



Language Policy and Reference Frameworks for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers in Algeria

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the current state of language policy and reference frameworks for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers in Algeria and to highlight their role in organizing the educational process and improving learning quality. The study adopted a qualitative descriptive-analytical research design. Data were collected through a comprehensive literature study and document analysis of policy documents, official reports, scientific articles, books, conference proceedings, and reference framework publications related to language policy and the teaching of Arabic to non-native speakers. The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis, which involved identifying recurring themes, categorizing findings into major thematic areas, and interpreting the relationships between language policy, reference frameworks, and teaching practices. The findings revealed a growing interest in teaching Arabic to non-native speakers in Algeria, alongside the absence of a unified national reference framework, disparities in curricula and teaching methods, limited integration of modern educational technologies, and insufficient teacher training. The study concludes that there is a need to develop a unified national reference framework, modernize curricula, strengthen teacher preparation programs, and integrate contemporary educational technologies in order to enhance the quality and effectiveness of Arabic language teaching for non-native speakers in Algeria.

Keywords: Reference Frameworks, Arabic Language Teaching, Algeria.

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Introduction

Language is one of the most fundamental pillars upon which the life of nations is built, as it serves as the medium through which ideas and knowledge are transmitted and through which bridges of communication are established among individuals and societies. The Arabic language is distinguished as one of the oldest living languages that has preserved its linguistic characteristics in terms of vocabulary, structures, and morphological and syntactic systems. Moreover, it possesses a remarkable capacity to accommodate various fields of knowledge and science. Arabic also serves as a means of communication for millions of people around the world and has maintained its authenticity throughout history while continuously renewing and developing itself thanks to its linguistic and cultural attributes. In addition, Arabic has been the vessel of Arab and Islamic culture throughout history, contributing to the transmission of civilization across generations. Its spread has been closely associated with the

expansion of Islamic civilization and the diverse cultures and bodies of knowledge that emerged from it (Farhan Al-Sulaim, 2023).

The Arabic language enjoys a prominent position among the world's languages due to its historical depth, linguistic richness, and expressive flexibility, which have enabled it to occupy a leading place among official and widely spoken languages in terms of the number of speakers. Interest in learning Arabic has increased significantly in recent years within universities and educational institutions in Europe and the United States, as well as in many countries across Asia, Africa, and South America, as indicated by reports of the Modern Language Association of America. This growing interest stems from the religious, cultural, and civilizational significance of the Arabic language. However, teaching Arabic to non-native speakers continues to face several challenges, most notably the unique characteristics of the Arabic linguistic system and its differences from many other world languages, making its acquisition a process that requires accurate and effective teaching methodologies and approaches (Brakhli, N., 2022).

In this context, Algeria occupies an important position in the field of teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, given the close connection of Arabic with the national, cultural, and religious identity of Algerian society. Algerian universities also attract a number of international students, particularly from African and Asian countries, through academic programs and specialized centers aimed at teaching Arabic using diverse educational approaches. Nevertheless, the current state of Arabic language teaching for non-native speakers in Algeria continues to face several challenges, most notably the absence of a unified reference framework that clearly defines language proficiency levels as well as educational and assessment standards. This situation has led to disparities in curricula and educational programs, as well as differences in teaching methods and assessment practices among educational institutions, which negatively affects the quality of the educational process and the effectiveness of its outcomes (Abdel Nasser & Daoud. 2021).

Although a growing body of research has addressed the teaching of Arabic to non-native speakers, previous studies have primarily focused on instructional methods, curriculum design, learner difficulties, and teacher competencies. Other studies have emphasized the importance of reference frameworks and have proposed general models for improving Arabic language education in different contexts. Likewise, research on language policy has largely examined its sociolinguistic dimensions and its role in regulating language use within multilingual societies. However, there remains a noticeable lack of studies that explicitly investigate the relationship between language policy and the development of reference frameworks for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers in the Algerian context.

Furthermore, little attention has been given to evaluating the extent to which Algeria's language policy contributes to the establishment of unified standards for

curriculum design, proficiency levels, teacher preparation, and language assessment. Consequently, the interaction between language policy and reference framework development in Algeria remains insufficiently explored. This study seeks to address this gap by providing an analytical examination of language policy and reference frameworks for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers in Algeria and by identifying the challenges and opportunities associated with developing a unified national framework.

Accordingly, the issue of language policy and reference frameworks for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers has become a topic that requires careful study and analysis, especially in light of the growing global interest in learning Arabic. Despite the efforts made in Algeria to develop Arabic language programs for foreign learners, the absence of a unified reference framework continues to raise challenges related to the organization of the educational process and the achievement of consistency among curricula and adopted standards. Therefore, the following research question emerges:

To what extent has language policy in Algeria contributed to the development of an effective and unified reference framework for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers?

