

Arabic Reading Proficiency: What's in Waiting Through Score Model Journey?

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ABSTRACT

Arabic reading proficiency is a critical foundation for language mastery, serving as a key measure of overall proficiency for both native and non-native speakers. This underscores the growing demand for Arabic reading proficiency assessments. However, unlike other analysis models, the SCORE model's application to Arabic reading assessment has not been widely explored. Hence, this concept paper examines Arabic reading assessments through comprehensive analysis from the SCORE model. The methodology used for this concept paper is the thorough analysis using SCORE model that measured among five elements such as Strengths (S), Challenges (C), Options (O), Responses (R) and Effectiveness (E). The main strengths include aligning the assessment with international standards, adapting to new technology, and promoting higher-order thinking skills, which are crucial for meeting diverse learner needs. However, challenges persist, such as limited resources, scarcity of expertise, and the necessity for culturally relevant frameworks, especially in regions like Malaysia, where Arabic is taught as a foreign language. Options for advancement include the integration of AI and adaptive testing technologies, partnerships with international frameworks, and targeted educator training. Responses from stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, and business organizations, indicate favorable support through funding, training, and innovative tool development. The effectiveness of Arabic reading assessments relies on their reliability, adaptability, and cultural integration, aiming to produce inclusive, precise evaluations that meet international standards. This finding has important implications towards essential insights for policymakers, educators, and institutions, underscoring the need for strategic advancements to enhance Arabic reading assessments in the evolving educational landscape. While this analysis provides valuable insights, alternative models like SWOT, SOAR, and NOISE could broaden perspectives and address the paper's limitations. Future studies are encouraged to explore longitudinal impacts and cross-contextual applications, ensuring sustainable and comprehensive language proficiency evaluation.

Keywords: Arabic reading proficiency, language assessment, foreign language, SCORE analysis

INTRODUCTION

In today's interconnected world, Arabic plays a vital role, serving not only as a custodian of cultural and historical heritage but also as a key language in global communication, economic relations, and education (Lachkar, 2021). Spoken by over 420 million people across more than 20 countries, Arabic serves as a bridge in diplomatic, economic, and cultural exchanges throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and beyond. As one of the six official languages of the United Nations, Arabic holds a unique status in global affairs. This relevance drives a growing interest in mastering the language, making it essential for professionals, students, and cultural enthusiasts who seek to engage meaningfully in Arabic-speaking regions and participate in a globally interconnected world.

Proficiency in Arabic has become increasingly valuable, enabling individuals to navigate various cultural,

professional, and academic settings within Arabic-speaking regions. A key component of this proficiency is reading, which serves as a foundation for deeper linguistic comprehension and access to a broad array of Arabic texts, from classical literature to contemporary media. It not only deepens language mastery but also strengthens communication skills. Integrating reading into educational curricula is crucial as it directly influences the development of listening, speaking, and writing competencies (Varanasi & Rani, 2022). Moreover, reading plays a vital role in language education by enhancing cognitive understanding and encouraging empathy, making it an indispensable tool for comprehensive learning (Lu, 2019).

With the growing importance of Arabic globally, the need for precise reading proficiency assessments has become a focal point worldwide. Traditionally, Arabic reading assessments have utilized classic methods, such as comprehension questions and vocabulary tests, which offer only a basic measure of reading skills. Yet, these conventional methods often lack precision in measuring true proficiency for both native and non-native learners (Mustopa et al., 2024). Compared to other widely taught international languages, Arabic assessments remain underdeveloped, lacking advanced tools and standardized frameworks. Furthermore, Arabic's unique script, morphological structure, and regional dialects add complexity to assessment, highlighting the need for culturally responsive tools that provide a more accurate reflection of reading proficiency. Effective Arabic reading assessments are crucial for tailoring instructional strategies, aligning with both educational and professional demands.

