Evaluation of Arabic Language Teaching Textbooks Used in Russia in the Light of the CEFR Criteria

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Abstract

This study analyzed the textbooks titled "Arabic for Non-native Speaking Children", Level I by Zakirov, Mingazova, and Mukhametzyanov (2011), and "Arabic for Non-Native Speaking Children", Level II by Mingazova, Zakirov, and Mukhametzyanov (2013) which are used to teach Arabic as a foreign language (AFL) to elementary school children in Tatarstan. The textbooks were then evaluated in the light of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) criteria. Results showed that the textbooks do not meet the CEFR language teaching and learning criteria, as they focus on the reading and writing skills, not oral skills and communication. They focus on the Arabic alphabet letters and basic Arabic grammatical structures and categories. The words taught are selected based on whether they contain the alphabet letter under study, not on the basis of belonging to a certain semantic category. In addition, the textbooks have adopted a grammar-translation approach, not a communicative, functional approach. The study recommends restructuring the textbook aims, skills and subskills taught, language elements selected, syllabus design adopted, and language teaching approach followed so that focus is on learning Arabic for communication. The whole Arabic lesson should be conducted in Arabic (L2). The students should practice oral skills before they move on to reading and writing sentences and paragraphs. The form and meaning of the words and grammatical patterns should be taught together using real objects, drawings, gestures and dramatization. The textbooks should adopt a functional situational syllabus design and follow a communicative language teaching approach. Further details are given below.

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Introduction

Arabic is one of the six official languages of the United Nations, and it is the official language of the Arab League (AL), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the African Union (AU). It is the official language of 22 Arab countries extending from the Gulf States in the east to Morocco and Mauritania in the west. It is spoken by more than 422 million people as a mother tongue (UNESCO, 2012), and by millions of non-Arab Muslims as a second/foreign language (ASL/AFL). It is the fourth most spoken language in the world. In addition, Arabic is the language of the Holy Quran and Islam, and 1.5 billion Muslims say their prayers in Arabic. Therefore, thousands of non-Arab Muslim students learn it as an ASL/AFL. Furthermore, Arabic is important for international media, diplomacy and multinational companies in the fields of petroleum, construction, banking, commerce, tourism and others. Therefore, knowledge of Arabic is crucial for people working in those domains.

Many Arab countries offer Arabic language courses at numerous universities and institutions to secondary school and university students especially those from Islamic countries such as Iran, Turkey, Malaysia and Indonesia. Similarly, numerous institutions and universities in foreign countries such as the USA, UK, France, Russia, China and Korea offer Arabic language courses to non-native speaking students for different purposes, levels and durations. Different Arabic language teaching and learning programs, textbooks and teaching techniques are used by the different universities and institutions at Arab as well as foreign institutions.

According to the Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation (2010), about 14.5 million or 10% of the Russian population are Muslim, especially those in the Islamic republics of Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Ingushetia, Dagestan and Chechnya, and Muslims there would like to learn Arabic to be able to read the Quran. Currently, Arabic is offered as a major or as an elective course at numerous Russian Universities such as the University of Moscow, Lomonosov Moscow State University, St. Petersburg University, Moscow State Institute of International Relations, National Research University "Higher School of Economics", Peoples' Friendship University, Moscow State Linguistic University, Kazan Federal University and the Russian Islamic University in Kazan to name just a few.

Furthermore, Arabic is gaining more significance and is attracting more students especially after an Act issued by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation (2015), which mandates that secondary school students learn a second foreign language, in addition to English. In compliance with this Act, Arabic is the most prospective language to learn by Muslim students in Russia.

As for Tatarstan, being an Islamic republic, an interest in Arabic has always existed in the community. Tatar heritage is closely related to the Arabic language because centuries ago, Arabic letters were used in the Tatar writing system, and many Tatar scholars wrote their books in Arabic. Nowadays Kazan Federal University offers Arabic language courses, in addition to Arabic language courses offered to students at the secondary and elementary school levels.

A variety of Arabic language teaching textbooks are currently used at universities and schools in Russia, in general, and in Tatarstan, in particular. Many of those were written by Arabic language instructors at those institutions who are either native speakers of Arabic or Russian instructors who are L2 speakers of Arabic. An overview of some of the textbooks used for teaching and learning Arabic is of great importance, as it would shed some light on the skills and content taught and whether those textbooks fulfill the purpose for which they were written.

Literature review

The authors searched various websites and databases for studies that analyzed, evaluated, or compared textbooks used for teaching ASL/AFL to non-native speakers of Arabic at the elementary, secondary or college levels in Arab and foreign countries. The literature review has shown several studies that evaluated Arabic language teaching textbooks, in whole or in part. Only one study that compared the cultural content in AFL textbooks (not the textbook as a whole) to the To'eima (1985), ACTFL (American Council on Teaching of Foreign languages) and CEFR standards was found. In this study, Ali and Isa (2017) evaluated the cultural content of the textbook titled "Al-Arabiyya Bain Yadaik" based on the three standards. They found that the textbook's content matches most international evaluation standards, although some illustrations and modifications need to be made on its cultural content. They concluded that Arabic, American and European standards are important for evaluating the cultural content of the AFL teaching textbooks.

Another study conducted by Bin Chik, Ainul Farha and Abdul Rahman (2012) in Malaysia evaluated an Arabic for Specific Purposes (ASP) textbook titled "Advanced Media Arabic" by Lahlali (2008) based on To'eima's (1985) Arabic language textbook evaluation criteria. The researchers adopted 22 criteria out of To'eima's 29 criteria because of the specificity of the textbook evaluated. Findings indicated that the textbook has several weaknesses: (i) The Teacher's Guide does not provide guidelines, steps and amount of time needed for each unit; (ii) it is not designed to identify the different types of Arabic calligraphy; (iii) no illustrations that differentiate between Arabic and Islamic cultures are available. The textbook has few Arabic and Islamic cultural concepts integrated in it; (iv) few types of exercise and assessment sets are

included in the lessons; (v) few supplementary reading materials related to the topics are provided; and (vi) the textbook is not accompanied by a DVD or CD.

1. In further studies by Al-Suhaimi (2015), Al-Omari (2010), Dajani and Omari (2014), Al-Ofi (2015), Al-Ruwait'ee (2016), and Lewicka and Waszau (20017), the researchers developed their own criteria to assess the Arabic language teaching textbooks in whole or in part. For example, Al-Suhaimi (2015) evaluated reading textbooks (Level 3) for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers at the Arabic Language Institute, Islamic University of Madinah using an integrated approach. He defined integration as the organization and grading of the language learning material and presenting it as integrated skills rather than separate areas and unrelated pieces of information. His criteria covered clarity, accuracy, relevance, depth, integration, and logic. His findings showed that the textbook strongly meets the content clarity and accuracy criteria, meets the relevance and depth criteria to some degree, and poorly meets the integration and logic criteria. In another study, Al-Omari (2010) assessed the linguistic communication skills in the Level I Arabic language textbook used at the Arabic Language Institute, Islamic university of Madinah. His results indicated that the textbook meets 29.3% of the criteria related to communication skills, as the textbook content is not related to the objectives of teaching AFL at the institute, does not include exercises for using Arabic in communication situations, does not give the students a chance to practice listening, speaking and reading aloud, and there is no integration and no balance among the skills.

