

ARABIC EDUCATION IN UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, NIGERIA: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Arabic Education has flourished and passed different stages and media in Nigeria over time. It has as such played significant role in spreading Islamic civilization outside the Arabian Peninsula. Historical records confirmed that for about three centuries between 17th and 19th centuries Arabic documents remained the only source of information for European writers on western and central Sudan. It was also a means of communication and language of instruction in different stages in Nigeria over the years. Meanwhile, the language is facing a lot of challenges in Nigerian Universities, ranging from Government policies on language education, social, pedagogical, etc. that may impede its aims and objectives. Some of these challenges came as a result of the educational policies. This paper attempts to discuss the role of Arabic language in the Islamic civilization in Nigeria and the current status of Arabic education in Nigerian Universities with special reference to the Nigerian Language policies and implementation in relation to the pedagogical situation of Arabic language in University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

Historical facts show that the presence of Islamic civilization through Arabic education came to the part of the world known as Nigeria today through the North African States such as Egypt, part of the Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco, etc. this process was made easy through commercial contacts that connected these states and the south of Sahara as far back as before 11th century. It is not easy, however to say precisely when this commercial contacts begun between the Arab worlds and their counterparts in the south of Sahara (Kanem Borno And some Hausa lands in today's Nigeria) (Galadanci, 1993).

Arabic language originated in pre-Islamic Arabia, the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet of Islam adopted standard Arabic from amongst the cluster of dialects of the time and thus became the language of Islam. Arabic language outside the shore of Arabian Peninsula therefore is concomitant to the emergence of Islam in such area. A study of the Arabic literature of Africa and Nigeria in particular is tantamount to the study of the Islamic cultural history of the region with particular reference to the literary works of the scholars.

BACKGROUND OF ARABIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Arabic language cannot be separated from Islam since the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet of Islam adopted *Arabiya al fus-ha*, standard Arabic from amongst the cluster of dialects of the time and thus became the language of Islamic civilization. Arabic language outside the shore of Arabian Peninsula therefore is concomitant to the emergence of Islam and its civilization in such area. A study of the Arabic literature of Africa and Nigeria in particular is tantamount to the study of the Islamic civilization of the region with particular reference to the literary works of the Muslim scholars.

It is a common knowledge that the main factor responsible for the spread and subsequently learning of Arabic language and literature outside Arabian Peninsula is Islam. Islamic expansion in its frontiers heralded the process of Islamization and Arabization, which has spillover effect on the efflorescence of Arabic language and its education. Being the language of the Qur'an, its learning especially for ritual purposes and services formed the basis of Islamic education. Hence, Islamic educational framework is embedded in Arabic language. Learning Arabic thus, is a pre-requisite to better understanding of Islam. That is the reason why Muslim scholars then-and up till today-considered Arabic learning as an integral aspect of Islam. Great scholars such as Imam Ibn Taymiyyah, was of the opinion that Arabic Education is obligatory when he says: "indeed Arabic language is integral part of Islam; its learning is a compulsory obligation. In as much as the understanding of the Qur'an, and prophetic tradition, are not only compulsory but also neither could be understood without Arabic language. Hence, learning Arabic is compulsory, since every means directed towards an obligation, is obligatory in itself, such a means is obligatory" (Al Ba'lee 1422 A.H).

Since the primary object of learning Arabic language by the Non-Arab Muslim scholars, in general and Nigeria in particular, was to obtain proper grip of the Qur'an and by implication – Islam, other subjects were incorporated into the curriculum of Islamic educational systems. The traditional Islamic curriculum then included Theology (*Tawhid*) jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), Traditions of the Prophet (*Hadith*), Exegesis of the Qur'an (*Tafsir*), Arabic language 'Arabiya and Stylistics (*bayan*). Others include Prosody (*Al 'Arud*) and (*Adab*) i.e. where the Pre – Islamic Arabic Poetry was learnt. The study of Classical Arabic literature was equally integrated into the scholarship curriculum of Islamic educational system. This was so particularly for learning the pure linguistic correctness of the time since in it were to be found words and usages though no longer current but which could throw light on the meaning of expressions in the Qur'an as rightly pointed out by Ibn Abbas in his *Tafsir*. That's all the more reason why up till today one can still find in the library of any Muslim scholar in the West Africa, one or more of the most celebrated anthologies of pre – Islamic Arabian poetry .

