب على التواصل</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>تحقيق أهداف التعلم</li> <li>كفاءة الوقت</li> <li>فهم الطلاب</li> </ul> |

Figure 1. Initial Learning Stimulation

This image shows the results of research on the effectiveness of the communicative approach in teaching Arabic during the two years of the credit hour program. The research examined three important aspects: learning achievement, time efficiency, and student understanding. The results of the research showed that this approach succeeded in achieving a success rate of 85%, that the time allotted was achieved according to the goal, and that the students were able to communicate well in Arabic.

In conclusion, this research shows that the communicative approach is effective in teaching Arabic because it has contributed to improving learning achievement, time efficiency, and students' ability to communicate. This shows that the communicative approach is an effective way to improve the quality of Arabic language instruction.

| ٢. استراتيجيات التعلم المطورة  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| الإنجازات  | التطبيق   | الاستراتيجية   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>تحسين قدرات الطلاب</li> <li>في التواصل في وقت أقصر</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>مناقشات جماعية</li> <li>ألعاب الأدوار</li> <li>التعلم متعدد الوسائط</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>النظم النشط</li> <li>التدريب المكثف</li> <li>الوسائل التفاعلية</li> </ul> |

Figure 2. Initial Learning Stimulation

This image shows a table containing the learning strategies developed in a study. The table is divided into three pillars: strategy, implementation, and achievement. The strategy column contains three main points: active learning, intensive practice, and interactive media. The Implementation column contains three methods that have been used to apply these strategies: group discussion, role-playing, and multimedia learning.

The achievement column shows the results of applying these learning strategies, which is to increase students' ability to communicate in a shorter time. From this table, it can be concluded that the learning strategies developed in this study succeeded in improving students' ability to communicate effectively and effectively.

| ٣. تأثير التطبيق على نتائج التعلم  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| النتائج  | المؤشرات   | الجوانب   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>تحسين ملحوظ في مهارات اللغة العربية لدى الطلاب</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>نتائج الاختبارات</li> <li>ممارسة التواصل</li> <li>الاختبارات الشفهية والكتابية</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>مهارات التحدث</li> <li>فهم النصوص</li> <li>إتقان المفردات</li> </ul> |

Figure 3. Initial Learning Stimulation

This image shows a table showing the impact of applying learning strategies on learning outcomes. The table is divided into three columns: side, scale, and score. The side column has three main points: the ability to speak, understand texts, and master vocabulary. The scale column contains three indicators used to measure these aspects: exam scores, communication practices, and oral and written tests.

The score column shows the effect of applying learning strategies on learning outcomes, which is the observed increase in students' ability to speak Arabic. Through this table, it can be concluded that the application of the learning strategies used in this study has succeeded in significantly improving students' ability to speak Arabic, which can be measured through exam scores, communication practices, and oral and written tests.

However, this study revealed that the application of the communicative approach in the credit hour program faces some challenges. First, lack of time is the main factor hindering the process of deep communication training. In a two-year credit-hour program, students must study intensively to complete the intensive curriculum. As a result, not enough time is often allocated to the speech and listening exercises necessary in the communicative approach.

Second, students' different abilities in mastering Arabic also affect the effectiveness of the learning process. Students with advanced skills usually adapt quickly to the communicative approach, while students with difficulties with grammar and vocabulary feel late in interactive discussions. This leads to a gap in achievements that needs to be taken into account.

### **Assessment of Learning Outcomes**

Through the results of the assessment, it was found that the communicative approach contributed significantly to improving students' speech skills. Students who regularly participate in active communication activities in class have shown improvements in vocabulary use, smoothness of speech, and listening comprehension. These findings are consistent with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), as elaborated by Richards and Rodgers (2001), who state that meaningful communication enhances linguistic competence and fluency more effectively than mechanical practice (Alfayez, 2022). The observed improvements in oral performance also resonate with Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes that language development occurs through social interaction and scaffolding within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Abdel-Malek, 2020). When learners are placed in interactive learning environments, peer and teacher mediation help bridge the gap between current abilities and potential development.

However, other skills, such as writing, still need more attention, since the credit-hour program places more emphasis on oral skills. This aligns with critiques by Celce-Murcia (2001), who notes that an overemphasis on spoken interaction in CLT can lead to neglect of productive written competencies. From the perspective of Integrated Skills Instruction, effective language acquisition requires the balanced integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. If writing is underrepresented, students may struggle with academic and professional communication demands in the long term. Therefore, there is a pedagogical need to revise curriculum designs to incorporate more task-based writing activities that still align with communicative principles, such as collaborative writing, peer review, and digital publishing.

In addition, this study also revealed that financial support at the school, such as the availability of multimedia rooms and digital educational resources, remains limited. Although the provision of interactive and contextual learning means is necessary to optimally support the communicative approach. This infrastructural limitation undermines the full potential of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), which, according to Falaqi (2024), provides authentic, learner-centered environments that are essential for communicative competence. Moreover, based on Chapelle's (2001) Evaluation Framework for CALL, the effectiveness of digital tools in supporting language learning depends not only on access but also on how technology is integrated pedagogically (Verhoeven & Snow, 2001). Without adequate technological resources, the implementation of CLT remains constrained, and students may miss out on opportunities for extended practice, feedback, and interaction beyond classroom boundaries.

Therefore, while the communicative approach shows promise in enhancing oral proficiency, its sustainability and inclusiveness are contingent upon curriculum alignment, equitable resource distribution, and professional development for educators in technology integration and holistic skill instruction.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study of the application of the communicative approach in learning Arabic in the two-year credit hour program at Zain El Hassan Qanqoun Model High School is an important step towards improving the quality of education and enhancing students' abilities in communicating in Arabic. By analyzing the results and making appropriate recommendations, continuous improvement in the learning process can be achieved and better outcomes for students can be achieved. We hope that these recommendations and findings will be useful and contribute to promoting comprehensive Arabic language learning. Thank you for your interest and trust in scientific research and analysis of results accurately and objectively. If you have any other questions or need more information, feel free to

ask them. Thanks again and have a pleasant day!

Based on the results and analysis, some important recommendations can be made to improve Arabic language learning in the credit-hour program: The first is to enhance practical exercises: Sufficient time should be allocated to train students in listening and speaking skills intensively, so that they can apply Arabic confidently and effectively in everyday situations. The second is to provide integrated educational support: the educational infrastructure in the school should be improved by providing diverse educational resources and modern educational technology that promotes interactive and inclusive learning. The third is to provide ongoing training for teachers: continuous training opportunities and workshops should be provided for teachers to develop their skills in implementing the communicative curriculum effectively and creatively. The fourth is to promote cooperation between students: educational activities can be organized that encourage cooperation and interaction among students, enhancing their abilities to communicate and collaborate in a supportive learning environment. The fifth is to provide periodic evaluation: a periodic assessment of student learning outcomes and the effectiveness of the application of the communicative approach should be provided to identify areas that need to be improved and strengthened.

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