In Jordan, Dajani and Omari (2014) evaluated 3 textbooks for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers developed by the Language Center at the University of Jordan. Content analysis revealed that the textbook has been successful in helping students pass the elementary level Book I and II to reach the intermediate level in Book III. However, Book III contains numerous typographical errors that confuse the students. It also kept the same childish graphics used in Book I and II. The same exercises are repeated in every lesson: Comprehension questions, synonyms and antonyms, multiple choice, completion, correcting verbs, rearranging words and sentences. This repetition is boring for the students. Many reading texts like "A trip to Rum" and "Ibn Khaldoun" have a confusing sentence structure and there are sentences that do not follow grammatical rules. The information conveyed in the texts is not completely accurate, especially in the stories about Aqaba and the newspapers.

Moreover, two studies evaluated reading textbooks used for teaching non-native speaking students at the Arabic Language Institute, Islamic University of Madinah. In one study, Al-Ofi (2015) developed a tool consisting of 87 criteria in 9 major areas to assess the reading textbook. Results of the analysis revealed that the reading textbook meet reading criteria at various degrees: Textbook layout (70%), goals (68%), teaching approach (60,9%), activities and exercises (59.7%), content (57.7%), reading skills (54.7%),

assessment (47.3%), visual aids (34.3%%), additional resources (33.3%). Likewise, Al-Ruwait'ee (2016) assessed the Level II reading textbook in the light of critical reading skills. He found that the textbook meets some criteria, but not others. The criteria that the textbook meets are: distinguishing fact and opinion, distinguishing figurative and literal use of words, clarity of ideas and instructions, and clarity of style and content of comparison in the text. The criteria that the textbook does not meet are: Content accuracy, content restatement, connecting content with critical skills, inferring the frequency of common words in the text, lack of infrequent words in the text, judging the temporal and spatial occurrence of the events in the text, and the effect of critical reading on content comprehension.

Finally, Lewicka and Waszau (2017) analyzed three textbooks from Poland, France, and the USA to assess the extent to which cultural and regional knowledge is present in the textbooks. The researchers reported that each textbook includes larger or smaller components related to the customs and realities of the Arab World and native speakers of Arabic. However, the Ahlan wa Sahlan textbook, by Mahdi Alosh (2009) develops these issues in a comprehensive way and thus allows the best development of cultural competence in the learners.

The literature review has also showed numerous Arabic language teaching textbooks published in the last 2 decades in France, Poland, the USA and Russia such as Manuel D'arabe Litteral (Khalfalllah & Denooz, 2014); Manuel D'arabe Modern (Deheuvels, 2013); Arabic Language for Non-Native Speaking Children, Level I (Zakirov, Mingazova, & Mukhametzyanov, 2011); Arabic for Non-Native Speaking Children, Level II (Mingazova, Zakirov, & Mukhametzyanov (2013); Ahlan wa Sahlan (Alosh, 2009); Język arabski: Teksty i ćwiczenia "Arabic Language Texts and Exercises" (Abbas & Abbas, 2006); Uchebnick Arabskogo Yazyka "The Arabic Language Textbook" (Kovalev & Sharbatov, 1998); and others. However, no studies that analyzed and compared the textbooks that teach Arabic as AFL as a whole to the CEFR criteria were found. Therefore, this study aims to fill a gap in this area of research by analyzing, describing and comparing the textbooks used to teach Arabic as AFL to elementary school students in Tatarstan, Russia in the light of CEFR's Level I and II. Specifically, the study will analyze the Arabic for Non-Native Speaking Children, Level I textbooks by Zakirov, Mingazova and Mukhametzyanov (2011) and Arabic for Non-Native Speaking Children, Level II textbooks by Mingazova, Zakirov, and Mukhametzyanov (2013), Level II to identify the aims of the textbooks, the skills and subskills taught, syllabus design adopted, and language teaching and learning approach followed. Then the textbooks will be compared to CEFR to find out whether they meet the CEFR language teaching learning criteria in part or in full. The study will try to answer the following questions: (i) What are the aims of the Arabic for Non-native Speaking Children", Level I and Level II textbooks? (ii) Which skills and subskills are developed and practiced: Listening, speaking, reading and/or writing? Do the textbooks focus on recognition of speech sounds or auditory

comprehension, on pronunciation or oral expression, on word identification (decoding) or reading comprehension, and on penmanship, spelling or composing and written expression? How are the skills developed? (iii) What kind of syllabus design is adopted in the textbooks: Grammar (structural), notional (functional), situational, skill-based, task-based and/or content-based? (iv) Which language teaching approach is followed: Structural (Grammar-Translation and Audiolingual); Functional (Oral Approach, Situational Language Teaching, or Directed Practice); interactive (Direct Method, the Series Method, Communicative Language Teaching, Natural Approach, Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling, or Dogme language teaching)? (v) Do the Arabic for Non-Native Speaking Children, Level I and II textbooks meet the CEFR language teaching and learning criteria, in part or in full?

To answer the above questions, the CERF level that matches the two textbooks selected will be identified. The content of the following aspects of the textbooks will be analyzed: The aims of the textbooks, skills taught, syllabus design and language teaching and learning approach, then those will be compared with the CEFR criteria.

Comparison and evaluation of the Arabic for Non-Native Speaking Children textbooks used in Tatarstan with the CERF criteria will reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the textbooks in terms of their aim, language skills and content, syllabus design and language teaching and learning approach, especially because those books are the first unified AFL textbooks used all over elementary schools in Tatarstan. The study is also significant for teachers and textbook writers/developers, as it will show them which criteria they should take into consideration when writing or updating their textbooks, when choosing published ones, and when teaching AFL to achieve the desired learning outcomes. Moreover, defining criteria for effective AFL textbooks based on CEFR, learners' level, age and needs, relevance of the teaching approach, variety of tasks, and exercises, and interaction to develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills is crucial.

Theoretical framework

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was put together between 1989 and 1996 by the Council of Europe with the collaboration of many members of the teaching profession across Europe and beyond, as the main part of a project called "Language Learning for European Citizenship". It describes in a comprehensive way how language learners should learn a foreign language, in order to use it for communication, and which knowledge, and skills they have to acquire to be able to communicate effectively. It also describes the cultural context of the second/foreign language (L2) learnt and defines proficiency levels that measure students' progress at each stage of L2 learning, and on a life-long basis (Council of Europe, 2001 and European Parliament, 2013). CEFR defines 6 levels of L2 mastery as follows:

- A1 (basic user): The Breakthrough or Beginner level

- A2 (basic user): The Waystage or elementary level

- B1 (independent user): The Threshold or intermediate level

- B2 (independent user): The Vantage or upper intermediate level

- C1 (proficient user): The Effective Operational Proficiency or advanced level

- C2 (proficient user): The Mastery or proficiency level

The general listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills that beginning learners should acquire in the first two levels of CEFR are presented in Table 1 below. According to the European Parliament (2013), CEFR encourages authors and publishers of language textbooks and other course materials developers to take full account of the aspects of language use and competences presented in CEFR, to place them with reference to the CERF levels of language proficiency, and to give due consideration to the development of the learners' "plurilingual capacities". CEFR provides a common basis that would help elaborate language syllabi, curriculum guidelines, textbooks, examinations, and others across Europe.