There are other subjects such as History (*Ta'rikh*), Geography and poetry, which were also incorporated into the curriculum as long as they can assist in the better understanding of these Islamic sciences. All this was done with Qur'anic Arabic adopted as its language as the Qur'an – a divine literary study has adopted this. There is no doubt that the influence of the Qur'an on classical Arabic literature would also reflect not only in the style but also on the emotional thought of the Muslim scholars in Nigeria and other non – Arab world where Muslims are preponderate.

It is worthy of note here, that the community of the Nigerian Islamic revivalists of the 19th century spearheaded by the famous Sheikh Uthman bn Fudi, was established on Islamic principles subjected to the canons of Islamic Law, which necessitated thorough knowledge before application. Hence, the scholars wrote many texts on Islamic tradition of reforms, as regards politics, ethnography, sociology, education, economy and urbanization, historiography, law, jurisprudence as well as administrative organization. All these subjects were not only in Arabic but also as they relate to religion of Islam. Muslim scholars also produced numerous titles in prose and poetry on subjects that cut across disciplinary boundaries such as history and medicine, apart from the traditional religious themes of Islamic jurisprudence, Qur'anic exegesis and different aspects of the Arabic language itself including its grammar .

With the revival of Islam in the early parts of the 19th century, the revivalists preoccupied themselves with writings which almost appeared to have been their first and foremost occupation. cursory look at the very title of the Jihadists' literary works are indicative of the fact that they are religious texts. Captions like, *Bayan* expounding; *Diya'* guiding light; *Irshad* counseling *Najm*, guiding star; *Nasihah*; advice, *Ta'lim*, educating, *Tanbih*, drawing attention to, etc are all aspects of conveying the message of Islam. Whereas numbers of these texts later on discovered to have served in some other capacities such as materials for historiography, ethnography, history, politics, sociology etc; the main object was

to proselytize Islam. Arabic learning in Nigeria in this spirit has exclusive process which has tremendously shaped the destiny of the scholars' emotion and thoughts as manifested in their literary productions.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The present study is an attempt to investigate the current approach used by the teachers of Arabic language in University of Ilorin, Nigeria and its resultant effects on the aims and objectives of Arabic language as a foreign and language of Islamic civilization in Nigeria with the aim of suggesting more effective and result orienting approaches in the teaching of foreign languages.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The structural characteristics of Arabic as compared to other languages studied in the school system in Nigeria, the sociolinguistic context within which Arabic is studied and the language teaching competences of the Arabic language teacher in Nigeria are some of the variables which affect Arabic education in Nigeria. Although the teaching process broadly encompasses preparation, presentation, application and review/evaluation, different contents and contexts of learning lend themselves to different approaches and different strategies of instruction. Experts in language teaching, have identified peculiarities of language teaching which distinguish it from instruction in other subject areas.

Up to now the prevailing approach in teaching Arabic in University of Ilorin as well as other Nigerian universities, is the traditional approach. In traditional Arabic teaching, the approach or teaching methodology use a lot of grammar drills and grammar-translation method. Most teachers of Arabic language courses use this methodology in their classrooms. Students depended totally on their teachers: from explaining the subject, translating the text, preparing the language practices to choosing the groups of vocabularies that they may memorize. Students were not trained to think and to expand what they have learned. Meanwhile, teachers relied totally on textbooks. They only taught what is written in the textbook using grammar-translation method. Most of them did not use their creativity to attract students nor motivate them to use and learn more outside classroom. They failed to realize what has been stressed by Leaver and Willis (2004) and that of the findings of Chomsky (1959, as cited in Leaver & Willis, 2004) who have demonstrated convincingly that both language learning and language use must be a creative process. Teachers need to focus more on the learning process rather than learning results, to help students know how to learn instead of what to learn only, and to help students establish creative learning rather than adaptive learning. Chomsky (1959, as cited in Leaver & Willis, 2004) stipulates that a basic rule system that underpins all languages is innate and that, given exposure to a specific language, children will naturally create the specific rules of that language for