Concept of Language Policy

The concept of language policy emerged as a field of study in the mid-twentieth century. One of the earliest definitions was provided by Haugen, who approached the concept through his analysis of efforts aimed at modernizing, promoting, and institutionalizing a national language within society. Since its inception, language policy has been closely associated with regulating the relationship among competing languages within a social space by determining appropriate forms of intervention for the development of existing languages or the establishment of regional, national, and international common languages (Oudainia & Haniya, 2015).

From this perspective, language policy is viewed as a process concerned with defining major choices related to the relationship between language and society, whether these choices are explicit and officially declared or implicit and indirect. This understanding is closely linked to the concept of language planning, which encompasses various linguistic alternatives and strategies. Such a perspective highlights the broad scope within which language policies operate, as they constitute an official activity aimed at organizing and regulating the linguistic environment of a society (Oudainia & Haniya, 2015).

Therefore, understanding the concept of language policy requires an analysis of its two fundamental components – policy and language – in order to reveal the nature of the relationship that exists between them (Omar A. & Hussein H., 2015).

Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers

Teaching Arabic to non-native speakers is defined as a specialized educational field that aims to enable non-Arab learners to acquire the linguistic competencies necessary to understand and use the Arabic language in various communicative contexts, whether for religious, academic, cultural, or professional purposes. This type of instruction focuses on developing the four fundamental language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – through the use of curricula and teaching methods that take into account learners' characteristics as well as their linguistic and cultural needs. Among the strategies commonly employed in this field are cooperative learning, connection-building strategies, formative assessment, and the use of visual-image strategies, all of which contribute to enhancing comprehension and linguistic interaction (Zardoum & Rabiba, 2020).

Despite the efforts made to advance the teaching of Arabic to non-native speakers, learners continue to face a number of challenges and difficulties. The most significant among these are pronunciation problems, challenges related to the adopted curricula and instructional materials, and issues concerning teachers' competencies and their performance within the educational process (Zardoum M. & Rabiba A., 2020).

The field of teaching Arabic to non-native speakers has witnessed remarkable development in recent years as a result of advances in linguistic and educational studies, as well as the emergence of modern theories in foreign language teaching. These developments have contributed to the rise of contemporary educational approaches aimed at making the learning process more effective and interactive, in a manner that responds to learners' needs and the demands of the modern era (Saad Ali Zayer, 2015).

Reference Frameworks

A reference framework, as defined in the book *The Reference Framework for Teaching Arabic to Speakers of Other Languages: Design, Instruction, and Training* (IMTAA'), is a standardized document that aims to define the levels of Arabic language learning and the linguistic, communicative, and cultural competencies that learners are expected to achieve at each educational stage. It also specifies the skills and knowledge required at every proficiency level. The framework seeks to organize the teaching of Arabic to non-native speakers according to clear and progressive standards that contribute to improving the quality of the educational process and establishing consistent foundations for instruction (IMTAA' Book, 2023).

A reference framework performs several essential functions that make it a central component in the teaching of Arabic to non-native speakers. It helps define learners' proficiency levels and the competencies required at each stage, guides the development of curricula and textbooks, and supports teachers in lesson planning and

the selection of appropriate learning activities. In addition, it contributes to the design of tests and assessment tools based on precise standards and promotes the harmonization of educational criteria across different institutions. Furthermore, it connects Arabic language teaching with contemporary international trends and standards in language education (IMTAA' Book, 2023).

The importance of reference frameworks is particularly evident in the development of curricula and assessment systems. They provide a foundation for organizing the educational process according to a competency-based approach that focuses on learners' actual linguistic abilities. They also facilitate the structuring of linguistic content in accordance with progressive proficiency levels and help identify the skills required in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Moreover, reference frameworks contribute to the development of standardized, objective, and reliable language assessments, while ensuring alignment between educational objectives, teaching methodologies, and evaluation practices. As a result, they play a significant role in enhancing the quality of Arabic language education for non-native speakers and promoting consistency across different educational programs (IMTAA' Book, 2023).

The Current State of Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers in Algeria

Teaching Arabic to non-native speakers is considered one of the important educational issues that has attracted significant attention from researchers and specialists due to its close connection with the educational system on the one hand and its social and cultural dimensions on the other (Zardoum & Rabiba, 2020).

Learning a second language refers to an individual's ability to use a language other than their mother tongue, which was acquired within the family and social environment. This process involves two fundamental stages: first, receiving and comprehending the language, and second, using it effectively in various communicative situations. In this context, learners of Arabic seek to distinguish its different sounds, understand their meanings and linguistic structures, and ultimately produce accurate expressions and use the language correctly (Zardoum & Rabiba, 2020).

