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SUGGESTED APPROACHES TO THE TEACHING OF ARABIC FOR COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS IN AN L2 CONTEXT

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Abstract

Developmental process of learning in whatever form cannot be achieved except with a good grounding in one form of language or the other. So the claim of (Crystal 1976), that language as an instrument of development is universally acknowledged cannot be rubbished away. Since teaching entails knowing what and how to teach, communicative competence is very essential. Teaching Arabic as communication among its numerous admirers within and outside formal educational system is overviewed in this paper. This writer is of the opinion that through the communicative competence approach which contextualizes language teaching, the Arabic language can be taught as communication. With this approach, this writer believes that the learners should have felt involved in sensible learning and as Hazel Francis (1977) puts it, for both teacher and pupils, it ends, if anything has been learned, with newly constructed or modified skill and knowledge with extended or revised communication skill, and with altered perceptions of the self and the other. Thus, as puts by Yilzid et al (2024) emotional barriers effective teaching, methodologies, and course materials fostering holistic language development is emphasized.

Keywords:
Approaches, Communicative Skills, Second language Arabic, Teaching Methodology.

Introduction

The most vital means of human communication is language and language primary function is to communicate. (Lawal, 2000) opines that no matter the number of definitions of language we may consider, language is fundamentally a medium for the expression of ideas, thoughts, feeling, beliefs, opinions and attitudes of mind. Since

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language is a major means of communication, communication therefore is basic to learning. In the opinion of (Ogunsiji 2005), the use of language for communication is perceived as being important, so there is the need to present language as "language in use" and not merely as "language as rules". A situation whereby grammatical competence is emphasized at the expense of communicative competence spell doom to language teaching and learning, most especially in the second language learning programme. This communicative competence is described as performance dynamism by (Ogunsiji 2005) presupposes actual language users in defined situations. The implication of this for teaching is that teachers should combine both grammatical competence and communicative competence. This is because as (Ogunsiji 2005) explains language teaching should be contextualized because language does not occur in a vacuum. In other words, (Hymes 1971) posits that the world of linguistic theory in relation to teaching language has two parts: linguistic competence and linguistic performance. While the linguistic competence is understood as concerned with the tacit knowledge of language structure, the linguistic performance is most explicitly understood as concerned with the processes often tenne enending and decoding. In the analysis of Ogunsiji (2005) the trend in linguistic, description, especially in systematic Functional Linguistic is towards communicative functionalism. He stressed further that the act of mastering a language involves not only the ability to construct "correct" or "grammatical sentences but also the ability to use sentences and utterances appropriately. Meanwhile, the effectiveness of language acquisition for non-native speakers demands a focus on learners (Md Din et al 2023). According to them students' participation in the learning process is very vital in this regard.

Objectives for Teaching an L2/Foreign Language (FL)

Teaching an L2 or FL requires enormous task and its success when communicative teaching is employed depends largely on the quality and dynamism of the curriculum and syllabus, the quality of the teaching personnel, the availability and use of instructional materials, the duration or length of learners exposure to the language, the utility of the language and the learners' readiness to learn. (Ogunsiji 2005: 5). Oudeh (2021) opines that there is no doubt that the objectives of language teaching and learning are manifested as follows:

- To develop the learners' intellectual power via foreign language study.
- To increase the learners personal culture through the study of the great literature and philosophy to which it is the key.
- To teach the learner to read the foreign language with comprehension so that he/she may keep abreast of modern writing, research and information.

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- To increase the learners' understanding of how language functions and to bring him/her through the study of a foreign language, to a greater awareness of the functioning of his own language.
- To provide the leaner with skills which will enable him to communicate orally, and to some degree in writing, with native speakers the language and with people of other nationalities who have also learned this language
- To bring the learner to a greater understanding of people across national barriers by giving him/her a sympathetic insight into the ways of life and ways of thinking of the people who speak the language he/she is learning.