themselves. Learning is thus seen as a process of discovery determined by internal processes rather than external influences.

Over the last few decades, so many new approaches have been adopted to simplify the teaching and learning of second/foreign languages. Amongst them are communicative language teaching approach, task-based language teaching, etc. with the advent of these approaches, second/foreign language teaching became more interesting and goal achieving. Nevertheless, these approaches are not widely followed and practiced as an educational approach in Arabic language teaching in Nigeria. In fact, the educational culture of the task-based learning/teaching (TBLT) is completely new to Nigerian students especially in Arabic as a second/foreign language learning even though Arabic language has been taught in Nigeria for decades. Hence, there are little or no discussions of TBLT in teaching and learning Arabic in Nigerian context. Due to this information gap regarding the use of task-based learning/teaching approach in teaching Arabic in University of Ilorin, Arabic language for communication is still seen as a difficult task. As such this makes the current study the first of its kind in the area of Arabic language.

METHODOLOGIES

The study benefited from the considerable length of practice of the researcher (10 years) as teacher of Arabic at the secondary and tertiary levels of education in Nigeria. In addition, the content of the National University commission (NUC) minimum standards for Arabic was scrutinized *Vis a Vis* the current academic programme of Arabic in University of Ilorin, Ilorin Nigeria. In order to establish the dimensions of the current practice regarding the teaching of Arabic in Unilorin, the study surveyed the pedagogical approaches utilized for teaching university undergraduates using an unstructured interview, a total of 32 respondents amongst whom 8 were lecturers of the department, and 24 students provided information on the methodologies used in teaching Arabic language, the utilization of teaching aids in actual teaching-learning contexts and the types of resources utilized to support instruction.

NIGERIAN LANGUAGE POLICY AND THE ISSUE OF ARABIC LANGUAGE

The colonial era in Nigeria witnessed a decline in the fortune of Arabic language as it is denied of institutional support which it has enjoyed throughout the preceding century. Although the British colonial authority adopted a system of indirect rule that initially preserved the pre-1903 administrative structure for purposes of local administration, the loss of political supremacy by the Muslim rulers in the caliphate and the introduction of western education marked the beginning of the decline in multifaceted functions of Arabic earlier identified. The decline was further reinforced in 1914 when

the northern and southern protectorates were merged to form what is now known as Nigeria. With the objective of evolving a language policy that will gradually replace Arabic with English, the Qur'anic schools were not recognized by the colonial authorities as part of the formal education system and these schools were not given the financial incentive that the Christian school system were receiving. Some feeble attempt were made to teach Arabic and Islamic studies as two distinct school subjects within the formal school system but this did not yield any significant results. The subject teachers were untrained and unrecognized like their counterparts who were teaching other school subjects and the pupils too were not motivated because of the low esteem accorded to knowledge of Arabic in the secular job market. Galadanci observed the situation of Arabic during this period in the following words

"The colonial authorities realized the importance of the Arabic language in the north as the language of administration and the language of culture and thus tried everything within their power to replace it with their own language. Therefore made English the official language so that government offices and registries of the Sharia courts would use English instead of Arabic".

