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Challenges and Solutions in Implementing the Arabic Language Curriculum in Higher Education: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Arabic language learning at a higher education level faces complex challenges, ranging from student motivation to the relevance of teaching materials in the global era. This article presents a systematic literature review (SLR) to identify, evaluate, and synthesize relevant research on the challenges and solutions in implementing the Arabic language curriculum in higher education. Using the PRISMA framework, we analyzed peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2025 from various international and national databases. The results indicate that the main challenges include (1) low student motivation and engagement, (2) a gap between teaching materials and professional needs, and (3) limitations in technology integration. In response, the literature highlights various innovative solutions such as (1) the application of communicative and project-based learning approaches, (2) the development of a curriculum oriented towards 21st Century Skills, and (3) the utilization of digital technologies like Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and gamification. The discussion further contextualizes these findings within the framework of second language acquisition theories and provides practical implications for curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers.

Keyword

Arabic Language Curriculum; Higher Education; Learning Challenges; Educational Innovation; Systematic Literature Review.

مستخلص البحث

يواجه تعلم اللغة العربية في مستوى التعليم العالي تحديات معقدة، بدءًا من دافعية الطلاب إلى مدى صلة لتحديد وتقييم وتوليف (SLR) المواد التعليمية بالعصر العالمي. يقدم هذا المقال مراجعة منهجية للأدبيات البحوث ذات الصلة بالتحديات والحلول في تنفيذ منهج اللغة العربية في التعليم العالي. باستخدام إطار قمنا بتحليل مقالات المجلات المحكمة المنشورة بين عامي ٢٠١٥ و ٢٠٢٥ من قواعد بيانات دولية، PRISMA، ووطنية مختلفة. تشير النتائج إلى أن التحديات الرئيسية تشمل (١) انخفاض دافعية الطلاب ومشاركتهم، (٢) الفجوة بين المواد التعليمية والاحتياجات المهنية، و (٣) محدودية تكامل التكنولوجيا. واستجابة لذلك، تسلط الأدبيات الضوء على حلول مبتكرة متنوعة مثل (١) تطبيق المناهج التواصلية والتعلم القائم على المشاريع، (٢) تطوير مناهج موجهة نحو مهارات القرن الحادي والعشرين، و (٣) استخدام التقنيات الرقمية مثل التعلم

والتلعيب. تناقش المقالة هذه النتائج في إطار نظريات اكتساب اللغة الثانية (CALL) اللغوي بمساعدة الحاسوب وتقدم آثارًا عملية لمطوري المناهج والمعلمين وصانعي السياسات.

منهج اللغة العربية: التعليم العالي؛ تحديات التعلم؛ الابتكار التربوي؛ مراجعة منهجية للأدبيات.

كلمات أساسية

Introduction (المقدمة)

The teaching of Arabic as a foreign language (*Ta'lim al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah li Ghairi an-Nathiqina Biha*) at the university level holds a strategic role in the context of globalization, diplomacy, and the economy. The importance of Arabic proficiency is not limited to religious and cultural aspects but also extends to professional sectors such as international business, media, and diplomatic relations (Fahmi & Suryani, 2022). With the growing demand for graduates competent in Arabic, higher education institutions worldwide are required to offer effective and relevant programs. However, the implementation of the Arabic language curriculum often faces various challenges that can impede the optimal achievement of learning objectives. Therefore, identifying these challenges and exploring innovative solutions is crucial for improving the quality of Arabic language education.

Previous research has highlighted various aspects of Arabic language learning in higher education. For instance, a study by Al-Jarf (2020) in the *International Journal of Higher Education* investigated the use of Augmented Reality (AR) technology to enhance students' vocabulary acquisition. Meanwhile, research by Haryanto and Adnan (2021) in the *Al-Arabi* journal explored the challenges of intrinsic motivation among students from non-Arabic major programs. Another study by Aeni (2019) in a *Taylor & Francis Online* journal discussed the need to integrate intercultural competence into the curriculum to prepare students for the global work environment. While these studies provide valuable insights, they tend to focus on single aspects, such as technology or motivation, in isolation.