The teaching of Arabic to non-native speakers in Algeria has witnessed growing interest in recent years due to the increasing demand for learning Arabic for religious, cultural, and academic purposes. Algeria has sought to strengthen the status of the Arabic language by supporting universities and educational centers that host international students, particularly from African and Asian countries. In addition, educational programs have been developed to enhance learners' linguistic and communicative competencies. This growing attention reflects the cultural and civilizational role that the Arabic language plays within Algerian society and in its regional and international environment (Al-Hadibi & Ali, 2020).

Furthermore, Arabic language learning has attracted an increasing number of learners from European, Asian, African, and American nationalities for purposes such as education, employment, translation, and interest in Arab and Islamic civilization. This expansion has led to the adoption of various teaching methods aimed at facilitating the learning process and helping students achieve linguistic proficiency (Al-Hadibi & Ali, 2020).

Among the most prominent methods is the Grammar-Translation Method, one of the oldest instructional approaches, which relies on the learner's native language to explain grammatical rules and connect new knowledge with prior learning experiences through translation. In response to the limitations of this method, the Direct Method emerged, emphasizing the teaching of the target language directly without relying on an intermediary language (Zardoum & Rabiba, 2020).

In addition, the Reading Method focuses on developing language skills through the comprehension of written texts, decoding linguistic structures, acquiring vocabulary, and applying it in meaningful contexts. Meanwhile, the Audio-Lingual Method is based on the gradual development of language skills, beginning with listening, followed by speaking, and then progressing to reading and writing, in accordance with the natural sequence of language acquisition (Zardoum M. & Rabiba A., 2020).

Challenges

Teaching Arabic to non-native speakers in Algeria continues to face a number of challenges that affect the effectiveness of the educational process and the quality of its outcomes. One of the most significant challenges is the absence of a unified national reference framework that regulates learning levels and defines the required linguistic competencies. In addition, there is a pressing need to develop curricula and integrate modern digital tools that keep pace with contemporary developments in language education. There is also a need to train specialized teachers in the field of teaching Arabic to non-native speakers according to current international standards, thereby enhancing instructional performance and achieving the desired educational objectives. Nevertheless, Algeria possesses considerable academic, cultural, and human resources that qualify it to become an important regional center for the teaching and global dissemination of the Arabic language (Khatout & Misbah, 2019).

Among the difficulties facing the teaching of Arabic to non-native speakers is the tendency of some instructors to use local dialects rather than Modern Standard Arabic within the educational environment. This practice may negatively affect learners' acquisition of the standard language in its correct form. Educational institutions also suffer from a shortage of qualified specialists in the field of teaching Arabic as a foreign language. Furthermore, the limited use of Arabic outside the academic setting reduces opportunities for language practice and authentic communication among learners.

Other challenges include the continued reliance on traditional teaching methods based on memorization and rote learning, accompanied by limited implementation of modern approaches that emphasize interaction, communication, and the development of linguistic competencies. Learners are also influenced by their native languages during the process of learning Arabic, both in terms of pronunciation and grammatical structures, which may result in recurring language errors. These difficulties are further intensified by the nature of Arabic sounds, which are characterized by diversity and complexity, making their acquisition a process that requires intensive and sustained practice. In addition, many non-native learners rely on textbooks and curricula originally designed for native Arabic speakers, which often fail to address their specific linguistic and cultural backgrounds and their distinct educational needs.

Research Method

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive-analytical research design. The descriptive approach is employed to examine the current state of language policy and reference frameworks for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers in Algeria, while the analytical approach is used to interpret relevant policies, educational practices, and scholarly literature in order to identify existing challenges and opportunities for development.

The study relies on secondary data sources, including books, scientific articles, conference proceedings, official reports, policy documents, and reference frameworks related to language policy and the teaching of Arabic to non-native speakers. Particular attention is given to literature addressing Arabic language education in Algeria and international reference frameworks for language teaching.

Data were collected through document analysis. The researcher reviewed and analyzed relevant scientific articles, books, official reports, language policy documents, and reference framework publications related to the teaching of Arabic to non-native speakers. Particular attention was given to studies addressing language policy, Arabic language education, and reference frameworks at both national and international levels. The selected documents were examined and classified according to the main themes of the study, including language policy, reference frameworks, teaching practices, and challenges facing Arabic language education for non-native speakers in Algeria.

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The analysis involved reading and reviewing the selected documents, identifying recurring themes and patterns, categorizing the findings into major thematic areas, and interpreting the relationships between language policy and reference frameworks for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers in Algeria. The results were then synthesized to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current situation and to formulate recommendations for future development.