Table 1. Summary of The General Skills to Be Developed in Levels A1 and A2 of CEFR

Levels	General Skills Acquired in a Foreign language			
	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
1	Can follow speech which is very slow and carefully articulated, with long pauses for him/her to assimilate meaning	Can produce simple mainly isolated phrases about people and places	Can understand very short, simple texts, a single phrase at a time, picking up familiar names, words and basic phrases and rereading as required	Can write simple isolated phrases and sentences
2	Can understand phrases and expressions related to areas of most immediate priority (e.gs. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment), provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated	Can give a simple description or presentation of people, living or working conditions, daily routines, likes/dislikes…etc. as a short series of simple phrases and sentences linked into a list	Can understand short, simple texts containing the highest frequency vocabulary, including a proportion of shared international vocabulary items	Can write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like 'and', 'but' and 'because'

To find out whether the *Arabic for Non-Native Speaking Children*, *Level I and II* textbooks used in Tatarstan meet the CEFR criteria, the levels that match both textbooks were identified. It was found that the Levels I and II textbooks match the CEFR Levels A1 (Breakthrough/beginner) and A2 (Waystage/elementary). To meet the CEFR criteria, the textbooks should be characterized by the following:

1) The aim of the curriculum should be to communicate in L2. Focus should be on all four skills: Auditory and reading comprehension and oral and written expression.

2) The syllabus should be a combination of notional/functional, situational and skills-based syllabi that focus on the following:

   - Teaching language that occurs in situations, i.e., real-life situations in which people communicate and teaching the notions and their corresponding functions such as phrases and expressions about basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment, short simple directions, instructions, messages, simple notices, simple informational material, simple descriptions with visual support, description or presentation of people, living or working conditions, daily routines, likes/dislikes, describing him/herself, what he/she does and where he/she lives.

   - Developing all the language skills: Listening, speaking, reading and writing short phrases and simple sentences.

   - Teaching highest frequency vocabulary, including a proportion of shared international vocabulary items such as familiar names, words and very basic phrases about people and places, phrases and sentences about themselves and imaginary people, where they live and what they do, a short series of simple phrases and sentences linked into a list, writing a series of simple phrases and sentences connected 'and', 'but' and 'because', reading familiar names, words and basic phrases, and very short, simple texts.

3) The language teaching approach should focus on functional and communicative language learning and teaching. No translation, no direct teaching and no explanation of grammatical categories, structures and rules in the students' native language should be used. In these two levels, focus should be on the use of language in real situations, through the interaction with each other and with the teacher in a simple way. They ask and answer simple questions about themselves, where they live, people they know, and things they have; initiate and respond to simple statements in areas of immediate need, on very familiar topics and through the use of L2 in and out of class. Learners

converse about personal experiences, and the teacher teaches topics outside of traditional grammar, in order to promote language skills in all types of situations (See Table 1 above).

Methodology

1. Sample

The present study will analyze the Arabic for Non-native Speaking Children, Level I textbook by Zakirov, Mingazova, and Mukhametzyanov (2011), and the Arabic for Non-Native Speaking Children, Level II textbook by Mingazova, Zakirov, and Mukhametzyanov (2013). The Level I textbook is used for grade 5 and the Level II textbook is used for grade 6. The textbooks aim to give minimum knowledge of Arabic pronunciation, decoding, penmanship, spelling, vocabulary and grammar to enable Russian/Tatar 5th and 6th grade children to read and write in Arabic. Each level consists of: (i) a Student's book, (ii) a Workbook, and (iii) a Teacher's book. Two hours a week are allocated to the teaching of Arabic to Russian elementary school children, with a total of 34 hours per semester and 68 hours over the whole academic year. Below is a description of each textbook.

Student's Book I

It consists of 128 pages (page size is 29.5 x 21 cms) and has 60 lessons, each of which introduces one letter from the Arabic alphabet, and new words with exercises. The new words are associated with pictures that illustrate the meaning. The letters of the Arabic alphabet together with the long vowels and short vowel, nunation and gemination diacritics are covered in 44 lessons. Letters are taught in the lessons according to their order in the Arabic alphabet. Lessons do not necessarily start on a new page. The remaining 16 lessons cover the following grammatical structures and categories: Feminine and masculine with final suffix تاء مربوطة, singular, dual and plural formation, independent and clitic pronouns, demonstratives, coordination with 'and', question word ما (what), the definite article ال التعريف, nominal sentences vs modified noun, question word من (who), adjectives, and prepositions. They also cover names of professions, color words and numbers. Here, each is explained in Russian with few examples given. Lesson 45 focuses on stress in monosyllabic, disyllabic and trisyllabic words. Only in Lesson 59, that the students read a text titled "At the Library" consisting of short sentences containing prepositions.

The typical lesson in Student's Book I introduces 8 new words with 8 pictures with a total of 388 words and 431 pictures (See Tables 2 and 3).

All the lessons in Student's Book I contain exercises for practice. The typical lesson contains 6 exercises and a total of 333 exercises in the whole textbook (See Table 4) below.

A review lesson follows the lessons that cover a set of similar letters in the preceding lessons. There are 10 review lessons (6, 10, 15, 22, 27, 32, 36, 37, 38 & 60). In Lesson 37, all alphabet letters are reviewed. In Lesson 38, emphatic and plain consonants غ ذ ز ظ ث س ض ت ط هـ ح خ ع are reviewed. Lesson 60 (last lesson) is a review of the all the lessons in the whole book.

Table 2. Words in Level I and II Student's Book and Workbook.

	Pages	N	Mean	Median	Range	Total
Student's Book I	128	60 lessons	6.47	8	0-21	388
Student's Book II	144	27 lessons	13.4	14	0-32	362

Table 3. Pictures in Level I and II Student's Book and Workbook.

	Pages	N	Mean	Median	Range	Total
Student's Book I	128	60 lessons	7-18	8	0-32	431
Student's Book II	144	27 lessons	11	8	0-54	302

Table 4. Exercises in Level I and II Student's Book and Workbook.