Even the local languages such as Hausa and Fulfulde which were already being written in Arabic script, were now been taught in formal schools in Latin scripts. The same situation was found in the southwest in the formal schools established by Muslim Organizations in response to the challenge posed by Christian schools. Their orientation was largely dictated by the fact that the opportunities for employment in the colonial civil service, in commerce and industry were only open to those literate in English language (Ogunbiyi 2005, al-Ilori 1971)

All the regimes, since the colonial times, have been coming up with one language policy or another for the country. A crucial aspect of the current language policy for Nigeria is summarized in the National Policy on Education (1998:9) as follows:

"Government appreciates the importance of language as a means promoting social interaction and national cohesion, and preserving cultures. Thus every child shall learn the language of the immediate environment. Furthermore, in the interest of national unity it is expedient that every child shall be required to learn one of the three languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. For smooth interaction with our neighbours, it is desirable for every Nigerian to speak French. Accordingly, French shall be the second official language in Nigeria and it shall be compulsory in schools"

One of the greatest implications of the present language policy is the amount of languages that now feature in the public school system of Nigeria. Some experts even feel that the number of languages is unwieldy. If anything, there is the need to determine the status of each of these languages in order to identify the position of Arabic as far as the policy is concerned. The National Policy on Education published in 1977 (revised 1981, 1988 etc) and the government's views on implementation of committee's Blueprint on the document, Arabic is given explicit mention only in relation to its link with Islam. At the primary school level, the Blueprint states on page 6: "where Arabic is the medium

of instruction in Religion and moral instructions, it will continue to be used (Akinaso & Ogunbiyi 1990)

The nomenclature used for the languages taught in Nigeria as can be seen in documents like the National Policy on Education (1998), National Examination Council Regulations and syllabuses For Senior School Certificate Examination (2002-2004) etc) include such terms as "official language", "mother tongue" ("language of the immediate environment", or L1), "Second language" (or L2) and "foreign language". English used to be the only official language but as we have just seen from the summary of the national policy on language, French has been made the second official language. According to the logic of this nomenclature, Nigeria languages are "mother tongue" ("languages of the immediate" or L1) while any of Hausa, Igbo, or Yoruba is a "second language" (or L2) in all the areas of the country where it is not a "language of the immediate environment". "Foreign language" is used to cover all the other non-native languages taught in the country; languages like Arabic, German, Russian, Portuguese and Japanese. Unfortunately, these terms as stated above have masking sociolinguistic technicalities that affect language teaching especially in the areas of stating objectives and the contents of the syllabuses for each type of language .

Although, Arabic language is classified as foreign language in Nigeria some Nigerian ethnic group known as Shuwa Arabs who live in towns and villages of Dikwa, Gamboru, Ngala and Gajibo in Borno State speak Arabic as their mother tongue. (Abu Bakr 1989, Ogunbiyi 2005)

A foreign language is one that is not the mother tongue of any group in the country where it is taught (Festus 2001). Furthermore this language will have no internal socio-political communication function in the country and it is not contradictory to state that the main reason why it is taught is to ease contact with the outside world. So, if we are to agree for the sake of argument that Arabic is a foreign language, then this paper studies the challenges associated with the teaching of Arabic in Nigeria as a foreign language and consequently recommends appropriate interventions in the light of the material and human resources required for improving its teaching as second language and of Islamic civilization in university of Ilorin, Nigeria.

ARABIC AND ISLAMIC STUDIES IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

The realization of the impressive contributions of Arabic as a language of Islamic civilization to the knowledge of world civilization in general and West African history and culture in particular made some universities in Nigeria to introduce Arabic and Islamic Studies into their respective institutions upon inception. While the University of Ibadan has a full-fledged Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Islamic Studies also features in the university's Department of Religious Studies, both in the Faculty of Arts. Bayero University has Faculty of Arts and Islamic Studies as well as a Department of Islamic Studies. The University of Maiduguri also adopts the nomenclature of Department of Arabic

and Islamic Studies. Also, Usmanu Danfodiyo University has Department of Arabic language and faculty of Islamic Studies. The University of Ilorin has an Islamic Studies unit in the Department of Religions, in addition to its distinct Department of Arabic. Obafemi Awolowo University and Adekunle Ajasin universities have Department of Religious Studies where Islamic Studies is taught as an adjunct to other religions. Others are Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, and so many state and private universities.