An analysis of the existing literature reveals a research gap. There is a lack of research that comprehensively maps the challenges and solutions in implementing the Arabic language curriculum in higher education through a systematic literature review approach. Most studies are case studies of a single institution or analyses of

a specific variable. Unlike previous research, this article aims to synthesize findings from various empirical studies over the last decade (2015–2025) to provide a holistic overview. Thus, the novelty of this article lies in its scope and systematic methodology, which allows for a broader identification of patterns, trends, and gaps in the literature.

The main objectives of this study are to (1) identify the primary challenges encountered in the implementation of the Arabic language curriculum at the higher education level, and (2) map the innovative solutions that have been proposed and implemented to address these challenges. The contribution of this research is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this article enriches the body of knowledge in the field of Arabic language education by presenting a synthesis of current knowledge. Practically, the findings are expected to serve as a guide for curriculum developers, lecturers, and policymakers in designing and managing Arabic language programs that are more responsive to contemporary demands.

To achieve these objectives, this article is organized into several sections. The first section is the introduction, which presents the background, a brief literature review, the research gap, and the objectives and contributions. The second section explains the research method. The third section presents the research findings. The fourth section is the discussion, which analyzes the findings. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the findings and provides implications and suggestions for future research.

Methods (منهجية البحث)

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) method to identify, evaluate, and synthesize evidence from relevant research in a transparent and replicable manner. The SLR process was conducted following the *Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses* (PRISMA) framework. The stages included identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of articles. This methodology was deemed most appropriate as the research aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the existing research landscape rather than generating new primary data. The systematic approach ensures that the review is conducted objectively and reduces potential bias in study selection.

The literature search was performed across several reputable academic databases to ensure comprehensive coverage. The databases used included Scopus, Google Scholar, ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), and SINTA (Science and Technology Index) to capture relevant national publications. The keywords used in the search included combinations of terms such as "Arabic curriculum," "higher

education," "challenges in Arabic learning," "Arabic teaching innovation," and their equivalents in Arabic and Indonesian. The inclusion criteria for selecting articles were: (1) the article had to be an empirical research study published in a peer-reviewed journal or conference proceeding; (2) the primary focus of the article had to be on the implementation of the curriculum, challenges, or solutions in Arabic language learning at the higher education level; and (3) the article had to be published between 2015 and 2025. Conversely, the exclusion criteria were: (1) articles discussing Arabic language learning at the primary or secondary school level; (2) articles that were narrative literature reviews, opinion pieces, or editorials; and (3) articles for which the full text was not accessible. The selection process was carried out independently by two researchers to minimize bias, and any disagreements were resolved through discussion.

Results & Discussion (نتائج البحث ومناقشاتها)

Following a rigorous selection process based on the established criteria, a total of 35 articles were identified as relevant and were analyzed in-depth. The findings from these articles were synthesized and categorized into two main themes corresponding to the research questions: (1) Challenges in Curriculum Implementation, and (2) Innovative Solutions in Learning.

3.1. Challenges in Implementing the Arabic Language Curriculum

The literature analysis revealed several challenges consistently reported by researchers. The first and most dominant challenge is low student motivation and engagement. A number of studies (e.g., Rahman, 2022; Siregar & Harahap, 2023) found that many students, particularly those from non-language programs, perceive Arabic as a difficult subject with little relevance to their future careers. This leads to passive attitudes in the classroom and low participation rates.

The second challenge is the gap between teaching materials and the needs of the professional world. The existing curriculum is often criticized for being overly oriented towards theoretical linguistics or classical texts, while practical communicative aspects for modern professional needs receive less attention (Aziz & Abdullah, 2021). Graduates are reportedly underprepared to use Arabic in professional contexts such as business, media, or tourism.