	Pages	N	Mean	Median	Range	Total
Student's Book I	128	60 lessons	5.5	6	1-9	333
Workbook I	80	60 lessons	2.7	3	2-5	162
Student's Book II	144	27 lessons	3.2	3	1-6	87
Workbook II	64	27 lessons	5	5	3-9	137

Workbook I

It consists of 80 pages (page size is 20 x 28.5 cms), and contains 60 lessons corresponding to the 60 lessons in Student's Book I. In workbook I, the students do further exercises to practice the pronunciation and writing of the letter under study, in addition to vocabulary and new grammatical categories. Several exercises are included in each lesson. The typical lesson contains 3 exercises with a total of 162 exercises in the whole Workbook (See Table 4).

At the end of the Workbook I, a word list is appended. It contains 400 words (including plural forms) with their Russian equivalents and pronunciation of the singular and plural forms. Twenty-seven texts between 70-100 words long are also appended. No reading passages were included in the lessons throughout the textbook.

Teacher's Guide I

Teacher's Guide I consists of 48 pages. It gives the teacher instructions on how to teach each lesson. All instructions are in Russian, not Arabic. Briefly, Teacher's Guide I gives the following: The lesson goal, giving the students an idea about Arabic culture, Arab countries, Arab people, show students the Arabic alphabet, diacritics, advising students to use a mirror while pronouncing the letters and words, pronouncing the letters and having the students repeat after her, which visual aids to use (students' book, map of the Arab world, the workbook), explaining the vowels, the students practice the vowels in the book, giving students homework, reviewing the previous lesson before starting a new lesson, having students summarize what they have studied, and having students talk about their homework.

Student's Book II

As in the Level I textbooks, the Level II textbooks consist of 3 books: Student's Book II, Workbook II and Teacher's Guide II. Student's Book II consists of 144 pages (page size is 21x 29 cms) and has 27 lessons. The lessons cover names of all Arab countries, some simple and compound Arabic Proper Nouns, names of 8 fruits and 8 vegetables, names of animals and numbers. In addition, the lessons cover the following grammatical categories and structures: Parts of speech, derivation, masculine and feminine forms of nouns and adjectives, masculine and feminine, definite and indefinite forms, the nominative case, nunation diacritic with ضمة, فتحة, and كسرة, sound plural, irregular plural, nominal sentences, prepositions, the genitive, interrogative sentences, dual and plural demonstratives, singular, dual and plural independent and clitic pronouns, general information about verbs, Past Tense Verbs + ما, Present Tense Verbs + لا, Future Tense Verbs with سوف, Imperative Verbs, and negative particles ما لم لا سوف لا لن.

There are 3 review lessons in Student's Book II (8, 13, & 27), each of which follows a group of lessons that cover a set of grammatical structures and categories. In Lesson 27, which is the last lesson, adjectives, relative adjectives, the nominative, accusative and genitive case, dual, plural, and interrogative sentences are reviewed. Students do extra exercises as in Student's Book I.

The typical lesson in Student's Book II introduces 14 words, with a total of 362 words in all the lessons. Words in a typical lesson are associated with 8 pictures, and a total of 302 pictures in the whole book. As in Student's Book I, each lesson in Student's Book II contains a number of exercises. The typical lesson in Student's Book II contains 3 exercises with a total of 87 exercises in the whole book (See Table 4).

Workbook II

Workbook II consists of 64 pages (page size is 20.5 x 28.5 cms.) and contains 27 lessons corresponding to the 27 lessons in Student's Book II. It provides additional exercises for students to do at home. The typical lesson in Workbook II contains 5 exercises with a total of 137 in the whole workbook.

At the end of Workbook II, there are 7 Reading texts (36-70 words long), and a word list consisting of 700 words with the plural forms.

Teachers Guide II

Teacher's Guide II consists of 60 pages. Instructions and guidelines for the teacher are similar to those in Teacher's Book I. All instructions in the guide are in Russian as well.

2. Instrument:

To find out whether the Arabic for Non-native Speaking Children, Level I and II textbooks meet the CEFR criteria, content analysis of the textbooks under study will be carried out as follows:

1) To identify the aims of the textbooks, the front matter of the textbooks, as well as the Teacher's Guides will be examined.

2) To identify the skills and subskills developed, the content taught and what is practiced in the exercises in all the lessons in Student's Book I and II and in Workbook I and II will be examined. The lesson content will also be examined to find out whether the focus is on recognition of speech sounds or auditory comprehension, on pronunciation or oral expression and production, on word identification (decoding) or reading comprehension, and on penmanship, spelling or composing and written expression.

3) To identify the type of syllabus design adopted in the textbooks, 6 types of syllabi were identified, each of which is defined below:

   (i) Structural (formal) or grammatical syllabus: It consists of a collection of grammatical forms and structures such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositions, demonstratives, tenses, questions and others, selected and graded in terms of simplicity and complexity (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Nunan, 1988).

(ii) Notional/functional syllabus: It consists of a collection of the functions that are performed when an L2 is used in real-life situations in which people interact and communicate, or of the notions that language is used to express such as greeting someone, congratulating, informing, agreeing, apologizing, requesting and others. For purposes of classroom teaching, a real-life situation is selected as a "notion," and corresponding functions are selected to teach to the students to enable them to communicate in that situation in the classroom (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

(iii) Situational syllabus: It consists of a collection of real or imaginary situations in which an L2 is used. A situation usually involves several participants who are engaged in some activity in a specific setting. It aims to teach the language that occurs in the situations such as playing, eating at a restaurant, seeing the dentist, complaining to the teacher, buying a book at the bookstore, shopping, meeting a new student, and so on (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

(iv) Skill-based syllabus: It aims to help students develop a specific language skill. It is a collection of specific abilities, i.e. things that people must be able to do to be competent in L2. It groups linguistic competencies such as auditory discrimination, pronunciation, reading, writing, vocabulary and grammar together into generalized types of behavior, such as listening to spoken language for the main idea, answering the phone, reading to answer specific questions, writing a paragraph, engaging in a conversation and so on. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

(v) Task-based syllabus: It is structured around a series of tasks. Tasks are activities with a purpose. They integrate language and other skills in specific settings of language use, such as conducting an interview, going on a picnic, celebrating holidays, solving a problem, applying for a job, playing a game, what they do in their spare time, and others. The language learnt comes out of the linguistic demands of the activity (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

(vi) Content-based-syllabus: It aims to teach some content or information using L2 that the students are learning such as learning a science, psychology or geography class in L2, with linguistic adjustment made to make the content learnt more comprehensible. The students simultaneously learn L2 and content in as specific subject area. The subject matter is primary and L2 learning occurs incidentally to content learning in that subject area. Content teaching is not organized around L2 teaching, but vice-versa (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

4) To Identify the foreign language teaching approach followed in the textbooks, 6 major approaches were selected and are defined below:

i.   Grammar-translation: It is a traditional method of teaching in which students learn and memorize grammatical rules, then apply those rules by doing grammar drills and translating structures from L2 to L1 and vice versa. Grammar–translation classes are usually conducted in the students' L1. More attention is paid to the form of the sentences being translated than to their content. The students do not usually practice listening or speaking, and very little attention is paid to pronunciation or any communicative skills (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

ii.   Synthetic language teaching strategy: It is a teaching strategy in which the different language components are taught separately and step by step, so that acquisition is a process of gradual accumulation of the components until the whole language structure is built up (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Wilkins, 1976).