The table below shows Federal, State and Private Universities where degree in Arabic language is offered in one form or the other.

S/NO	Federal	State	Private
1	University of Ibadan	Nasarawa State University, Keffi	Crescent University, Abeokuta
2	University of Ilorin, Ilorin	Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos	Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin
3	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife	Umaru Musa Yar'adua university, Katsina	Fountain University, Oshogbo
4	university of Lagos, Lagos	Kogi State University, Anyigba	Katsina University, Katsina.
5	University of Jos, Jos	Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye	
6	Bayero University, Kano	Kaduna State University, Kaduna	
7	Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	Adamawa State University, Mubi	
8	Usmanu Danfodiyo university, Sokoto	Tai Solarin university of Education, Ijagun	
9	University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri	Kwara State University	
10	Federal university, Dutse		
11	University of Abuja		

Apart from undergraduate programmes in Arabic Language, the disciplines is also studied at postgraduate levels leading to the award of higher degrees in Arabic language and/or literature.

ARABIC EDUCATION IN UNILORIN

Arabic education started at the University of Ilorin upon its inception in 1975 to develop a specialization in linguistic studies and Arabic literature, for the benefit of the Nigerian citizens and Muslim children looking at the cultural, historical and religious significance to Nigerian Muslims. The Arabic language is one of the courses offered in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Faculty of Arts, when the university began its academic programmes. After a year, of its establishment, the department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, became Department of Religions because of the addition of Christian Studies as a unit in the department. Arabic language continued to be taught in the department of religion until 2004, when a separate department was created for it until today. Since its inception, it plays a key role in the dissemination of Arabic language and literature among young Muslims, in a modern way by opening the opportunity to several disciplines.

LANGUAGE OBJECTIVES AND TEACHING APPROACHES

The objectives of offering Arabic to higher education learners in Nigeria do not significantly vary from institution to institution. The Arabists sampled agreed that achieving both academic and communicative competences are encapsulated in the philosophy and objectives of teaching Arabic in Nigeria. Apart from serving as a teacher education programme especially in the colleges of education, the Arabic programmes aim at producing Arabists in the context of globalization and technological development. Such specialists should normally be able to function effectively in contemporary human societies using the linguistic resources at their disposal as basic tools. In other words, the graduates of Arabic are expected to be proficient enough to be able to converse with educated native speakers of Arabic to the extent that linguistic and meta-linguistic (discourse on the structure of the language) exchanges can occur. A typical illustration of the dual objective of producing graduates with academic and communicative competence is the Arabic programme at the university of Ilorin which in part aims to turn out competent Arabists who will be able to function effectively in social, political and economic spheres of life and to expose the students to the culture of the Arabs and the contributions of Arabic Language to West African historical and intellectual heritage in general and Nigeria in particular" In a nutshell, the institutions aim at producing professionals who will be able to function as translators, interpreters, broadcasters, writers, diplomats in the Arab world, tourism managers and in such ancillary careers such as serving curators, numismatics, ethnographers, historiographers.

The survey established that majority of the thirteen teachers in the department of Arabic currently did not undergo any formal pedagogical training, except only two who had postgraduate diploma in teaching Arabic as foreign language (TAFL). Thus, were yet to acquire competences in second language education and as such are not conversant with foreign language methodologies such as the Cognitive, Audio-Lingual, Direct Method, Natural/Communicative Approaches, Total Physical Response (TPR), Community Language Learning (CLL), the Total Immersion Programme and task-based language teaching (TBLT) approach.

Although the institution have a modern language laboratory which the department of Arabic share with other foreign and indigenous languages, the availability of Arabic softwares that will make the instructional process meaningful and result oriented are not available. The articulation of problems associated with the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language should logically lead to the appropriate intervention.