To thoroughly explore the future of Arabic reading assessment, this article utilizes the SCORE model, a systematic evaluation framework that appraises Strengths, Challenges, Options, Responses, and Effectiveness. This approach enables a thorough study of the existing condition of Arabic reading assessment, identifying significant areas in need of reform and proposing strategic improvements. By using this model, this article aims to present a comprehensive analysis of the current challenges and potential opportunities in Arabic reading assessment, as well as practical insights for educators, researchers and educational institutions as they navigate the evolving demands of language proficiency in the modern era.

Score Model

The SCORE Model serves as a strategic planning tool that aids organizations in evaluating their strategies and guiding future decision-making. This analysis offers a structured and comprehensive alternative to SWOT, equipping decision-makers with insights to leverage strengths and opportunities while addressing potential challenges. Its systematic approach enables organizations to assess current strategies effectively and make well-informed plans for growth and improvement, offering a strategic advantage for forward-looking organizations (Neal, 2023).

The SCORE model, comprising strengths, challenges, options, responses, and effectiveness, provides a structured framework for evaluating educational initiatives. Strengths indicate existing resources, while challenges reveal areas for improvement. Options address opportunities and associated risks, with responses assessing initiative outcomes. Effectiveness gauges how strategies enhance efficiency, reliability, and contextual appropriateness. This analysis model offers a holistic, refined approach, allowing stakeholders to evaluate strategies before and after implementation, thus supporting continuous advancement in educational planning. In contrast to the simpler SWOT model, which categorizes elements into 'positive versus negative' dimensions like "strength versus weakness" and "opportunity versus thread", the SCORE model offers a more layered approach to strategic evaluation. By measuring both pre- and post-implementation impacts, SCORE facilitates continuous improvement, providing a versatile, comprehensive tool that supports the nuanced assessment of strategies and tactics in educational planning.

Figure 1 illustrates the application of the SCORE model in assessing various dimensions of educational strategies. In this context, the SCORE model is employed to evaluate Arabic reading assessments by identifying the strengths underpinning these assessments, the challenges they face, and potential options for further development. The model also incorporates feedback from stakeholders and evaluates the overall effectiveness of the initiatives. This structured approach allows for a thorough evaluation, offering key insights to support ongoing improvements in language education.

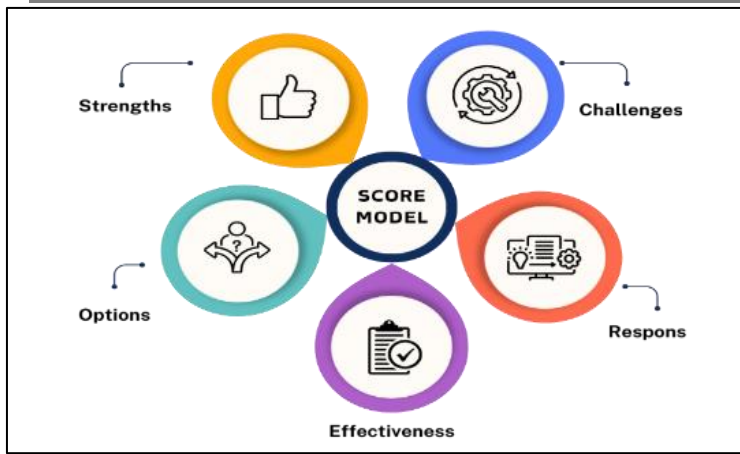


Figure 1: SCORE Model

Strength

The effectiveness of an assessment is essential for accurately evaluating students' performance. Employing a comprehensive and internationally recognized framework enhances both the quality and credibility of the assessment. Aligning Arabic reading assessments with global standards presents significant advantages for future applications, as it ensures these evaluations are not only acknowledged on an international level but also adaptable to various linguistic contexts. Moreover, the integration of well-established global frameworks improves the accuracy of assessing learners' proficiency, leading to more reliable and valid assessment results. (Waluyo et al., n.d.). The process of standardization strengthens the credibility of qualifications and ensures that the assessment of reading skills is both precise and reliable. As example, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is widely used worldwide for language evaluation. While initially developed for European languages, CEFR has been successfully adapted for Arabic, enabling accurate proficiency assessments and global acknowledgment of learners' abilities. In Malaysia, the integration of the CEFR into Arabic language assessments guarantees that students' proficiency is measured based on international standards, thereby aligning with global benchmarks and enhancing the international recognition of their language skills (Abdullah et al., 2023).

