

# A Conceptual Study of Qur'anic-Based Approaches in the Teaching of Arabic as a Foreign Language

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## ABSTRACT

The persistent struggle among non-native speakers to acquire genuine fluency in Arabic presents a long-standing pedagogical dilemma, often reducing the language to a mere utilitarian tool, devoid of its deep cultural and spiritual resonance. This reductionist approach, favoured by many contemporary curricula, strips Arabic of its inherent richness, leaving learners with a fractured understanding of its complex morphology and profound semantic layers. Prior scholarship, while extensive on general second language acquisition, frequently overlooks or superficially engages with the unique linguistic ecosystem of Qur'anic Arabic as a foundational pedagogical model for foreign language learners. This conceptual analysis, drawing upon classical linguistic treatises and contemporary educational theory, scrutinises existing pedagogical lacunae. It uncovers three critical themes: the profound intertwining of sacred text and linguistic structure; the inherent lexical and grammatical integrity of Qur'anic discourse as a teaching blueprint; and the potential for a deeper, motivationally-charged learning experience when the source text is positioned centrally. The implications extend beyond mere linguistic proficiency, suggesting a transformative shift in curriculum design that could foster not just fluency, but a more holistic appreciation for Arabic and its enduring literary heritage.

**Keywords:** Qur'anic Arabic, Foreign Language Teaching, Arabic Pedagogy, Classical Arabic, Religious Education

## INTRODUCTION

The current state of Arabic language instruction for non-native speakers is, arguably, a failure. Despite decades of pedagogical innovation and countless theoretical frameworks—each promising revolutionary outcomes for learners across diverse linguistic backgrounds—the stark reality remains: achieving anything beyond basic transactional competence proves exceedingly difficult. Students grapple with seemingly insurmountable grammatical complexities; they stumble through lexicons often divorced from living contexts; many simply give up. This persistent inability to cultivate genuine mastery, particularly a nuanced appreciation for the language's deeper registers, begs a re-evaluation of our foundational assumptions regarding how Arabic ought to be taught, especially as a foreign language in secular or even faith-based institutions. The conventional wisdom, which prioritises modern standard Arabic and often segregates classical forms, often creates an artificial barrier, ironically hindering the very progress it purports to accelerate. Why, one might ask, do we continue to insist on models that consistently underperform, neglecting the very fount from which Arabic derived much of its structural integrity and expressive power? Scholars have explored various communicative approaches (Al-Jarf, 2019), yet they mostly skirt around the elephant in the room: the Qur'an itself as a didactic resource. This persistent avoidance, born perhaps of perceived academic neutrality or an unwarranted fear of theological entanglement, leaves a gaping void in the methodological discourse, denying learners a potent, organically structured pathway into the language. It's a glaring oversight, a pedagogical blind spot that demands immediate intellectual redress.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Discussions surrounding Arabic as a foreign language (AFL) pedagogy have long been fractious, often characterised by a tension between communicative competence and grammatical accuracy. Mahmoud (2020) champions immersion, arguing for environments that mirror natural acquisition, yet his work, whilst insightful, tends to overlook the specific challenges posed by the diglossic nature of Arabic—the chasm between spoken vernaculars and formal written forms. Other proponents, such as Abdul-Raof (2019), have vociferously advocated for a return to classical texts, suggesting that the structural integrity and semantic precision inherent in works like the Qur'an offer an unparalleled foundation. His assertion, however, faces a practical counter-argument from educators who fear overwhelming learners with archaic syntax and an extensive vocabulary that seems irrelevant to daily interaction. It is a valid concern, one that points to a systemic pedagogical inertia, a reluctance to innovate beyond established—and often failing—paradigms.

The debate over Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) versus Classical Arabic (CA) in AFL curricula remains fiercely contested. Ryding (2005), a prominent voice, largely endorses MSA as the default, reasoning that its standardised form allows for broader communication and access to contemporary media. Yet, critics, including Al-Khuli (2022), contend that MSA, by deliberately simplifying or omitting classical structures, inadvertently deprives learners of the deep grammatical rules and morphological patterns that govern the entire language family. This omission, they argue, results in a superficial understanding, a mere veneer of fluency that cracks under pressure when confronted with more sophisticated texts. The very elegance of Arabic, its internal logic, derives significantly from its classical roots; to bypass this is to build on shaky ground.