The situation is aggravated by the availability of limited instructional resources which effectively support teaching and learning. For instance, most of the text books in circulation were designed for native speakers of Arabic. The facilities offered by such books to the foreign learner are thus minimal. In many cases, learners find such texts cumbersome to follow. Perfunctory interest has been shown by local authors to address the need to author suitable books that are tailored to the needs of the Nigerian learner of Arabic. But up to now, only a handful of beginners' primers are available for teaching the rudiments of Arabic.

The major impediment to effective teaching of Arabic is the gaps which exist in the training of the manpower expected to ensure that teaching is effective. The lack of qualified professional educators with specialization in *teaching Arabic as a foreign language* is a critical challenge. There is also, yet to be any attempt to incorporate in the curriculum the teaching of Arabic for professional purposes. The relative dearth of specialists quantity-wise and quality-wise in the institution still constitute a cog in the wheel of Arabic education. Therefore, one major problem of teaching Arabic in university of Ilorin is the predominance of literature specialists and lack of adequate language experts in Arabic as a foreign language. Substantial number of teachers of Arabic in this institution are more at home in teaching literature, stylistics in Arabic literature, Arabic literary history etc. Specialists in teaching Arabic as a foreign language are very few as mentioned above. This has posed a serious threat to the professional handling of teaching of Arabic language to non-Arab speakers in the country. The fact of the non-availability of specialists in the linguistic study of Arabic and its pedagogy is further corroborated by the lopsidedness in the research output of lecturers in Arabic in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The research focus of the lecturers has tilted more to the literary aspect rather than the linguistic aspect.

TEACHING APPROACHES

There is every need to mention here that producing graduates of Arabic with native-like language competence is the ultimate aim of Arabic programme in Nigerian Universities from the dimension of the objectives by the Nigerian Universities Commission. This programme of instruction should result in high self-esteem, autonomy and effective communicative skills at the end of the training programme. Various teaching approaches exhibit separate strengths and weaknesses when applied in different contexts. A combination of strategies may also produce salutary results depending on aspects of second language learning involved. Thus, a clear demand on the pedagogical capacities of the Second Language (SL) teacher and more importantly his creativity and resourcefulness will be required. For instance, the Total Immersion Programme be it the effective or ineffective typology has a high potential of yielding impressive outcomes. While the former involves slow communication of the teacher in the target language the latter in which the teacher speaks more rapidly has the capacity of replicating the target language culture if properly implemented. However, the best immersion technique may be incapable of developing capacity for spontaneous oral communication in different domains and contexts. The learning environment has a crucial role to play in ensuring that the learning period is prolonged as much as possible beyond the time allotted for classroom interaction.

However, there should be a paradigm shift in the field of Arabic teaching in order to become more student-centered and thus allows for more meaningful communication, and provides for more practical extra-linguistic skill building. The traditional way of present/practice/produce (PPP) method of teaching Arabic has been replaced by communicative language teaching and many studies reveal that task-based language teaching is an offshoot to communicative language teaching. Teacher-centered classes and structural- syllabus teaching are giving way to a more student-centered, practical and flexible approaches.

Some other practitioners have adopted TBLT out of desire for a meaning-focused approach that reflected real-life language use. They believe that language needs to be transferred to real-world activities and that is best accomplished by doing some of these activities in the classroom (Brown et al, 1989). In foreign language learning contexts where students have little exposure to the target language outside the classroom, TBLT can be specifically helpful (Jeon & Hahn, 2006). Others, like Prabhu (1987), adopted tasks because they firmly believed that task-based interaction stimulated natural acquisition processes.

There are special characteristics offered by TBLT approached as stated by Larsson (2001) when he describes about the advantages of TBLT. According to him, TBLT helps to:

- 1- Improve students' communicative skills.
- 2- Increase the general ability of social interaction.
- 3- Encourage students to gain deeper sense of understanding.

- 4- Activate student to be actively acquiring the knowledge and not be passive receivers.
- 5- Motivate students to learn in a way that the prospect of a final examination rarely manages to do.