A major advantage of developing Arabic reading assessments lies in their adaptability to modern technologies, which greatly enhances the efficiency and scalability of the assessment process. For example, Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) is increasingly used worldwide to personalize the assessment experience by adjusting the difficulty of questions in real-time based on the student's performance. This technological integration ensures that assessments are not only more efficient but also more accurate, as they are tailored to the individual needs of learners (Hilmiyati et al., 2024). The integration of adaptive technology in Arabic reading assessments aligns with the broader global initiative to promote digitalization in education, including Malaysia as part of these worldwide efforts (Abdullahi et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the incorporation of higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) represents a significant advantage in Arabic reading assessments, as these tasks extend beyond basic comprehension, encouraging students to engage in advanced cognitive processes such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. By integrating educational frameworks with modern approaches, assessments can be designed to include more challenging activities. Innovative approaches, such as the BERT-BiLSTM model, are highly effective in adapting texts to suit learners' proficiency levels. These methods enable a thorough analysis of texts, focusing on multiple elements including context, syntax, and semantics, thereby ensuring that the materials are appropriately aligned with the learners' abilities (Ouassil et al., 2024).

This section highlights the importance of making assessments relevant and comparable to global proficiency standards, which enhances their credibility and applicability. The model encourages the integration of advanced technologies, such as AI and adaptive testing, which can make assessments more precise, responsive, and personalized. Then, by fostering critical and analytical thinking, this approach goes beyond basic reading proficiency, aiming to cultivate deeper cognitive skills in learners.

Challenges

A significant challenge in developing high-standard Arabic reading assessments lies in the lack of specialized expertise in language assessment literacy, particularly in foreign language contexts. Language assessment literacy requires a thorough understanding of key assessment principles, including validity, reliability, and alignment with proficiency standards, which are crucial for building strong and effective assessments. For Arabic as a foreign language, this skill set becomes even more specialized, needing to address the unique challenges that non-native learners face. Integrating the CEFR adds complexity to this task, as it requires thoughtful adaptation to accommodate Arabic's unique linguistic structure (de Graaf, 2021). Without professionals skilled in this literacy, assessments risk losing cultural relevance, inaccurately measuring proficiency, and failing to meet international standards, which ultimately limits their effectiveness and reliability.

In addition, limited financial and material resources hinder the successful implementation of Arabic reading assessments. Developing effective assessments requires substantial investment in technology, infrastructure, time, and funding, which are often constrained. Without adequate financial support, implementing advanced methods like computer adaptive testing, which enhance accuracy and personalize the testing experience, becomes challenging (Burr et al., 2023). Furthermore, there is a shortage of qualified professionals with expertise in both Arabic language instruction and assessment design. In countries like Malaysia, where Arabic is taught as a foreign language, only a small group of specialists possess expertise in Arabic language pedagogy. Unlike English, widely understood as a second language, Arabic is less familiar to the general population, including technologists who may be skilled in assessment tools but lack the necessary Arabic language proficiency. This shortage limits the effectiveness of assessments and makes it challenging to establish a consistent standard, especially in regions where Arabic is taught as a foreign language.

As Arabic reading assessments evolve globally, it becomes essential to address the distinct needs of non-native learners (Ouassil et al., 2024). Arabic's unique script, root-based structure, and intricate grammar can make learning challenging, so future assessments must be designed to ensure both accuracy in measuring skills and accessibility for learners. Developing these assessments requires careful adaptation of existing frameworks, which often struggle to accommodate Arabic's linguistic nuances. Furthermore, cultural and linguistic relevance is crucial for diverse backgrounds, as many learners lack familiarity with Arabic culture (Thohri, 2024). Choosing themes and contexts that are engaging and relatable makes assessments fairer and more accessible. In combination, these adaptations in language and culture are vital for shaping Arabic reading assessments that support equitable learning, enabling future assessments to better serve non-native speakers and advance Arabic language education worldwide.