Approaches

According to (Lawal 1992), there is a general tendency of using 'approach', 'method' and 'technique'. The three though are inter-related but different in terms of their relative focus and status in the curriculum process. Lawal explained that approach can be described as a general teaching direction which is closely tied to theories of language and how it is learnt. (Ogunsiji 2005 and Lawal 2000) looked at Approaches to language teaching from different dimensions. Lawal (2000) in his own argument classify them into two under (i) formalist/structuralist approach and (2) Activist approach, while Ogunsiji seęs it from (1) traditional and (2) modem. According to him, subsumed under traditional are the structural approach, the prescriptive approach, the grammar translation approach e. t.c. F or the modern, there are drills approach, the direct method approach, the audio-lingual approach, the situational approach and recently, the communicative competence approach. Lawal's formalist category is tied on structural linguistic such that the teacher stresses rules and facts about language. This is basically a reliance on a deductive form of teaching, moving from statement of the rule to its application in the example. According to Lawal, the teacher may, for instance give a definition of a noun and then asks his learners to identify the nouns in a given sentence.... This approach thus, often becomes too preoccupied with a bookish elaboration of fine details of grammar to the detriment of learners' actual use of the target language for communication.

This traditional/formalist way of teaching is commonly used In the teaching of Arabic i Al-arahiyyah in most of our government secondary schools and private Arabic schools in Nigeria Arabic/Al-arabiyyah in these schools in recognized as foreign and its teaching is based purely on the Chomskyan transformational generative grammar. The Chomskyan theory emphasizes the structural of formal characteristics of language to the detriment of the use to which the structures and forms can be pat. In fact, most Arabic language textbooks whether local or foreign and as available in Nigeria market today designed and prepared using the traditional and generative grammar approach/style. Such books possess imposing titles like-Qawaid al-Jughah (Alanshiyyah (Arabic language Rules

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Grammar), Al-Nahw al-Wadik (Syntax made simple), al- nahw al Waft (Comprehensive Arabic grammar text) A typical example of such book authored in 2001 by Zafir et al is meaidul-hughatul-Arabia in this book, though passages are given to elucidate on topics treated emphasis is much given to grammar in such a way that grammatical terms were made topics under which explanation and illustrations were given At the bottom of the explanation rules of such grammatical topics are highlighted for the learners to memorize. So, because of the heavy emphasis on rules which leaners easily commit to memory, the tendency is that communicative competence in them is faulty. Hence, their usage of appropriate sentences utterances, phrase and other technicalities in Arabic language usage is found wanting in spite of their understanding the grammatical rules.

As much as being acquainted with rules of grammar, as claimed by traditionalists, is good, its sustainability largely depends on how the language is utilized especially the second language learning like Arabic in Nigeria.

Under Activist approach (Lawal 1992) advocates that learners should be exposed to the natural form of the target language after which he can deduce rules for himself. This opinion of Lawal by implication recognizes the importance of rules but not to the detriment of functional and utility aspect. If the latter is given serious consideration in learning Arabic or other foreign language, there would be active Participation by the learners and skills in them would be naturally developed. This will eventually give rise to fluent reading and original writing.

Except in few Arabic texts that are based purely on reading. Register, appropriate situation etc like al-Mutaala .....grammar base texts like al-Tuhfah al-Siniyyah where definitions of terms are given followed by example is predominant. Example of what we find in such book of teaching Arabic is

الحرف:

ما لا يصلح معه دليل الاسم ولا دليل الفعل. وأقول، يتميز الحرف عن أخويه الاسم والفعل بأنه دخول علامة من علامات الأسماء المتقدمة ولا غيرها لا يصح عليه كما لا يصح دخول علامة من علامات الأفعال التي سبق بيانها عليه.