In addition to the above mentioned criteria for task-based approach, Willis (1994), cited in Hashim et 'al, (2014) claims that there is a six stage cycle in task-based teaching. The first stage is introduction to both topic and task, where the teacher helps the students to understand the objectives of the task and he/she organizes the collection of ideas or information about the topic. In this stage students take part in activities that either help them to recall words or phrases which will be useful during the performance of the task. The second stage is the task itself. Students work in pairs or groups using whatever language resources they have to express themselves. Teacher encourages them but there is no correction. Emphasis is on fluency and getting things done. The third stage is planning. Students spend some time on putting together in written or spoken form a report on what they did and what conclusions they reached. Teacher can help with language here, if it is required, with the emphasis on ability to communicate the results. The fourth stage is reporting where the teacher organizes feedback, with the groups reporting to the class, either orally or in writing their results. Also, there is no overt correction. The fifth stage is language focus and practice where the teacher sets up a language focus task, which draws attention to one or more of the following:

- (a) Language which students could have used but they did not use,
- (b) Language they used but not as well as they might have used,
- (c) Any other language that is related to the topic and task which the teacher considers important and wishes to focus on. This stage can include drills, dialogues or typical activities from the practice stage of Present Produce Practice (PPP). In all cases, the goal is to focus students' attention on key language points. The last stage is the parallel task where the students have a chance to try out the task again, but with different materials, which will necessitate the same kinds of language.

The basic principle of TBLT is that by having learners perform tasks, it will help them to develop knowledge and skill in the second language in accordance with the way their own language learning mechanisms work. According to Ellis (2002), the task function in TBLT works as 'devices for creating the conditions required for language acquisition'. Thus, it is not the content of the lesson that is the focal point but the process of classroom interaction that generates opportunities for learning. The focus is not on the product or on what to learn, but rather on the process or on how to learn. TBLT offers what traditional method failed to accomplish. This is the main reason why the researcher has decided to propose TBLT as a new approach in the second language learning in university of Ilorin, Nigeria.

The TBLT strategy proposed above is premised on the limitations of learning Arabic in an environment in which it is not spoken and also in view of the fact that the learner may not benefit from the luxury of spending a long period in an Arabic speaking community. The strategy is therefore

focused on various intensive teaching-learning experiences backed by a combination of old and modern teaching and learning resources all of which should be propelled by relevant pedagogy. The main strategy is to ensure that the learner masters the complex system of a language within a reasonable span. A studied review of the entire educational plan for learning Arabic in Nigeria such that there will be a synergy among all the domains in which Arabic is learnt is inescapable. This step will logically lead to the evolution of an integrated curriculum of Arabic which will include all levels of the teaching of the subject as well as ensure that both academic and communicative objectives are not only reflected in the curriculum but well applied. This opens the way for more equitable opportunities for specialization in the literary and linguistic aspects of the language (Adam and Adebisi, 2012).

More importantly, the curriculum should reflect the needs of learners to be able to compete effectively for scarce job opportunities after graduation. The curriculum content should not only include course offerings that would empower the graduate of Arabic to be self-employed but also include course offerings in linguistics and language pedagogy. At the postgraduate level, it should be feasible to mount graduate courses leading to specialization in teaching Arabic as a foreign language. Such a programme will benefit immensely from the quality of the Arabic undergraduate programmes and the resourceful teaching of the subject at the lower levels given the expected broad orientation of the learners.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of the study show that Arabic language has been taught at the University of Ilorin for decades now with teachers with little pedagogical training of foreign language teaching therefore using less result oriented approaches in the teaching of the language. Therefore, the current study suggests task-based language teaching approach for the teaching of the language for effective communication output. The numerous political and economic challenges facing Arabic education in Nigeria today can be reduced if the graduates of Arabic are trained with effective communication skills such as the task-based teaching and learning approach which is more effective and result oriented in the teaching of foreign language.

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