Finally, the limited availability of academic resources also presents a pressing obstacle in advancing Arabic reading assessments, especially in non-native contexts (Biltawi et al., 2020; Liberato et al., 2024). Compared to widely taught languages like English, which is highly developed in terms of research and resources, Arabic remains underserved regarding research, instructional materials, and tailored assessment frameworks that meet diverse learners' needs. This gap hinders the creation of rigorous, evidence-based tools essential for accurately evaluating proficiency, especially for non-native learners. This shortage continues to challenge the future reliability and effectiveness of Arabic language evaluation in foreign language education.

In conclusion, the future of Arabic reading assessment encounters significant challenges, including limited academic resources, scarce expertise, funding constraints, and the need for culturally relevant frameworks. Overcoming these barriers is essential for developing reliable, globally aligned assessments that accurately measure proficiency and promote equitable Arabic language education for non-native learners.

Options

In today's educational landscape, implementing AI technology and adaptive testing within Arabic language assessments presents various options and opportunities for creating more accurate and efficient evaluations that align with each student's proficiency level. However, each of these implementations carries its own risks to consider, such as limited resources and expertise, which may pose challenges to fully realizing this

implementation. Research shows that AI-powered adaptive testing can adjust question difficulty on the spot, providing a more precise understanding of each learner's abilities (El Msayer et al., 2024; Yuldashev et al., 2024). This flexible approach clarifies language proficiency while making assessments adaptable and personalized to each student's unique learning needs.

Moreover, integrating Arabic reading assessments with established international frameworks, such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) or the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines, offers a pathway to standardize proficiency evaluation and improve global comparability. Presently, Arabic lacks a framework fully adapted to its unique linguistic features, leading to inconsistencies in assessment standards (Ghani et al., 2021). Alignment with frameworks like CEFR or ACTFL would support reliable, standardized measurement across proficiency levels. Nonetheless, adapting these frameworks presents challenges, as their original design necessitates substantial resources and expertise to accommodate Arabic's distinctive structure.

Some educators demonstrate only a moderate level of assessment literacy, which limits their ability to implement assessment practices aligned with contemporary needs (Gaikwad et al., 2023). Providing targeted training in assessment literacy is essential to equip educators with the skills necessary for modern demands, such as utilizing digital assessment platforms and conducting more effective evaluations. This training equips teachers with the skills needed to effectively apply and assess tools, improving their capacity to interpret outcomes and manage linguistic and cultural nuances. Such professional development fosters consistency, supporting a reliable, future-focused approach to Arabic language assessment.

Replacing conventional assessment methods with modern approaches is essential for enhancing the quality and relevance of Arabic reading evaluations. Modern assessments provide a more comprehensive view of student progress and align better with international standards, addressing gaps that traditional methods may overlook. However, this transition carries challenges, such as limited understanding of new systems among educators, administrators and learners (Chikezie & Okoye, 2023) which may lead to inconsistencies. For example, educators may need additional training to adapt to these methods effectively. Additionally, without support from institutions and parents, the integration of modern assessments may face resistance, impacting their overall impact and sustainability.

One critical consideration is that assessments designed for native speakers may not be suitable for non-native learners, leading to inconsistencies in proficiency measurement (Abigail, 2017). This discrepancy creates a gap in assessment effectiveness, as non-native speakers often face unique linguistic and cultural barriers. However, this limitation presents an opportunity to design new assessments specifically tailored to non-native speakers, allowing for more accurate proficiency evaluation and fostering gradual skill development in a culturally inclusive manner. Developing such assessments can enhance learning outcomes and ensure that evaluations are relevant and meaningful across diverse learner groups.

