

RECONCEPTUALIZING ARABIC LANGUAGE CURRICULUM QUALITY: A STANDARDS-BASED EVALUATION OF THE GRADE EIGHT CURRICULUM IN ARABIC SCHOOLS IN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

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Abstract

This study evaluates the content of the Arabic language curriculum prescribed for Grade Eight students in Arabic schools in Brunei Darussalam in light of international standards for language education. It seeks to determine the extent to which the curriculum aligns with principles of communicative competence and contemporary curriculum design quality. The study employed a descriptive-analytical evaluative approach within a mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative data. Questionnaire responses were analyzed through weighted percentages and descriptive statistics, while findings were interpreted in the light of semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and classroom observations, following the principle of methodological triangulation to enhance credibility and interpretive depth (Cohen et al., 2018, pp. 287–314; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, pp. 14–26). The study sample consisted of Arabic language teachers responsible for teaching Grade Eight in Arabic schools in Brunei Darussalam. The findings indicate that the curriculum demonstrates an acceptable to good level of pedagogical and linguistic adequacy. It is broadly appropriate to students' linguistic and developmental levels and exhibits considerable strength in lexical and grammatical organization, particularly in supporting reading comprehension and sentence construction. However, the results also reveal a relative imbalance in the distribution of language skills, with reading and writing more strongly represented than listening and speaking, while the effective enactment of oral skills depends heavily on teacher initiative (Richards, 2013, pp. 5–33; Canale & Swain, 1980, pp. 1–47). The study further found that the curriculum privileges Islamic and Arab cultural content more than local Bruneian sociocultural realities, and that morphology and learner differentiation remain comparatively underdeveloped. Accordingly, the study recommends strengthening skill balance, redesigning morphological progression, and expanding the representation of local cultural context in accordance with contemporary principles of materials development (Tomlinson, 2012, pp. 143–179).

Keywords: curriculum evaluation; Arabic language teaching; four language skills; language curriculum design; teaching Arabic to non-native speakers

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1. Introduction

Curriculum evaluation constitutes one of the foundational pillars of contemporary educational research, as curriculum is no longer understood as a static inventory of topics or grammatical structures, but rather as an integrated pedagogical system encompassing objectives, content, skills, cultural context, and classroom enactment (Graves, 2008, pp. 147–181; Richards, 2013, pp. 5–33). This perspective is especially important in the context of Arabic language education in Arabic schools in Brunei Darussalam, where Arabic serves educational, cultural, and religious functions simultaneously. Consequently, curriculum quality in this context must be assessed not only in terms of linguistic adequacy, but also in relation to communicative functionality, cultural relevance, and pedagogical usability (Canale & Swain, 1980, pp. 1–47; Baker, 2012, pp. 62–70).

From this standpoint, the quality of curriculum content cannot be judged solely by the abundance of vocabulary or grammatical topics it contains. Rather, it must be examined in relation to its appropriateness for learners' developmental and linguistic levels, its balance across the four language skills, its responsiveness to individual differences, and its capacity to represent students' social world in a pedagogically meaningful way (Tomlinson, 2012, pp. 143–179; Deunk et al., 2018, pp. 31–54). The present study therefore seeks to evaluate the content of the Grade Eight Arabic language curriculum in Arabic schools in Brunei Darussalam in light of international standards for language education, through a field-based analysis integrating quantitative findings with qualitative evidence, with the aim of identifying strengths and limitations and offering a rigorous basis for curriculum improvement.

2. Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

This study is grounded in a theoretical framework that integrates communicative competence theory, contemporary approaches to language curriculum design, and the scholarship of materials development and evaluation in foreign language education. Canale and Swain (1980, pp. 1–47) established communicative competence as a framework linking linguistic competence with the social and strategic dimensions of language use. This marked an important shift in curriculum theory, as curricular success could no longer be measured merely by the amount of grammar and vocabulary presented, but by the extent to which learners are enabled to use language meaningfully in authentic communicative situations. From this perspective, the balance among the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—became a central criterion in evaluating language curriculum quality (Richards, 2013, pp. 5–33).