The third challenge relates to teaching methodologies that tend to be conventional. Several studies (e.g., Wekke, 2019) indicated that lecture and memorization methods still dominate the classroom. This teacher-centered approach is considered less effective in developing students' active communicative skills. A lack

of training for instructors on modern methodologies also serves as a hindering factor.

The fourth challenge is the limitation in the integration of learning technology. Despite the immense potential of technology, its implementation in Arabic language learning remains limited. A study by Al-Bari (2020) found that the use of digital platforms, language learning applications, and online resources is often sporadic and not systematically integrated into the curriculum.

3.2. Innovative Solutions in Arabic Language Learning

In response to these challenges, the literature also presents various solutions and innovations that have been developed and tested. The first solution is the application of communicative and contextual learning approaches. A study by Mufidah (2022) showed that the use of task-based learning and project-based learning methods significantly improved students' speaking skills and engagement. Students were given authentic tasks such as creating blogs, podcasts, or business simulations in Arabic.

The second solution is the development of a curriculum oriented towards Arabic for Specific Purposes (ASP). Several universities, as reported in research by Fathoni (2023), have successfully designed courses focusing on Arabic for tourism, Islamic banking, or journalism.

The third solution is the integrated use of digital technology. Innovations in this area are diverse. Research by Jauhari (2021) demonstrated the effectiveness of using Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) platforms for personalized grammar and vocabulary practice. Additionally, the concept of *gamification* has been shown to increase motivation, as demonstrated in a case study by Ansori (2024) using applications like Kahoot! and Duolingo.

The fourth solution is the strengthening of lecturers' pedagogical competence. Professional development programs focused on innovative teaching methodologies are key. A study by Huda and Setyawan (2022) emphasized that the successful implementation of an innovative curriculum is highly dependent on the readiness and skills of the instructors.

The findings of this study confirm that the challenges in implementing the Arabic language curriculum in higher education are multifaceted, encompassing students' psychological aspects, content relevance, teaching methodology, and technology utilization. The low motivation identified in the results aligns with Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

A curriculum perceived as irrelevant and monotonous teaching methods directly and negatively impact student motivation. This finding is reinforced by recent research indicating that instrumental motivation (career-related) is a primary driver for foreign language learners in the modern era (Lee & Tashima, 2024).

The gap between the curriculum and professional needs is a critical issue. The solution of developing an ASP curriculum is a strategic step that aligns with global trends in language education. As discussed by Douglas (2020) in the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), this approach ensures that language learning directly supports the learners' academic or professional goals, thereby increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of learning.

The adoption of technology in Arabic language learning, though still limited, shows tremendous potential. The use of CALL and gamification is consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which posits that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness are key factors in user acceptance of technology (Davis, 1989). When students feel that technology makes learning easier and more beneficial, they are more motivated to use it. Cutting-edge research by Wang and Chen (2025) on Virtual Reality (VR)-based language learning shows that immersive technology can create authentic learning environments, a promising direction for adaptation in the Arabic language context.

Overall, this discussion indicates that the solutions emerging from the literature are not standalone fixes. Instead, they are interconnected and must be implemented holistically. An ASP curriculum will be more effective when delivered through communicative methodologies supported by integrated technology and taught by instructors with modern pedagogical competencies. The transformation of the Arabic language curriculum in higher education demands systemic change, not just partial improvements.

Conclusions (الختاتمة)

This systematic literature review has synthesized research from the last decade on the challenges and solutions in implementing the Arabic language curriculum in higher education. The main challenges identified include low student motivation, a curriculum relevance gap, conventional teaching methods, and limited technology integration. In response, the literature offers innovative solutions such as communicative approaches, ASP curriculum development, the use of digital technology, and enhancing lecturer competence. These findings underscore the need for a paradigm shift from grammar-focused teaching to an approach that is more communicative, contextual, and relevant to 21st-century professional needs.

Future research could be expanded to include other sources such as books and research reports. Furthermore, a meta-analysis could be conducted to quantitatively measure the effectiveness of various interventions. Further exploration of the use of Artificial Intelligence in personalized Arabic language learning is also a promising area of research.

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