مثاله:

(مِنْ) و (هَلْ) و (لَمْ) فهذه الكلمات الثلاث حروف لأنه لا تقبل "الـ" ولا التنوين ولا يجوز دخول حرف الخفض عليها الخ

Meaning:

Particle

He said: particle is any lexical item which does not take signs of either noun or verb. And I say: particle is quite different froln its sister group of lexical items by neither taking the sign of nouns or verbs mentioned earlier Examples of particles are "Min " "Hal" "Lam" These words are good example of particles/preposition and cannot take Alif and Lam (definite article,) nunation, and genitive particles. Hence, you cannot say al-min, Minun and ila

Min.....

By this system of teaching, knowledge of Arabic use cannot be adequately garnered resulting in unrealistic and ineffective learning acquisition. Arabic being a language of words with precise unquestionable meanings as well as multiple nuances, a language which can, in only a few words, addresses a very specific topic as well as conveys diverse meaning (Um Ya' qub online), need to be learnt through the communicative approach. With the communicative approach in teaching Arabic new words and idioms such as technological terms and other terms that are incorporated with the translation of European works of literature will be exposed to learners early enough in n their learning. More so, since language is not monolithic. functional/activist approach will further expose the learners of Arabic to the activities of purists who have concentrated on forming new words in Arabic forms to cover the modem vocabulary and the moslemist who for example adopted "telfinus" for telephone instead of "Hati-r as coined by purists. In addition in a second language learning situation, teaching Arabic by using communicative approach is extremely vital to understand the concepts behind important Arabic words which cannot be translated into a single English word. This is because more often than not, Arabic words have many different meanings, and to get a sensible meaning, one needs to look at the context in which the word appears. Hence (Ogunsiji 2005) opines that in a second language situation there is the need to define the situation as closely as possible and define the role the language is performing within it.

Procedure for teaching Arabic as Communication

Communication is defined by (Assuzu 1990) as all methods of conveying any kind of thought, feeling and attitude between person or persons. It is a process involving a shared code or codes of verbal and non-verbal symbols. But (Widdowson 1978) opines that communication only takes place when we make use of sentence to perform a variety of different sets of especially social nature. Among these as (Popoola 2003) explains include making statement of various kinds to express feelings and command, asking for or giving information.... And when this takes place, in the opinion of (Brumfit 1994), it is a creation of natural linguistic environment (Arazi et al 1998) quoting (Muhammad Al-Mubarak 1972) sees the peculiarity of Arabic as a language in communication in its two perspectives (uttered and written) as a wonderful instrument with which we transform what occur to our acaustic image to mental image or rather intellectual sense.

This notion implies that language is used to perform specific function in line with contextual situation that pre-supposes it. (Ogunbiyi 1981) explains that Arabic, as a functional language, possesses three basic components and these are Mufradat, annizam as- sawti and an- nizam al-Jumlah. However, system of situational context is given impetus due to the fact that the person who is aware of the context in which utterance is made

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can know the meaning. Teaching Arabic as communication can be broadly looked at in three ways: Arabic can be taught as a religious language, it can be taught to specialists and it can also be taught to Learners as a school subject.

(1) (Akhtar 1997) stresses that there is always a need to balance between the spiritual and material life. And for the "Muslims" all over the globe (Arab natives inclusive) learning standard Arabic for the acquisition of spiritual knowledge is of great necessity. The teaching of Quranic Arabic communicatively will afford its learners the ability to pronounce correctly, understand simplistic translation of Arabic Qur'an und abo-all avail them easy comprehension. By this, the Common problem of parrot-fashion learning-a situation where you sec people who can recite a portion of holy Qur'an in pure Arabic text but can neither comprehend nor give a simple translation will be reduced drastically. Hence, teaching standard Arabic as communication will enhance Muslims understanding of the messages contained in the Quranic Arabic and uplift their spiritual needs. According to (Akhtar 1997) even in the 21 Arabic speaking countries, the natives still need to refer to the Arabic Tafseer of Qur'an such as by ibn Kathir, Al-Tabari etc to fully comprehend Qur'an. This is because their colloquial Arabic cannot take them anywhere in understanding the Quranic Arabic. So since a Muslim living in any part of the world needs Arabic as his/her second language after his native language, its communicative teaching is highly recommended.