At the same time, contemporary scholarship insists that language curriculum should be understood within its social and pedagogical context rather than as a fixed textual artifact. Graves (2008, pp. 147–181) argues that curriculum is a dynamic process in which objectives, content, activities, and assessment interact within a specific educational setting, and that curriculum quality depends heavily on its implementability in actual classrooms. This view aligns with modern approaches to materials development, which regard effective learning materials as those that generate meaningful learning, provide interactive opportunities, and respond to learner diversity (Tomlinson, 2012, pp. 143–179). Similarly, studies on differentiated instruction show that curricula containing varied levels of support and task complexity are better able to accommodate differences in learners' abilities and prior knowledge (Tomlinson et al., 2003, pp. 119–145; Deunk et al., 2018, pp. 31–54).

Previous studies have approached language curriculum evaluation from multiple angles and have commonly shown that curricula often display strength in lexical and structural organization while revealing relative weakness in communicative, cultural, or applied dimensions. Research in second language education has shown that the development of oral communicative competence requires authentic tasks that allow learners to interact, negotiate meaning, and engage in purposeful

communication, rather than merely complete closed classroom exercises (McDonough et al., 2015, pp. 1–12). Likewise, studies on second language writing demonstrate that writing activities are most effective when linked to communicative purpose and realistic social context, rather than reduced to purely structural exercises (Hyland, 2007, pp. 148–164).

With regard to the cultural dimension of language teaching, recent scholarship emphasizes the necessity of integrating local cultural context with the target culture, since language learning becomes more meaningful when learners are able to connect the new language with their own social and cultural world (Baker, 2012, pp. 62–70; Porto et al., 2018, pp. 484–498). Despite the growing body of international scholarship on curriculum evaluation, studies specifically addressing Arabic language curricula in Arabic schools in Brunei Darussalam remain limited. The significance of the present study therefore lies in its attempt to evaluate the content of the Grade Eight Arabic curriculum in light of international language education standards through a field-based analysis that combines quantitative evidence with qualitative insights, thereby offering a more precise understanding of the curriculum's alignment with communicative competence principles and contemporary curriculum design quality.

3. Research Methodology

This study employed a descriptive-analytical evaluative approach, which is among the most widely used methodologies in curriculum evaluation research. The purpose of this approach is to describe the educational phenomenon with precision, analyze its components, and interpret them in relation to contemporary theoretical frameworks and pedagogical standards (Cohen et al., 2018, pp. 287–314). It is particularly appropriate for evaluating the content of the Grade Eight Arabic language curriculum in Arabic schools in Brunei Darussalam because it allows for systematic examination of curriculum elements such as content appropriateness, skill representation, lexical and grammatical structure, and cultural-contextual relevance, followed by interpretation in light of international standards for language education (Richards, 2013, pp. 5–33).

The study adopted a mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative data in order to achieve a more comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon under investigation. This design is increasingly recognized in contemporary educational research because it enables the researcher to combine statistical analysis with contextualized interpretation grounded in field evidence, thereby strengthening validity and deepening understanding (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, pp. 14–26). The quantitative component consisted of analyzing questionnaire responses through weighted percentages derived from actual frequencies, whereas the qualitative component consisted of semi-structured interviews with teachers, document analysis, and classroom observations.

The study population comprised Arabic language teachers in Arabic schools in Brunei Darussalam who teach the Grade Eight curriculum. A purposive sample was selected from teachers with direct experience in teaching the curriculum under investigation in order to ensure that the data reflected the actual realities of classroom implementation. The research instruments included a questionnaire as the primary tool for collecting quantitative data. It was designed in light of international standards for language curriculum evaluation and included domains related to content appropriateness, balance of language skills, cultural dimension, lexical and grammatical adequacy, and attention to individual differences. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted to generate qualitative data capable of interpreting the questionnaire findings. This was complemented by document analysis of the textbook and general curriculum framework, as well as classroom observations to examine actual instructional practice.