In summary, the development of Arabic reading assessments presents a range of opportunities and risks that, if navigated thoughtfully, can greatly enhance both the accuracy and cultural relevance of evaluations. By addressing the diverse needs of educators and learners, and balancing innovative and traditional approaches, we can establish a framework that supports effective, inclusive language assessment not just for native speakers but for non-native learners as well.

Responses

To effectively develop Arabic reading assessments, it is essential to gather insights from a broad range of stakeholders, including educational authorities, universities, language experts, and policymakers. Understanding their perspectives will help shape effective strategies, particularly those aimed at improving language proficiency among non-native learners. This section addresses anticipated responses from these stakeholders, focusing on how their support can drive the development and integration of Arabic reading assessments in modern era.

The expected response from educators is a favorable reception, as the new development of Arabic reading

assessments offer benefits for a range of stakeholders, including both teachers and students. These assessments foster a culture of inclusivity and precision in language proficiency evaluation, motivating instructors to enhance their teaching methods. Continuous collaborative efforts, supported by partnerships with language experts and technologists, are essential (Dina & Ildikó, 2012; Tim et al., 2018) to address the unique challenges in diverse educational contexts. Such efforts ensure that assessments remain culturally relevant, enabling students to build skills that align with both academic and global standards.

Policymakers are increasingly recognizing the need to update Arabic reading assessments and are implementing policies to facilitate this change (Erarslan & İlhan, 2024). In various regions, government programs are funding initiatives to improve assessment literacy, providing financial support to develop accurate, culturally inclusive language assessments and resources for teacher training. For example, the Malaysian government strongly supports the development of Arabic, recognizing it not only as a global language but also for its importance to the Muslim community, with many Muslim students beginning their studies in secondary school and continuing at higher levels.

The progression of Arabic reading assessments offers significant business opportunities, particularly for companies specializing in educational technology, professional training, and educational services. As educational institutions increasingly prioritize advanced tools for evaluating language proficiency, there is scope for companies to develop digital platforms that address the specific linguistic nuances of Arabic. The demand for professional development services that emphasize assessment literacy and culturally responsive evaluation methods for educators is also on the rise, highlighting an emerging niche in training. Furthermore, the need for accurate assessment tools and specialized educator training underscores a growing market with considerable potential for expansion (Al-Abbas et al., 2023).

In summary, the advancement of Arabic reading assessments has garnered favorable responses from educators, policymakers, and industry stakeholders, with active support directed toward initiatives in funding, training, and tool development. Nevertheless, challenges such as uneven resource availability and resistance to change persist, impacting the effective implementation of these improvements across varied educational settings.

Effectiveness

Assessing the effectiveness of the SCORE model in developing Arabic reading assessments that align with contemporary standards and requirements, several factors must be considered to ensure the approach is both comprehensive and applicable. This includes assessing whether the model is efficient, reliable, adaptable, culturally appropriate, and well-integrated within the educational context to support diverse learner needs.

Reliability is a key indicator of effectiveness when assessments are developed, ensuring consistent and accurate measurement (Gupta, 2023) across diverse learner groups. Achieving this reliability involves implementing standardized scoring criteria and clear assessment guidelines, which minimize subjective interpretation and maintain uniformity. Reliable assessments provide dependable insights into student proficiency, enabling educators to make informed instructional decisions. This consistency reinforces the credibility of Arabic reading assessments, supporting fair evaluation and fostering trust among educators, students, and stakeholders.

The adaptability of Arabic reading assessments lies in their capacity to meet diverse learner needs, educational levels, and regional dialects. By leveraging adaptive testing technologies, these assessments can adjust question difficulty in real-time, aligning with each student's proficiency level (Shafique et al., 2023). This flexibility makes Arabic reading assessments accessible and effective across different educational contexts, supporting a wide range of learners from various backgrounds.