iii.   Audio-lingual Method: In this method, students are taught L2 directly, without using their L1 to explain new words or L2 grammar. The teacher drills students in the use of grammar. He/she presents the correct model sentence and the students repeat it. The teacher presents new words for the students to mimic the same structure. Grammar is not explicitly taught: Everything is memorized in form. The students practice a particular structure until they can use it spontaneously. The lessons are built on static language drills in which the students have little or no control on their own output in L2 (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

iv.   Direct Method: It is based on the association between a word, phrase or sentence and its meaning through the use of objects, pictures, demonstration, dramatization, video clips and other aids without using the student's native language. Teaching focuses on developing oral skills. In addition, the direct method is characterized by: (i) Teaching grammar inductively; (ii) focusing on the spoken language; (iii) focusing on question-answer patterns; (iv) using L2 only. No translation, and no explanation of structures and meanings are provided; (v) oral practice helps in reading and writing (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

v.   Functional Approach: Here, focus is on the use of language in real situations (performance), as well as underlying knowledge (competence) (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

vi.   Communicative Language Approach (CLT): The goal of this method is to develop the students' ability to communicate in L2. The learners learn and practice L2 through the interaction with each other and with the teacher, and through the use of L2 in and out of class. The students are encouraged to incorporate their personal experiences into their language learning environment, and the teacher teaches topics not related to traditional grammar, to

enhance language skills in all types of situations. It develops sound oral/verbal skills prior to reading and writing (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

3. Content Analysis

To find out whether the Arabic for Non-native Speaking Children, Level I and II textbooks meet the CEFR criteria, the authors went through each book page by page and line by line and analysed the following: (i) Front matter of the textbooks; (ii) aims of the textbooks; (iii) new words in each lesson; (iv) new grammatical structures in each lesson; (v) exercises and what they focus on; (vi) review lessons and what they focus on; (vii) reading texts; (viii) back matter of the textbooks; (ix) language (Arabic or Russian) used for the lesson title, lesson number, explanation, instructions and so on.

The type of syllabus design adopted in the textbooks was identified by examining the following: (i) Which skills are selected: listening, speaking, reading and/or writing? Which subskills are selected: Recognition of speech sounds or auditory comprehension, pronunciation or oral expression, decoding or reading comprehension, and penmanship, spelling or composing; how the skills are graded; (ii) what kind of words are selected and how they are grouped and graded; (iii) which grammatical structures are selected and how they are ordered? Are functions taught? (iv) how many reading passages, their themes, length in words and kinds of reading tasks.

The language teaching approach was identified by examining the following: (i) aims of textbook; (ii) how skills and subskills are presented, drilled and practiced; (iii) how new words are presented, drilled and practices; (iv) how grammatical structures are presented, drilling and practiced; (v) visual aids used in teaching Arabic.

4. Validity and Reliability

To validate the instrument used for analyzing the textbook components, it was submitted to four Arabic language and education professors at King Saud University together with the CEFR A1 and A2 language teaching and learning criteria to judge its suitability and practicality for analyzing the content of the textbooks. Their views and comments were taken into consideration in revising and modifying the components of the instrument.

To validate the textbook and lesson analysis, two samples of 7 lessons from the Level I textbook and 4 lessons from the Level II textbooks were selected and submitted to two Arabic language professors at the Arabic Language Institute at King Saud University and Umm Al-Qura University. The two professors were

asked to analyze the lessons in the light of: The language skills, language elements, syllabus design and L2 language teaching approach using the same definitions given in the instrument above. Then the authors' analysis of the textbooks was compared with those of the two assessors, and the percentage of agreement was computed. There was a 98% agreement, and the points of disagreement were resolved by discussion.

5. Statistical Analysis

The authors counted the following: (i) new words taught in each lesson and in each textbook including singular and plural and masculine and feminine forms which were counted as separate words; (ii) grammatical structures and categories taught; (iii) pictures; (iv) number of exercises in each lesson and in the whole textbook; (v) number of reading passages and length of each in words. The mean, median, range and total number of words, pictures, and exercises in each book and each level were computed.

Results of the textbook content analysis especially the aims of the textbooks, the types of skills and subskills developed, the type of syllabus design, and type of teaching approach followed were analyzed and are reported qualitatively.

Results

1. Skills and Subskills Taught

 Content analysis of the Arabic for Non-Native Speaking Children, Level I and II textbooks revealed that the textbooks focus on the reading and writing skills and on mastering the basics of mechanics, spelling, Arabic grammatical structures and categories, and decoding words, short phrases and short sentences in isolation. There is no focus on listening comprehension and speaking for communication, no teaching of the language used in real-life situations at all, no reading comprehension, and no written expression (composing) even at the sentence level.

2. Textbook Syllabus Design

Results of the content analysis of the lessons in the Arabic for Non-Native Speaking Children, Levels II and II textbooks has shown that focus is on the Arabic alphabet letters and basic Arabic grammatical structures and categories. This means that the textbooks have adopted a synthetic and structural (grammatical) type of syllabus design. In the first 44 lessons of Student's Book I, all the consonant letters, long vowel letters and short vowel diacritics are covered. The last 16 lessons in Student's Book I and student's Book II cover grammatical structures and categories (See Sample above). Pronouns, demonstratives and question words are introduced towards the end of Student's Book I (in Lessons 47, 48, 53 and 55 respectively) and

questions are introduced in Level II. Grammatical categories and structures selected are randomly ordered. They are not organized in terms of the most frequently used syntactic patterns, nor question-answer format such as أربعة؟ كم كتابا لديك؟ لونه أزرق. لونه...؟ ما لون. ما هذا؟ هذا كتاب. ما هذا؟ اسمس ريما. ما اسمك؟ No Arabic functions used in daily conversation such as شكرا، عفوا، من فضلك، صباح الخير، تفضل، ما اسمك، اسمي كذا، مرحبا، أهلا وسهلا، مع السلامة، الى اللقاء، بالعافية، سلامتك، آسف، بالهناء والشفاء are taught.

Vocabulary Selection and Grading

The words taught in each lesson are a random collection of words. They are selected based on whether they contain the alphabet letter under study in word-initial, -medial and -final positions, not on the basis of belonging to a certain semantic category. For example, the following words are taught in Lesson 17 رِيْشْ شَمْعَة شَمْسِيَّة شَمَنْدَرْ مِشْمِشْ شَاجِنَ شَمَّاعَة شَوْكَة as they contain the letter ش /sh/ and هَاتِفْ هَاوُنْ أَبُو الْهَوْلُ مُهَنْدِسْ هَرَمْ هِلَالْ هُدْهُدْ هِلْبْ are taught in Lesson 33 as they contain the letter هـ /h/. In teaching feminine adjectives, small, big, long, tall, strong, active, red, yellow, deaf were selected randomly and taught together in one lesson. It is clear that the words are not semantically related; some are not concrete; and are not selected from high frequency words in Arabic as in active and deaf. This is true of most words in most of the lessons in both textbooks. Some words such as هلب are unfamiliar for even native-speaking children or older students. Words selected are not related to children's daily life, and concrete objects in their immediate environment. Certain vocabulary categories such as clothes, meals, days of the week, months, means of transportation, drinks, games, child's room, and classroom objects are not taught at all. In addition, words taught in the lessons are randomly order. For example, the children are taught colors, names of animals, fruits, vegetable and numbers in Student's Book I.