Data analysis proceeded in two integrated stages. First, the quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, particularly weighted percentages and frequencies, in order to determine the degree to which each evaluative criterion was achieved (Field, 2018, pp. 72–95). Second, these results were interpreted in the light of the qualitative data generated from interviews, document analysis, and classroom observations, following the principle of methodological triangulation, which enhances reliability and strengthens interpretive credibility through the use of

multiple sources of evidence (Denzin, 2012, pp. 80–88). This methodological design thus provided a coherent and rigorous framework for achieving a deeper understanding of the Grade Eight Arabic language curriculum and evaluating it in light of international language education standards.

4. Results and Discussion

The questionnaire findings, after recalculating the weighted percentages on the basis of actual frequencies, show that the content of the Grade Eight Arabic language curriculum in Arabic schools in Brunei Darussalam presents a generally positive profile, although this positivity is not distributed evenly across all dimensions. Rather, the curriculum appears stronger in its linguistic and structural aspects than in its communicative, contextual, and differentiation-related dimensions. Such a pattern is not uncommon in language curriculum evaluation, since curricula may appear coherent in progression and linguistic coverage, yet reveal relative imbalances in skill distribution, cultural contextualization, or responsiveness to learner diversity. The literature on curriculum evaluation confirms that curriculum quality cannot be measured merely by content abundance, but rather by its capacity to support meaningful, progressive, teachable, and contextually relevant learning (Graves, 2008, pp. 147–181; Richards, 2013, pp. 5–33; Tomlinson, 2012, pp. 143–179).

4.1 Content Appropriateness to Learners' Linguistic and Developmental Levels

The data indicate that the weighted percentage for the suitability of curriculum content to students' linguistic level reached 76.9%, suggesting that the curriculum is generally aligned with learners' linguistic competence and does not exhibit a sharp mismatch between textbook language and students' capacities. This result gains further significance when read alongside the percentage for the appropriateness of content to students' age level, which reached 77.7%. Taken together, these findings indicate that the curriculum achieves a reasonable degree of alignment not only with learners' linguistic ability but also with their developmental stage and age-related interests. This is consistent with sociocognitive and developmental perspectives that emphasize the importance of presenting content within learners' zone of accessibility, without making it trivial or cognitively overwhelming (Canale & Swain, 1980, pp. 1–47; Graves, 2008, pp. 147–181).

Interview evidence supported this conclusion. One teacher reported that “most students are able to follow the vocabulary and grammar presented in the book, and the language level is generally suitable for Grade Eight students,” while another observed that “the curriculum works well for average-level students, but weaker students sometimes struggle with dense vocabulary.” These comments suggest that the curriculum is appropriate for the majority rather than universally appropriate to all learners. Document analysis reinforced this interpretation, showing that the curriculum framework aims to consolidate essential vocabulary, sentence construction, and grammatical awareness at an intermediate level. Classroom observations likewise showed that students were generally able to follow reading texts and comprehension tasks with moderate teacher guidance.

From an interpretive perspective, this indicates that the curriculum demonstrates a reasonable degree of calibrated difficulty, yet still requires greater flexibility in dealing with learner variation. Since roughly one quarter of responses did not fully endorse content appropriateness, the issue is not outright incompatibility but insufficient provision for lower-performing learners. From the standpoint of curriculum evaluation, it is not enough for content to be “appropriate on average”; it must also be accessible through graded entry points and support mechanisms that allow less prepared learners to progress without exclusion. This is precisely what research on differentiated instruction has emphasized, namely that curriculum quality improves when it contains internal scaffolds and differentiated task pathways rather than relying solely on general progression between units (Deunk et al., 2018, pp. 31–54; Tomlinson et al., 2003, pp. 119–145).