Embedding cultural elements within the development of Arabic reading assessments makes the evaluations more relevant and aligned with students' contexts (Hani Syazillah et al., 2018). This approach reduces feelings of unfamiliarity and detachment, allowing students to engage more naturally with the material. Such culturally integrated assessments foster a sense of connection and inclusivity, enhancing comprehension and creating a more authentic language learning experience, while still maintaining high quality and international standards.

This approach highlights the distinct advantages and effectiveness of these assessments.

In conclusion, the development of Arabic reading assessments has effectively improved assessment practices, promoted inclusivity, and aligned evaluations with local contexts while achieving international recognition. However, sustaining these improvements requires continuous support, sufficient resources, and equitable opportunities for educators to build and maintain essential assessment literacy skills, ensuring that all students benefit.

Figure 2 presents the SCORE Model for Arabic reading assessments, providing a holistic analysis of strengths, challenges, options, responses, and effectiveness in advancing assessment practices. This model serves as a vital tool for evaluating the current landscape of Arabic reading assessments, pinpointing areas for enhancement, and suggesting actionable strategies to support further development within diverse educational settings.

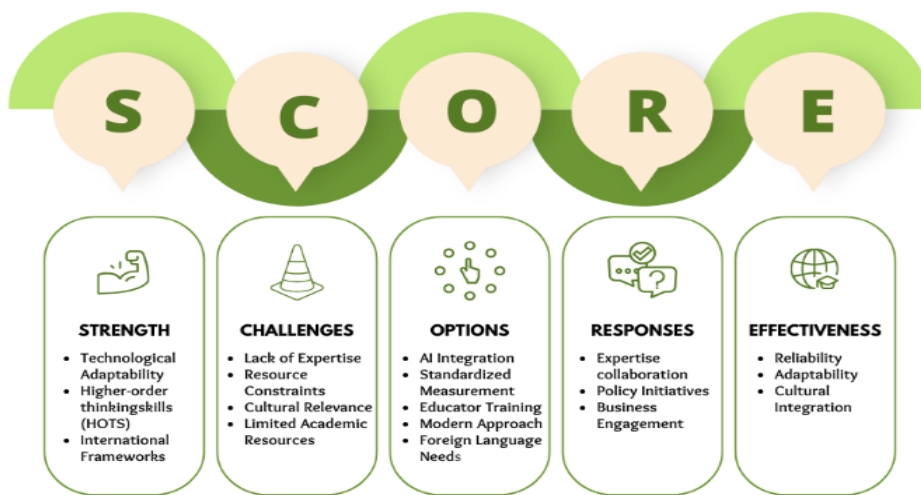


Figure 2: SCORE Model for Arabic Reading Assessment Development

Summary

Overall, these results demonstrate that this paper successfully achieves its objective by utilizing the SCORE model to explore the future of Arabic reading proficiency in language educational assessment. Distinct from other analyses, this study offers an integrated perspective that not only guides the implementation of robust assessment practices but also supports continuous refinement, ensuring that they align with evolving educational needs and international standards particularly in non-native contexts like Malaysia. By focusing on the five key elements of the SCORE model, this approach also can refine teaching strategies. This alignment directly supports the objectives of Malaysia’s Ministry of Education (MOE) and Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) to produce language-proficient graduates. Consistent and rigorous Arabic literacy standards not only prepare students for academic and professional engagement but also fulfill national language competency goals, meeting both local and global needs.

Although the SCORE model provides a structured framework, incorporating alternative models like SWOT, SOAR, or NOISE could yield a broader range of perspectives. These models can complement the SCORE analysis by identifying new opportunities, addressing weaknesses, and providing additional strategies to align with international and local educational needs. Future research could examine the long-term impact of the SCORE model on Arabic reading proficiency by tracking learners' progress over time. This approach could assess the model’s effectiveness in meeting proficiency standards and adaptability to evolving educational goals. This will be crucial for ensuring that Arabic language education remains adaptable and responsive to the evolving demands of global learning environments.

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