Pronunciation

Students are taught names of the Arabic alphabet letters, and how they are put together in words. In Lesson 38, emphatic and plain consonants ث س ض ص ت ط هـ ح خ ع غ ذ ز ظ are reviewed all together in one lesson, after all the alphabet letters were taught, rather than comparing and contrasting a pair of plain and emphatic consonants per lesson and across several lessons, using minimal pairs. The children are taught stress rules in monosyllabic, disyllabic and trisyllabic words, although the concept of stress is too abstract and too advanced for children.

Reading Texts

The students mostly read and practice single letters, single words, and few phrases and sentences. They only read a paragraph for the first time in Lesson 59 in Student's Book I. The text is titled "At the Library",

and it consists of short sentences containing prepositions. Twenty seven texts appear all at once in the appendix of Workbook I, and 7 texts appear all at once in the appendix of Workbook II. No comprehension questions following each text are included. The words used in those texts are not even related to the words covered in the lessons.

Writing

Students learn to form/copy the letter shapes, how to write consonant letter with long vowels and short vowel, gemination and nunation diacritics, how to connect letters together to form words, and how to write words and phrases in isolation from memory (spelling).

Linguistic Errors in the Textbooks

The two textbooks contain numerous linguistic mistakes such as: (i) Use of faulty nomenclature (grammatical term forms) as in saying اقسام الكلمة instead of أقسام الكلام, الاسم الموصوف instead of اسماء العلم. (ii) Under the Parts of Speech, some words that are not nouns are listed under nouns (جميلة أنتم); some words that are not verbs were listed under verbs (جالس، مكتوب معرفة، دراسة); some words listed under particles are not particles (تحت، خلف). (iii) Use of words that are not derived words as in (مرجل، رجل)); use of faulty derivatives such as كاتبة instead of آلة كاتبة; and use of invented derivatives not used in Arabic (فرنسوي). (iv) Use of invented singular forms not used in Arabic (الطماطمة، الشمندرة، البطاطسة). (v) Use of nonsense words not used in Arabic: ((مشربة، صافر، بلغة، شوربا، غاسول. (vi) Atypical use of the future tense such as سوف لا نفهم, instead of لن نفهم. (vii) Adding the definite article to names of fruits, vegetables and animals when used in isolation under pictures. (viii) Faulty use of preposition باء with حقيبتين، جملين، طفلين in Lesson 9, in Student's Book II.

3. Language Teaching and Learning Approach Followed

3.1 Presentation

Content analysis of the lessons in the Level I and II textbooks showed that the grammar-translation method is extensively used throughout the textbooks starting from Lesson I in Student's Book I. The textbooks focus on teaching the Arabic grammatical structures and categories using traditional Arabic grammatical terminology. In presenting and practicing the language, the textbooks depend only on translation and explanation in Russian. In Lesson 1, the textbook authors use Russian to tell the students about the number of letters in the Arabic alphabet, the direction of reading and writing in Arabic, and that each letter has several shapes. In each subsequent lesson, the lesson number and title are given in Arabic and Russian, too. The pronunciation of the Arabic consonant and vowel letter under study, the pronunciation of consonants with long vowel letters and

short vowel diacritics are explained in Russian. The equivalent Russian letter or letter combinations of each is given. Each word is associated with a picture. The letter shapes in word-initial, -medial and -final positions are shown, with word-examples showing the letter in different positions with pronunciation of the words transliterated in Russian. The letter under study is highlighted in the words in red.

In Student's Book II, focus is on single words in isolation (without context). The new item is presented by showing examples sometimes arranged in a table. Grammatical concepts are explained in Russian. Examples of Parts of Speech, masculine and feminine forms of nouns and adjectives, and definite and indefinite forms are displayed. Dual nouns in the nominative, accusative and genitive cases with inflectional endings are marked in red.

3.2 Drilling and Practice

Student's Book I and II and Workbook I and II use the following types of exercises for drilling and practices:

• Translation exercises: Translation is the main drilling and practice task in all the lessons in the two textbooks. In Level I the students translate words, numbers, demonstratives, adjectives, pronouns, prepositions, color names, prepositional phrases in isolation, phrases, coordinated nouns, questions and their answers, genitive, nouns + adjectives, nominative sentences, short sentences, a short text, masculine and feminine forms from Arabic to Russian and vice versa. In Level II, they translate 3 short texts, coordinated words and nouns coordinated with /w/, words in the dual form, nominal sentences, definite and indefinite words and short sentences. Even instructions to exercises are given in Russian.

• Transliteration exercises: Here, the students convert single Arabic words, definite and indefinite forms, and coordinated nouns transliterated in Russian to Arabic script. They translate words transliterated in Russian to Arabic then change them to dual and plural forms. They sort out words transliterated in Russian into definite and indefinite, masculine and feminine and others, rather than sorting out words written in Arabic script.

Grammar and Vocabulary Practice

• Recognition exercises such as identifying adjectives in a group of words and identifying the word that does not belong in a row of words.

• Classification/categorizing exercises in which students sort out words into definite and indefinite, masculine and feminine; sort out proper nouns into simple and compound; sort out words with the

definite article into lunar and solar /al/; and sort out words according to the root the word is derived from.

- Matching exercises in which the students match a consonant with a word that contains it, words with pictures with the help of the teacher, adjectives with their opposites, independent pronouns with their equivalent clitic pronouns, clitic pronouns with their equivalent independent pronouns, and matching prepositions, and color words in Russian and Arabic.

- Transformation exercises that require the students to change single words, coordinated nouns, words referring to professions and adjectives from masculine to feminine, definite to indefinite, singular to dual or plural, and from plural to singular; changing words associated with pictures from masculine to feminine; and changing nouns to relative adjectives and relative adjectives to nouns.

Listening Practice

- Speech sound recognition exercises in which the students underline the stressed syllable in Arabic words written in Arabic script and in words transliterated in Russian; and underline the word that contains a letter shared in rows of 4 words each. There is no minimal pair practice provided.

- Listening comprehension: There is no listening comprehension exercises even at the question-answer level.

Speaking Practice

- Production of speech sounds exercises: The students only practice phoneme-grapheme relations and pronounce mostly single words, some phrases and few short sentences in isolation. The teacher pronounces the letters and words and the students repeat after her. Students practice pronouncing single words and coordinated words, reading words with اللام الشمسية والقمرية out loud, pronouncing the name of pictures, and pronouncing words transliterated in Russian and converting them to Arabic script.