4.2 Representation and Balance of the Four Language Skills

With respect to the four language skills, the results indicate that the curriculum includes activities aimed at developing listening, reading, speaking, and writing, yet the degree of representation is uneven. After recalculating the figures, the weighted percentage for the availability of listening activities reached 82.5%, reading 84.2%, speaking 80.5%, and writing 84.7%. However, the indicator

relating specifically to the balanced representation of all four skills stood at 78.1%. These results show that the curriculum does not suffer from the absence of skills, but rather from a relative imbalance in their distribution and pedagogical realization. Reading and writing appear more stable and structurally embedded than speaking and listening, even though listening is present to a greater extent than superficial impressions might suggest. This pattern accords with scholarship on language teaching, which shows that curricula influenced by text-based and structural traditions tend to privilege reading, writing, and grammar over oral skills unless supported by dedicated audio materials and explicitly communicative tasks (Canale & Swain, 1980, pp. 1–47; Richards, 2013, pp. 5–33).

Interview data reinforced this pattern. One teacher stated that “reading is the most developed component of the textbook, as almost every unit includes a reading text followed by comprehension activities,” while another noted that “students spend a considerable amount of time working with reading texts, which helps them build vocabulary and understand structures.” Classroom observations confirmed that most observed lessons revolved around text reading, vocabulary explanation, and answering comprehension questions. These findings show that reading is not merely present in the curriculum, but serves as the principal structural محور around which other lesson components are organized.

By contrast, teachers indicated that listening activities, although present, often require supplementation through teacher initiative or additional audio materials. One teacher explained that “listening tasks exist in the textbook, but teachers often need to provide additional audio materials or complementary exercises.” The same applies to speaking, where teachers reported that the textbook contains oral activities, but these must frequently be expanded in class to produce meaningful interaction. This observation aligns with research on oral interaction, which holds that spoken competence is not adequately developed through closed classroom questions or limited role-play alone, but requires authentic communicative tasks in which learners exchange information, negotiate meaning, and use language in contexts approximating real communication (McDonough et al., 2015, pp. 1–12; Shaver, 2010, pp. 173–184).

Accordingly, the appropriate interpretation is not that the curriculum “lacks oral skills,” but rather that it contains oral components whose pedagogical realization is less firmly embedded than that of reading and writing, and whose effective enactment depends more heavily on teacher initiative. Thus, the challenge is not the addition of skills as such, but the redistribution of pedagogical weight within the syllabus so that oral skills become integral to the curriculum structure rather than supplementary extensions.

4.3 Cultural and Contextual Dimension of the Curriculum

The cultural dimension presents a more complex picture. The weighted percentage for the inclusion of Islamic, Arab, global, and local cultural elements in reading activities reached 83.7%, while the equivalent figure for listening activities was 76.2%. The weighted percentage for the relevance of speaking activities to students’ real-life cultural experiences reached 71.7%, and for writing activities 75.2%. At the same time, the degree to which the curriculum was perceived as appropriate to learners’ cultural background stood at 67.6%, one of the lowest indicators in the study. These figures suggest that the curriculum includes substantial cultural content, but not at the same level of local contextual grounding or proximity to the lived experience of Bruneian students.

Qualitative evidence clarifies this picture. One teacher observed that “many reading texts reflect Islamic values, historical narratives, and moral lessons, which helps students connect language learning with their religious identity.” This is a significant strength, given that Arabic in Brunei is not merely a school subject but also a language of religious and cultural significance. However, other teachers noted that students sometimes respond more positively to examples closer to their everyday life in Brunei, and that some topics—although age-appropriate—reflect Arab contexts more than the social world students themselves inhabit. Such observations are consistent with intercultural and contextual approaches to language education, which argue that cultural inclusion becomes pedagogically effective only when learners are enabled to compare, connect, and express their own

world through the target language, rather than remain passive recipients of an external culture (Baker, 2012, pp. 62–70; Porto et al., 2018, pp. 484–498).