Furthermore, the integration of religious texts, particularly the Qur'an, into AFL instruction presents another layer of contention. While studies by Al-Qurashi (2021) acknowledge the Qur'an's undeniable linguistic significance—its perfect grammatical construction and rich rhetorical devices—many pedagogical frameworks remain hesitant to embrace it as a core teaching instrument. This reluctance often stems from a misplaced fear of proselytisation or a misguided attempt to maintain secular academic purity, effectively sidelining a text that is, quite simply, the most influential piece of Arabic literature ever produced. Such an exclusionary stance, arguably, impoverishes the learning experience, severing the language from its most profound cultural and historical anchor. One might suspect that such hesitation ultimately does a disservice to both the student and the subject matter.

Conversely, a niche body of scholarship, represented by works like those of Khan (2018), argues for targeted Qur'anic integration, focusing on its unique lexical patterns and rich semantic fields. These works often highlight how Qur'anic vocabulary provides a consistent, coherent linguistic framework that can be systematically learned, thus building a robust internal dictionary for learners. Their proposals, however, frequently remain confined to specialised religious institutions, failing to penetrate mainstream AFL programmes. The challenge here is not merely about *\*what\** to teach, but *\*how\** to present such material in a pedagogically sound, accessible manner that does not presuppose prior religious knowledge, but rather treats the Qur'an primarily as an unparalleled linguistic artefact.

Beyond these stylistic and content-based arguments, the psychological dimensions of learning Arabic also warrant attention. Ghazali and Yaakob (2019) explore learner motivation, suggesting that a connection to the spiritual or cultural aspects of Arabic can profoundly affect engagement and retention. If the Qur'an represents the apotheosis of Arabic expression for many, then its strategic use might well tap into a wellspring of intrinsic motivation, transforming a laborious task into a more meaningful pursuit. Yet, despite these indications, few mainstream curricula have deliberately capitalised on this potential motivational engine, preferring instead a more detached, ostensibly objective approach. This often leaves learners feeling disconnected, merely acquiring vocabulary and grammar rules without truly grasping the soul of the language. It's a missed opportunity, a pedagogical vacuum awaiting innovation.

## METHODOLOGY

This conceptual study proceeds through a rigorous, intellectually discerning analysis of existing literature and established theoretical constructs, rather than embarking on empirical data collection. We aren't polling students or conducting interviews; our work resides entirely within the library, among texts, ideas, and competing

arguments. Our aim is to construct a theoretical synthesis, a coherent framework that proposes an alternative pedagogical direction for Arabic as a foreign language, grounded firmly in Qur'anic linguistic principles. This is not merely a summary of previous findings; it is an active engagement with, and often a challenge to, prevailing assumptions.

The initial phase involved an extensive, deliberate search across academic databases—JSTOR, Scopus, Google Scholar—using a focused set of keywords such as 'Qur'anic Arabic pedagogy,' 'classical Arabic teaching methods,' 'religious texts language acquisition,' and 'Arabic diglossia education.' This was not an indiscriminate sweep, but a carefully curated selection process. We consciously discarded outdated theories that failed to adequately address the unique challenges of non-native acquisition, favouring instead those works that offered deeper conceptual insights or presented compelling, albeit perhaps marginalised, arguments regarding the structural integrity of classical Arabic.

Our intellectual journey involved a painstaking sifting through philosophical treatises on language, historical accounts of Arabic grammar's development, and contemporary discussions on second language acquisition theory. Each text was scrutinised not just for its content, but for its implicit assumptions, its underlying biases, and the theoretical lineage it represented. For instance, discussions around the 'natural' order of language acquisition were juxtaposed with classical Arab grammarians' meticulous categorisations, seeking points of unexpected congruence or glaring divergence. This demanded a critical eye, an almost archaeological digging through layers of thought.

The core of our methodology centred on what might be termed 'conceptual triangulation.' We identified recurring themes and critical disjunctures within the literature—for instance, the persistent pedagogical fragmentation of Arabic language levels, or the artificial separation of grammar from semantic depth. Then, we consciously sought out counter-arguments or overlooked historical perspectives, particularly those rooted in traditional Islamic scholarship concerning Arabic linguistics and exegesis, where the Qur'an functions as the ultimate linguistic benchmark.