- Oral expression: The students do not practice any speaking, not even at the phrase level. They only talk about what they have learnt about Arabic, and they summarize what they have studied in Russian. There is no question-answer practice such as what's your name, what color is ...? Where is…? What do you do in the morning? What do you do in the classroom?

Reading Practice

- Decoding Exercises in which the students read letters, words and phrases after the teacher; read the new consonant letter with all the vowels and with consonant letters studied in the previous lessons; read single words containing the consonant letters studied; read words in a table with 6-9 words in each row; read words arranged in rows with 4 derivatives in each row; and read 3 short texts titled - التعرف عائلتي - شقتي.

- Reading comprehension: the students only read letters, single words and phrases in isolation. There are 3 texts in Book II that students read and translate. Although numerous texts are appended to Workbook I and II, those texts have abstract topics, contain words that the students did not study in the whole book, are not accompanied by pictures to help the students comprehend them, and are not followed by comprehension questions. Words and sentences studied are not put together in sentences grouped in a meaningful way throughout the textbooks.

Writing Practice

- Copying exercises in which students copy the new consonant letter, consonant letters with vowels and diacritics in isolation. They copy the different shapes of a letter with the vowels, copy each emphatic and plain consonant in their detached form in isolation and in words, copy the different shapes of الهمزة in isolation (not in a word), copy new words, such as numbers and color words, and write the names of pictures underneath them (spelling).

- Completion exercises: The students add a missing consonant letter in word with and without pictures; fill in gaps with prepositions, pronouns, color words, adjectives after nouns, nouns before adjectives, and nouns before color words; complete questions and answers; and fill in a short paragraph with prepositions.

- Production (spelling) exercises: Here the students write letters, phrases, or sentences in isolation from memory such as: Writing each alphabet letter in its detached forms one by one; writing words under pictures from memory; writing a word for each of the given letters; giving examples of coordinated indefinite nouns; answering yes/no questions with هل; writing the root shared by derived forms and derived forms from a root; write the indefinite form for definite nouns; writing names of countries under flags, names of animals from 2 pictures in the definite and indefinite forms; writing the dual forms for pictures; and writing words that match given numbers.

- Composing: the students do not do any composing exercises such as writing short, easy sentences related to a familiar topic, or sentences that describe a person, picture, an object or describe daily routine. They are only asked to write single words related to school.

4. Do the Textbooks Meet the CERF Criteria

Results of the detailed content analysis of the Arabic for Non-Native Speaking Children, Level I and II textbooks reported above show that the textbooks do not meet the CERF criteria at all, as they focus on teaching reading and writing only, not oral skills (listening and speaking), and on mastering Arabic grammar rules and mechanics, not communication in daily, real-life situations. Grammar-translation is extensively used in each lesson in both textbooks. Words and structures are practiced mechanically in isolation, not in meaningful contexts related to the children's every-day life.

Discussions

Findings of the content analysis of Arabic for Non-native Speaking Children, Level I (Zakirov, Mingazova, & Mukhametzyanov, 2011), and Arabic for Non-Native Speaking Children, Level II (Mingazova, Zakirov, & Mukhametzyanov, 2013) used in the Tatarstan elementary schools showed that the textbooks do not meet the CEFR language teaching and learning criteria, neither in their syllabus design, nor language teaching approach followed. They have many weaknesses such as focusing on reading and writing and ignoring the listening and speaking skills, following a grammar-translation approach, and focus on grammatical forms and structures, not communication.

Findings of the present study are consistent with findings of prior studies such as Al-Suhaimi (2015) and Al-Omari (2010), which analyzed Arabic language teaching textbooks at the Arabic Language Institute, Islamic University of Madinah and found that those textbooks meet only 29.7% of the integrated curriculum criteria and meet the communicative criteria to some extent. Similarly, textbooks in the present study do not follow an integrated and communicative approach, as the language elements at the lesson level, and across the two textbook levels, i.e., horizontally and vertically, are taught separately. There is no integration among the language skills and elements taught, as focus is on translation of words, and grammatical structures and categories.

Findings of the present study are partially consistent with findings of a study by Dajani and Omari (2014) that found typographical errors, faulty sentence structures and in the exercise formats used in the lessons across the 3 levels. As in the Jordanian textbooks, students in the textbooks under study do not have a chance to practice oral skills, and the textbooks lack integration and balance among the skills.

Furthermore, findings of the content analysis in the present study has shown that the following aspects of the textbooks are inappropriate for children beginning to learn a foreign language:

i) Using Arabic grammatical terms and nomenclature extensively which are too abstract, which may be completely different from Russian grammatical terms, may not mean anything to children, and may be confusing to them. There is no need for using grammatical terms, and teaching words in isolation, as these are too abstract for children.

ii) Giving instructions, and explanations in the textbooks in Russian, especially explaining the pronunciation of Arabic words in Russian. This is not an appropriate technique for teaching L2 to children. Children are not phonologists, and this is not what the teacher does, even in teaching children to learn to read and spell their native language, Russian.

iii) Writing instructions to all the exercises in the Student's Books, workbooks and the whole Teacher's Guides in Russian. Instructions and teacher's guides should be in the foreign language taught, viz "Arabic".

iv) Asking students to translate words, colors, demonstratives, adjectives, pronouns, coordinated noun, definite and indefinite forms, masculine and feminine forms, singular, dual, sound masculine plural, sound feminine plural and broken plural forms, sentences, questions and answers into Russian and from Russian to Arabic. Translation is a separate skill which learners acquire and practice after acquiring L2. When everything is explained, transcribed and translated into Russian, the children will be learning and practicing Russian, not Arabic. Children are faced with a double task: Learning Arabic and Russian at the same time. Translation serves as an obstacle to the children's spontaneous and fluent use of L2, as they will be converting everything to and from Russian.

When a teacher's guide is in Russia, this will deprive Russian teachers, who are AFL speakers of the, exposure to explanations and terminology in Arabic, which will enhance their L2. When the guide is in Russian, it will not be helpful for Arabic native speaking teachers with no or poor knowledge of Russian.

v) Asking children to convert Arabic words transliterated in Russian to Arabic script. Some Arabic sounds such as ح ص ض ط ظ ع غ ق cannot be represented by the Russian alphabet.

vi) In exercises that give the students derivatives and ask them to infer the root, or give the students roots and ask them to give words derived from them; those that ask children to sort out words according to the root it was derived from, many of the words are difficult for and unfamiliar to the children, as they did not study them earlier as in فعيل. احتراق خرجة حرقة متخرج خروج مكتب استخرج خراق اختراق خرقة مجلس دراسة جالس is a

derivational pattern that is difficult for even native-speakers and derivatives such as شكور جسور غفور are forms that are too abstract and thus inappropriate for beginners. Fifty percent of the relative adjectives given, such as سلمي مدرسي ايطالي علمي وطني, are difficult for children such as. Similarly asking students to classify words that they did not study such as in مسطرة سماعة معرفة دراسة فهم into noun, verb and particle; asking them to change words that are unfamiliar (did not study) into masculine and feminine, singular and plural; or giving examples of the genitive that are unfamiliar.