Interestingly, speaking activities appeared more readily connected to daily life than writing activities. Teachers explained that oral activities often revolve around school, family, and everyday routines, all of which are close to students' lived reality. Writing activities, by contrast, tend more often toward structural drills than authentic expression of experience. This observation is supported by research on functional writing in second language education, which shows that writing becomes more meaningful when linked to a communicative purpose, an imagined audience, and a plausible social context rather than reduced to sentence-level structural practice (Hyland, 2007, pp. 148–164).

In summary, the curriculum does possess a meaningful cultural dimension, yet it appears stronger in its symbolic incorporation of Islamic and Arab culture than in its localized intercultural mediation that would enable students to use Arabic in describing their Bruneian world. This does not call for reducing Islamic or Arab content; rather, it suggests the need to blend it more deliberately with Bruneian school, social, and community contexts so that Arabic becomes a language of identity, belonging, and everyday expression alike.

4.4 Lexical, Grammatical, and Morphological Adequacy

The linguistic dimension yielded some of the strongest results in the study. The weighted percentages for the availability of nominal vocabulary, verbal vocabulary, and particles/connectors were 87.3%, 87.3%, and 85.8%, respectively. The percentages for interrogatives, demonstratives, and relative pronouns were 86.5%, 84.1%, and 82.9%. The weighted percentage for grammatical lessons was 87.3%, whereas the corresponding figure for morphological lessons was only 64.5%, making it the weakest indicator in this domain and one of the weakest in the entire study. These findings suggest that the curriculum possesses a relatively strong lexical and grammatical foundation, but is less cohesive in morphology.

From an interpretive standpoint, these results indicate that the curriculum equips students with a sufficient linguistic repertoire to support reading comprehension, sentence construction, and basic structural control. This is consistent with the literature, which identifies lexical richness as a central factor in successful reading and overall language performance (Schmitt, 2008, pp. 329–363). Likewise, the clarity and relative coherence of the grammatical lessons constitute a structural advantage, as explicit form-focused instruction remains an important component of second language learning when tied to meaningful use (Spada & Tomita, 2010, pp. 263–308).

The interviews strongly supported this pattern. One teacher reported that “the book contains a wide range of vocabulary that students need to understand texts and classroom dialogue,” while another noted that “grammar explanations are generally clear and followed by exercises that help students apply the rule.” The picture changed, however, when teachers addressed morphology. One reported that “morphology is the most difficult part for students, and some lessons present more than one pattern or form at a time, which causes confusion.” Another added that “students need more gradual practice, because the textbook sometimes moves too quickly from one morphological pattern to another.” Classroom observations confirmed this, as students needed more explanation, examples, and comparisons in morphology than in other areas.

This finding is highly significant, because morphology in Arabic is not a marginal subsystem but a core generative element of the language itself. Weak sequencing or insufficient recycling in this area may therefore limit learners' ability to transform formal knowledge into usable competence. It may thus be said that the curriculum is strong in linguistic presentation but less rigorous in its pedagogical mediation of morphology. In other words, the material is present, but it is not always presented in the gradual, comparative, and contextualized manner required for intermediate-level learners to absorb it effectively.

4.5 Responsiveness to Learners' Needs, Cultural Background, and Individual Differences

The weighted percentage for the suitability of content to learners' linguistic needs reached 75.0%, a good but not especially high result. The percentage for suitability to learners' cultural background was 67.6%, indicating a clearer gap in this regard. The indicator for attention to individual differences reached 70.4%, which may be considered acceptable, but also suggests that nearly one-third of respondents did not believe that the curriculum adequately accommodates learner variation.

This result is consistent with findings in differentiated instruction research. Centralized curricula are often built around an "average learner," whereas real classrooms are characterized by variation in prior knowledge, learning pace, readiness, and motivation. One teacher explicitly observed that "students in the same class differ greatly in their level of Arabic, so the teacher needs to adapt the materials." Classroom observations likewise showed that some students required additional explanation or verbal support to understand activities that others completed more easily. This reinforces the research-based insight that curriculum quality is not determined solely by coherence of progression, but also by the extent to which the same curricular pathway can accommodate learners with varying capacities through support options and graduated tasks (Deunk et al., 2018, pp. 31–54; Tomlinson et al., 2003, pp. 119–145).