This process wasn't linear; it was iterative, a constant back-and-forth between broad conceptualisation and minute textual analysis. We identified key conceptual nodes—such as *i'jāz al-Qur'ān* (the inimitability of the Qur'an) as a linguistic phenomenon, or the intricate relationship between root morphology and semantic extension—and then tracked how these concepts either appear or, more often, are glaringly absent from mainstream AFL pedagogical discourse. The strength of this approach lies in its capacity to build a coherent argument from fragmented insights, drawing connections that might otherwise remain obscured. It is a work of intellectual synthesis, an attempt to weave disparate threads into a novel conceptual tapestry. We are building an argument, piece by painstaking piece, from the raw material of ideas.

## RESULTS

The careful re-examination of Arabic language pedagogy, viewed through the lens of Qur'anic-based approaches, reveals several conceptual pillars that have, regrettably, been either ignored or superficially engaged with in prevailing methods. These findings are not empirical observations; they are theoretical revelations, conceptual breakthroughs arrived at through diligent textual analysis and critical synthesis.

Firstly, there is the undeniable structural integrity of the Qur'anic text itself. It is not merely a religious scripture; it is a linguistic masterpiece, a self-contained ecosystem of grammatical precision and rhetorical brilliance. Every word, every grammatical particle, serves a purpose (Siddiqui, 2018). Teaching Arabic by systematically unpacking these structures—showing learners how meaning is built layer upon layer, from root morphology to complex sentence structures—offers a stable, predictable, and profoundly logical entry point. Current methods often present grammar as a series of disconnected rules. This approach, by contrast, views grammar as an organic whole, demonstrable and observable within an accessible, yet infinitely rich, corpus. It's a complete system, waiting to be understood.

Secondly, the inherent lexical coherence within Qur'anic Arabic proves to be an exceptionally powerful pedagogical tool. The Qur'an employs a finite, albeit vast, vocabulary, often reiterating key terms and concepts, allowing for deep semantic immersion (Mir, 2019). When learners engage with this corpus, they encounter words

not as isolated dictionary entries, but as participants in a complex web of interconnected meanings. This contextual richness cultivates a profound understanding of semantic fields, antonyms, and synonyms, far beyond rote memorisation. It builds a genuine conceptual lexicon. Students learn a word's meaning, its usage, and its broader implications all at once, which is a stark contrast to simply listing definitions.

Thirdly, the spiritual and intellectual engagement provoked by Qur'anic content offers an unparalleled motivational engine for learners. Acquisition can be a tedious chore. However, when the language is connected to a source of profound meaning—a text held sacred by billions—the learning process transcends mere utility (Rahman, 2021). Learners are no longer simply memorising verb conjugations; they are unlocking verses, grasping ancient wisdom, connecting with a profound cultural heritage. This intrinsic motivation, often overlooked in secular pedagogical models, can dramatically increase retention and foster a deeper, more enduring connection to the language. It transforms a task into a quest.

Beyond these, the rhetorical and stylistic depth of the Qur'an provides a masterclass in Arabic expression. Its use of metaphor, simile, and paronomasia is unparalleled, offering learners not just correct grammar, but \*beautiful\* grammar, expressive vocabulary (Abbasi, 2020). By studying these rhetorical devices, students move beyond basic communication to a sophisticated appreciation of Arabic literary artistry. This elevates the learning experience from functional to artistic, fostering a sense of aesthetic accomplishment. It's about more than just speaking; it's about speaking eloquently.

Thus, these conceptual insights collectively suggest a re-orientation. Arabic instruction needs not invent new grammars or vocabularies. It merely needs to rediscover its most potent, historically proven resource, treating it not as a religious anomaly but as the definitive linguistic standard. This is the argument we assemble. It isn't about proselytising; it's about pedagogy.

## DISCUSSION

The findings, or rather, the conceptual revelations put forth, demand a re-evaluation of fundamental assumptions underpinning Arabic as a foreign language instruction. So what does this truly mean for the real world? It suggests that our current fixation on fragmented, often 'modernised' curricula might be deeply misguided, leading only to a generation of learners who possess a superficial command of the language, forever distanced from its profound intellectual and spiritual wellsprings. We've been building houses without solid foundations.

One might suspect that the persistent struggle many students face, even after years of study, directly correlates with the disengagement of Arabic pedagogy from its classical heritage. When the Qur'an, as the undisputed linguistic zenith of Arabic, is treated as an optional extra or a specialised niche, learners are deprived of its inherent coherence. This study argues that by foregrounding the Qur'anic text, not merely as a religious artefact but as a perfectly articulated linguistic corpus, we could provide students with an organic, intrinsically logical framework for understanding Arabic grammar, morphology, and semantics. It offers a consistent point of reference, a linguistic anchor in a sea of dialectal variation and ever-changing vernaculars (Hassan, 2019). This shift, arguably, could transform the learner's journey from one of arduous memorisation into a process of systematic discovery.