(2) Secondly, Arabic language can be taught to professionals. Teaching Arabic as communication to professionals will certainly help in the acquisition of effective communication skills as well as being acquainted with the language terms that are relevant to their professions. Oil exploiters, diplomats, Attaches etc are good example of those in this category.

(3) The third category is teaching Arabic as communication in the classroom environment within the school setting. (Ogunbiyi 1981) highlighted such methods as self-defining context, dramatization, use of real objects, pictures and sketches, Berbal definition et.c for teaching Arabic vocabulary in second language learning situation. This writer believes that some of these procedures can also be adopted in teaching Arabic as communication. In addition, in the opinion of (Ogunsiji 2005) worthwhile activities should be provided for the students to widen their experiences and expand their horizons. Of such according to him are fieldtrips and creation of pseudo-natural situations in the classroom e.g the bank, the court of law, the post office, transportation e.t.c

For example the teaching of interrogative noun can be thoroughly achieved and at the same time learners acquire terms that relate to Air traveling through the example below

AT THE AIRPORT **فى**

المطار

س : متى يحين موعد الرحلة القادمة الى

اليابان

When is the next flight to Japan?

ج :

س يحين موعد الرحلة القادمة غدا

:

The next fight is tomorrow **ج**

:

هل أَستطيع الحصول على ثلاثة تذاكر ؟

س

Can I get three tickets?

نعم

ج:

Yes

كم لي من فضلك بتذكرتين لراشدين وواحدة للطفل

س:

Could I have two tickets for two Adults and one for a boy؟

Yes **نعم**

ج:

متى ستقع الطائرة

س:

When will the plane take off?

ج : الساعة السادسة ونصف مساء

6:30pm

ما رقم بوابة العبور

س:

What is entrance number

سبعة عشر

ج :

أين مكتب الستعلامات؟

س:

Where is the screening office

هناك

ج :

There

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The teacher can also use self-defining context to teach basic language skills as well as communicative skills (Ogunbiyi 1981) giving example on this explains that when a teacher of Arabic as a second language enters the classroom and says "As-SSalam alaykum" and "ma'a as salamah" when he enters and leaves the classroom respectfully, the pupils without further explanation will pick it that the two are forms of greetings for meeting and leaving people respectively. Proficiency in communicative skills of learners can also be enriched by using simpler already known words to define complex words. In this situation, the teacher exposes meaning of strange word in such a way that the learners gasp it e.g الشارع = مكان يسير فيه الناس والسيارات.

الفراش = مكان الذي ينام فيه االناس

Similarly, reading andهخ comprehending ability will be enhanced in learners with the introduction of learners to purely Arabic text on comprehension such as al-qira, al- mutala 'ah and al-Nurus. This exposure will assist learners more in grasping different registers. More so, by teaching reading and comprehension peculiarities of Arabic as a semiotic language will become known to learners. Such peculiarity include the fact that Arabic could be regarded as very scientific language, in which the meaning of a word is based on its root, which usually consist of three letters. Hence, variations in shades of meaning are obtained first by vowelling the simple root, and secondly by the addition of prefixes, suffixes and in-fixes. So when learners are giving functional and active teaching in reading and comprehension they would ultimately have some grounding in Arabic to easily find the meaning of an Arabic word from its roots by consulting an Arabic English dictionary or lexicon. In addition, learners will also get familiar with the way some words change their meaning to the opposite side when followed by different preposition Al-huruf For example, the word Da'a دعا may mean wishing well or cursing if followed by the preposition (ل)or (على) respectively.

Conclusion

Teaching Arabic as communication is highly recommended for all the levels of acquisition as pointed and highlighted above. There is no doubt that for proper understanding of the Qur'an, a functional knowledge of Arabic as a second language is required by any Muslim. Learning Arabic as communication by professionals is of high premium for quick assimilation of terms that are required in their various fields. Although, the teaching of Arabic as communication is a demanding task, more demanding is itu teaching as communication in the classroom situation to pupils.

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