It may therefore be concluded that the curriculum succeeds reasonably well in addressing learners' general linguistic needs, but is less successful in reflecting the local cultural background and less flexible than desirable in responding to individual differences. What is required, then, is a shift from content that is merely "generally suitable" toward content that is pedagogically elastic and responsive to classroom diversity.

4.6 Internal Progression, Actual Implementation, and Dependence on the Textbook

The data showed that the weighted percentage for the presentation of content in a gradual sequence from easier to more difficult reached 74.6%, indicating a reasonable organizing logic in the sequencing of topics. The percentage for the extent to which the curriculum includes all lessons actually taught by teachers reached 80.3%, suggesting a strong relationship between the prescribed and enacted curriculum. However, the weighted percentage for the extent to which the content is delivered strictly in textbook form was only 66.8%, the lowest figure in this domain, indicating that the textbook occupies a central place in implementation but is not sufficient on its own.

This finding is particularly important from the perspective of curriculum enactment theory. Research shows that the written curriculum never fully coincides with the enacted curriculum, and that teachers function not as mechanical transmitters but as mediators, adapters, and partial curriculum-makers in response to classroom needs (Shawer, 2010, pp. 173–184). This was clearly evident in the interviews, where one teacher remarked that "the book is useful, but we add other materials, especially in speaking activities," and another noted that "sometimes we provide extra worksheets or additional examples to help students understand the lesson." Classroom observations similarly showed that teachers often expanded exercises, re-explained concepts, and introduced examples not found in the textbook.

This suggests that the curriculum is not detached from classroom reality, but that it requires active pedagogical mediation in order to achieve its full objectives. This finding has a dual significance: on the one hand, it points to the vitality and professional agency of teachers; on the other, it may indicate that certain areas remain underdeveloped in the textbook itself, especially oral skills, morphology, and support for weaker learners. Thus, partial dependence on external supplementation should not be read only as a sign of teacher strength, but also as an indicator of the need to strengthen the core curriculum materials themselves.

4.7 Overall Synthesis of the Findings

When the findings are synthesized, the Grade Eight Arabic language curriculum in Arabic schools in Brunei Darussalam can be said to possess a number of clear strengths. It is reasonably well aligned with learners' linguistic and developmental levels, includes substantial representation of the four

language skills, provides a strong lexical and grammatical foundation, demonstrates a workable level of progression, and remains generally connected to actual classroom instruction. Yet this positive profile is accompanied by several relative weaknesses, most notably the incomplete balance among skills, limited localization of cultural content, weaker treatment of morphology in comparison with vocabulary and grammar, and insufficient accommodation of learner diversity in relation to the realities of the classroom.

This means that the curriculum, in its current form, is neither fundamentally flawed nor pedagogically ineffective; rather, it is a functional curriculum with significant potential for further development. It possesses a substantial linguistic and educational foundation, but this foundation still requires a more explicit shift toward communicative balance, internal flexibility, local cultural mediation, and stronger support for oral learning and morphology. More precisely, the curriculum may be described as structurally strong, moderately adaptable, and comparatively weaker in communicative balance and contextual mediation.

4.8 Methodological and Pedagogical Significance

In light of the literature, these findings suggest that curriculum reform should not aim at replacing the current structure wholesale, but rather at recalibrating its centers of strength and weakness. Vocabulary, grammar, and general progression form a solid foundation, yet the curriculum requires a better balance between reading and orality, greater inclusion of Bruneian realities in activities, more gradual and recursive treatment of morphology, and built-in levels of support within tasks. This direction is fully consistent with contemporary principles of language curriculum development, according to which true quality lies in a curriculum's capacity to combine linguistic adequacy, communicative functionality, pedagogical flexibility, cultural relevance, and practical teachability (Graves, 2008, pp. 147–181; Richards, 2013, pp. 5–33; Tomlinson, 2012, pp. 143–179).