The resistance to integrating Qur'anic approaches often stems from valid, if somewhat overstated, concerns about accessibility and religious neutrality. Yet, this paper implicitly argues that such concerns may inadvertently impoverish the learning experience. The fear of 'religious bias' often overshadows the immense linguistic benefits. One might postulate that approaching the Qur'an as a \*linguistic exemplar\*, rather than solely a theological document, mitigates this issue. Its perfect syntax, its vast and yet internally consistent lexicon—these are not matters of faith, but of demonstrable linguistic fact (Zayd, 2020). By de-emphasising the religious interpretation in the language classroom and foregrounding its structural perfection, instructors could unlock a powerful teaching resource without overstepping academic boundaries. It's an intellectual pivot, not a conversion.

Furthermore, the observed motivational potential, stemming from an engagement with deeply meaningful content, presents a compelling case for curricular reform. Students are more likely to persevere through the rigours of language acquisition if they feel a profound connection to the material. Learning Arabic \*through\*



the Qur'an offers an intrinsic reward structure beyond mere practical utility—a spiritual and intellectual enrichment that can dramatically improve engagement and retention rates (El-Sayed, 2022). This implies a paradigm shift away from purely functional language instruction towards a more holistic educational experience, one that acknowledges the profound cultural and historical weight of the language. Such an approach might even make the dry mechanics of grammar far more palatable.

The conceptual framework presented here does not advocate for an abandonment of modern pedagogical techniques, but rather a strategic re-prioritisation. It is not about turning language classrooms into seminars; rather, it is about recognising and intelligently re-integrating the most significant linguistic resource in Arabic history into mainstream teaching. This would mean designing curricula that systematically introduce Qur'anic vocabulary, grammatical structures, and rhetorical patterns from early stages, gradually building complexity. It's entirely possible that by doing so, we might not only improve linguistic proficiency but also cultivate a generation of learners with a far richer, more authentic appreciation for the Arabic language and its enduring legacy. The alternative is to persist in current failing methods, forever chasing diminishing returns.

## CONCLUSION

The conceptual journey undertaken here, dissecting the merits of Qur'anic-based approaches in foreign language instruction, leads to a decisive conclusion: the pedagogical landscape of Arabic as a foreign language is critically underdeveloped, largely due to its persistent reluctance to embrace its most profound and structurally perfect linguistic resource. We have, arguably, been looking in the wrong places for solutions, devising convoluted methods when the answer lay in plain sight, enshrined in a text of unparalleled linguistic elegance. The persistent failure of many learners to achieve deep fluency and genuine appreciation for Arabic culture suggests a fundamental flaw in current methodologies, which often sever the language from its foundational textual heritage.

This study argues that the systematic integration of Qur'anic principles into AFL curricula is not merely an academic exercise but a necessary corrective. By re-centring instruction around the Qur'an's robust grammatical framework, its coherent lexical system, and its profound motivational pull, educators could cultivate a more authentic, deeply rooted understanding of the language. This isn't about imposing a theological viewpoint. It's about leveraging a linguistic goldmine, a perfectly preserved corpus that offers a consistent, logical, and immensely rich pathway into Arabic. The current ad-hoc, often fragmented approaches simply cannot compete with the organic integrity offered by such a foundational text.

Future research ought to develop specific, scaffolded pedagogical models that systematically integrate Qur'anic vocabulary acquisition and grammatical analysis at various proficiency levels, moving beyond mere theoretical advocacy. Testing these models in diverse educational settings, critically assessing both linguistic outcomes and learner engagement metrics, would provide the empirical data necessary to validate the conceptual arguments presented here. Specifically, controlled experiments comparing traditional MSA curricula with hybrid Qur'anic-infused approaches on metrics like retention of irregular verb conjugations and the understanding of idiomatic expressions would be exceptionally useful.

Ignoring these insights would be a profound disservice, condemning future generations of learners to perpetual linguistic struggle, denying them access to the rich cultural and intellectual heritage that Arabic, at its heart, represents. The path forward demands courage: a willingness to challenge established norms and embrace a methodology that, while perhaps unconventional in certain academic circles, is historically grounded and intellectually compelling. The alternative is continued mediocrity.

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