Result and Discussion

Result

1. Language Policy and Arabic Language Teaching in Algeria

The analysis revealed that Algeria has shown increasing interest in promoting Arabic language education for non-native speakers through universities and educational centers that attract international students. Language policy has contributed to strengthening the status of Arabic within the educational system and supporting programs dedicated to teaching Arabic to foreign learners.

2. Reference Frameworks for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers

The findings indicate that no unified national reference framework currently exists for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers in Algeria. Educational institutions adopt different curricula, proficiency levels, and assessment practices, resulting in variations in learning outcomes and educational standards.

3. Challenges in Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers

Several challenges were identified, including the use of curricula originally designed for native speakers, limited integration of digital technologies, reliance on traditional teaching methods, insufficient teacher preparation, and the influence of local dialects within the educational environment.

Discussion

1. Language Policy and Arabic Language Teaching

The findings indicate that Algeria has demonstrated increasing institutional interest in promoting Arabic language education for non-native speakers through universities and specialized educational centers. This reflects the strategic role of language policy in supporting the dissemination of Arabic and strengthening its international status. These findings are consistent with the views of Spolsky (2004) and Kaplan and Baldauf (1997), who argue that language policy plays a central role in shaping educational practices and language planning. However, despite these positive initiatives, the findings suggest that language policy has not yet been translated into a comprehensive national strategy that regulates Arabic language education for non-native speakers. This lack of coordination limits the effectiveness of existing educational programs and contributes to institutional inconsistencies.

2. Reference Frameworks for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers

One of the most significant findings of this study is the absence of a unified national reference framework for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers in Algeria. This finding supports previous research emphasizing that reference frameworks are essential for standardizing language proficiency levels, curriculum design, learning

outcomes, and assessment procedures. The findings are also consistent with the principles of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which has demonstrated the importance of unified standards in improving language education across different institutions. Without such a framework, educational institutions are likely to continue adopting different curricula and assessment systems, leading to variations in learners' language proficiency and educational quality.

3. Challenges in Arabic Language Teaching

The study identified several persistent challenges affecting Arabic language teaching for non-native speakers, including reliance on curricula designed for native speakers, insufficient teacher preparation, limited use of digital technologies, and continued dependence on traditional instructional approaches. These findings agree with previous studies that emphasize the need for learner-centered and communicative teaching methodologies in second-language education. The continued use of textbooks intended for native speakers may not adequately address the linguistic backgrounds and learning needs of foreign learners. Similarly, inadequate teacher training reduces instructors' ability to implement modern pedagogical practices effectively. Furthermore, limited integration of educational technologies restricts opportunities for interactive learning and authentic language practice, which are widely recognized as essential components of successful foreign language instruction.

4. Overall Interpretation

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Algeria possesses considerable academic and institutional potential for becoming a regional center for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers. Nevertheless, achieving this objective requires stronger alignment between language policy, curriculum development, teacher preparation, and assessment standards. The establishment of a unified national reference framework would contribute to improving consistency across educational institutions, enhancing instructional quality, and supporting learners in achieving internationally recognized language proficiency levels. Therefore, the successful development of Arabic language education in Algeria depends not only on expanding educational programs but also on adopting comprehensive educational policies that integrate international best practices with the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the Arabic language.

Conclusion

This study examined language policy and reference frameworks for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers in Algeria. The findings show that Algeria has made considerable efforts to expand Arabic language education for a growing number of international students, supported by significant academic, cultural, and human

resources. However, the absence of a unified national reference framework has produced disparities in curricula, teaching methods, and assessment across institutions. This problem is compounded by the continued use of materials designed for native speakers, reliance on traditional memorization-based instruction, a shortage of specially trained teachers, the influence of local dialects on the acquisition of Modern Standard Arabic, learners' difficulties with pronunciation and grammar, and the limited use of digital tools.

These findings imply that improving Arabic language education in Algeria requires a coordinated strategy. Policymakers should develop a national reference framework that standardizes proficiency levels, objectives, and assessment criteria. Curriculum developers should design materials suited to the linguistic and cultural needs of non-native learners. Institutions should promote communicative, learner-centered teaching, provide specialized teacher training, invest in digital learning environments, and encourage consistent use of Modern Standard Arabic. With these measures, Algeria could become a leading regional center for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers.

This study has several limitations. It relies on document analysis and literature review rather than primary data from teachers, learners, or administrators, and it focuses only on the Algerian context, which limits generalizability. It also does not evaluate the effectiveness of specific programs through classroom observation or quantitative measurement. Future research could use mixed-methods approaches, such as surveys, interviews, and classroom-based studies, to address these gaps.

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