5. Findings and Recommendations

5.1 Findings

The field study findings indicate that the content of the Grade Eight Arabic language curriculum in Arabic schools in Brunei Darussalam demonstrates an acceptable to good level of pedagogical and linguistic adequacy, although this adequacy is not evenly distributed across all dimensions. Quantitative data, supported by interviews, document analysis, and classroom observations, show that the curriculum is appropriately aligned with learners' linguistic and developmental levels, suggesting that its overall structure is not detached from the characteristics of the target learner group. The results also reveal notable strength in lexical and grammatical organization. The curriculum includes nominal, verbal, and functional vocabulary, as well as core grammatical lessons that effectively support reading comprehension and sentence construction, thereby providing a relatively coherent linguistic foundation.

At the same time, however, the findings reveal that this structural coherence is not always accompanied by sufficient communicative balance. Reading and writing appear more strongly established than listening and speaking, despite the presence of activities intended to address these latter skills. Qualitative evidence confirms that the actual activation of oral skills depends to a considerable extent on teacher initiative in expanding and supplementing the textbook rather than on the textbook's internal structure alone. The study also demonstrates that the curriculum contains substantial cultural content, especially in its representation of Islamic and Arab culture, yet the localization of cultural content to the Bruneian context remains below the desired level, making some activities less closely connected to students' everyday world and lived experience.

Among the most significant findings is that morphology constitutes the weakest area of the curriculum. Morphological content appears less gradual and less pedagogically mediated than vocabulary and grammar, and students require more explanation, comparison, and structured review in this area. The study also shows that attention to individual differences and learner-specific needs remains moderate. The curriculum appears more suitable for average learners than for students who are either weaker or more advanced. On this basis, the curriculum may be characterized as strong in

its general linguistic structure, moderate in classroom flexibility, and comparatively weaker in communicative and contextual balance.

5.2 Recommendations

In light of these findings, the study proposes that the curriculum be redeveloped through an integrated approach that combines linguistic accuracy, communicative functionality, and contextual relevance. The first proposal is to rebalance the four language skills across units so that reading no longer dominates the internal structure of the syllabus. Listening and speaking activities should be designed as authentic components of the textbook itself and systematically linked to the vocabulary and structures targeted in each unit.

The second proposal concerns cultural localization. The curriculum should incorporate more topics and contexts derived from school life, social interaction, and religious and community practices in Brunei, so that Arabic is learned not only as a language for understanding Arab culture, but also as a language through which students can express their own lived reality.

The third proposal is to reconstruct morphological treatment in a more gradual and accessible way by reducing pattern density within single lessons, increasing structured recycling, and expanding contextualized examples and comparative applications. The study also proposes embedding internal support pathways within the curriculum to address learner diversity, including graded tasks, remedial activities, and enrichment exercises, so that students with different levels of readiness and pace can benefit from the same content through differentiated levels of support.

The study recommends the adoption of a regular evidence-based review process for the Grade Eight Arabic curriculum, drawing on field evaluation results, teacher feedback, classroom observation, and textbook analysis. It further recommends the development of supplementary listening and speaking materials, so that oral skills become structurally embedded in the teaching process rather than remaining dependent on external supplementation.

The study also recommends specialized teacher training in communicative teaching, differentiated instruction, and the simplification of Arabic morphology, so that teachers can implement the curriculum more effectively without bearing the sole burden of compensating for its limitations. Finally, the study recommends that the curriculum be regarded not as a finished product, but as an open framework for continuous improvement. The central issue is not whether the curriculum is valid in principle, but whether it can be elevated from a level of acceptable functionality to a level of global quality that integrates linguistic competence, balanced skill development, pedagogical flexibility, cultural appropriateness, and responsiveness to the realities of Bruneian learners in light of international standards for language education.

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