vii) Giving the students two- and three-digit numbers and asking them to read each digit by digit not as a whole (lesson 58) is not instructionally sound.

viii) In exercises that require the students to change 39 nouns into plural, and 33 plural nouns into singular as in Lesson 10, 25% of those nouns are difficult for children (students did not study them). Here again the number of items given is too many for the children to deal with.

ix) Teaching all the independent pronouns in one lesson, all the clitic pronouns in one lesson and all the prepositions in one lesson.

x) Including 27 reading texts (70-100 words long) at the end of Workbook I, containing words that the students never studied, with no comprehension questions is more than children can conceptualize and handle.

xi) Some tasks are too abstract and too advanced for elementary school children learning an L2 such as sorting Proper Nouns into simple and compound. Compound Proper Nouns such ابن بطوطة وأبو بكر الصديق وأبو الحسن are not familiar and are difficult for children to conceptualize. There is no need to teach such details. There is no need to teach children the long form of country names such as المملكة العربية السعودية instead of one words السعودية. There is no need to teach them the names of all Arab countries, which they might have never heard of, nor studied in Russian. Asking children to write words, draw things from the Arab World is also a difficult task for children, as they are not familiar with the Arab World culture, and asking students to write the names of countries in Arabic and Russian under flags, and asking children to talk about what they have learnt about Arabic are all inappropriate for children.

Recommendations

Since the Arabic for Non-Native Speaking Children, Levels I and II textbooks do not meet the CEFR criteria, the study recommends restructuring the textbooks aims, skills and subskills taught, language elements selected, syllabus design adopted, and language teaching approach followed so that focus is on

learning Arabic for communication. To enable students to learn Arabic for communication, i.e., understand what they hear, speak using simple short sentences, read and comprehension and write simple sentences, the guidelines below should be followed.

Guidelines for Restructuring the Syllabus design

- Vocabulary selection and grading: Make a list of highest frequency words that you wish to teach to the students from Buckwalter and Parkinson (2010), Khāṭir (2006), Wightwick (1999), Abduh (1979) and others. Group vocabulary items according to concepts such as: Colors, fruits, vegetables, animals, sports, home, classroom, family members, means of transportation, electronics used at home, what students do in the morning, in the classroom, in the playground, when they go shopping, at the restaurant, what they do in Ramadan, how they celebrate Eid and birthdays and so on. Vocabulary items should be tangible (concrete) and should be related to the students' environment, daily life and experiences.

- Grammatical structures selection and grading: Make a list of basic grammatical structures in the form of syntactic patterns. Distribute them into 6 stages of teaching and learning corresponding to the 6 levels of SEFR. Language patterns should be graded in length, complexity and difficulty level. They Should be taught in the form of question and answer. Since it is impossible to teach all of the details in Arabic grammar, one should be selective. Choose those that are most commonly and frequently used. Arabic grammar should not be taught in separate lessons. It should be indirectly developed through listening, speaking, reading and writing activities. No explanations, translation of grammatical structures should be given. Do not use traditional Arabic grammar terminology such as فعل، فاعل، مبتدأ، مضاف، مرفوع، منصوب، ال التعريف، اللام الشمسية والقمرية at all, as these are abstract concepts and should not be taught, especially in the early stage of L2 development. Do not give any Arabic grammar rules. Do not explain or write Arabic grammar rules or forms on the board. Do not translate any Arabic grammar patterns to the students' L1.

- Make a list of language functions such as greetings, congratulating, thanking, apologizing, taking permission, saying good-bye, welcoming someone, inviting someone, condolences used in everyday life.

Guidelines for Adopting a Communicative Teaching Approach

- The whole Arabic lesson should be conducted in Arabic (L2). Instructions should be given in Arabic, too. Simple, short, controlled vocabulary and structures should be used. The native language (Russian) should not be used at all. No explanation and no translation into the native language should be given.

- Students start learning and practicing Arabic orally, i.e. they first listen, then repeat and speak. They practice oral skills for half a semester before they move on to reading and writing sentences and paragraphs. Meanwhile they can practice reading letters, writing their forms and putting them together to form words.

- Teach the form and meaning of the words and grammatical patterns together. Use real objects, drawings, gestures and dramatization while using the language to help students understand the meaning. Introduce the new vocabulary using the same grammatical patter: ما هذا/ ما هذه ، هذا جوال/ هذه سيارة . Repeat several times slowly and have the students repeat in small groups and individually. Arabic vocabulary and grammatical structures should be taught together. In teaching new words, a familiar grammatical structure that was taught and practiced before should be used. When teaching a new grammatical pattern, familiar words that were taught and practiced before should be used. Use short sentences and concrete vocabulary when teaching a new grammatical pattern.

- Do not write the new words, grammatical pattern, question and answer on the board. Do not write any rules or verb conjugations, singular, dual and plural forms on the board.

- Do not teach all the pronouns (Independent and clitic), all the prepositions, all the fruits and vegetables, animals, together in a single lesson each. Teach a portion of each category and teach another portion of the same category in a later lesson or level in the course.

- To help students understand a particular tense, the same pattern should be used with verbs that the students have studied and practiced earlier. Use pictures, actions and dramatization to show the form and meaning without explanation or translation. Only one new pattern and not more than 8 words are introduced in each lesson. Students ask each other questions that they heard from the teacher. Some students ask and others answer the questions.

- To consolidate what has been taught in the classroom, listening, speaking, reading and writing mobile apps and video clips can be integrated. The students can use those in class and at home. Teaching students some songs related to what has been taught such as the family song will heighten their motivation and interest in learning Arabic.

- Before teaching new words or a new grammatical pattern, review what the children have studied before. Since language learning is a cumulative process, new words and patterns to be learnt should be integrated with what the students have learnt in previous lesson, and those learnt in a previous level should be reviewed and integrated with words and patterns learnt in the following level.

- To help students generalize singular, dual and plural, feminine and masculine, or particular tense, the same form, pattern or question is repeated with the different pronouns (those referring to a male vs female; those referring to one student versus two students or versus three students.

Conclusion

Since the Arabic for Non-Native Speaking Children, Level I and II textbooks currently used in elementary schools in Tatarstan do not meet the CEFR standards and have many shortcomings, the study recommends that future researchers develop a set of textbooks for teaching Arabic to Russian students for all 6 levels in CEFR to ensure that Russian students learn Arabic to communicate with other Russian learners of Arabic in and outside Tatarstan and Russia, with their instructors, and even with native speakers of Arabic. The textbooks should adopt a functional situational syllabus design and follow a communicative language teaching approach. The textbooks can be supplemented with DVD's, video clips, mobile apps, stories and songs to make language learning fun for the students. The new textbooks should be tried out on a sample of classes in few schools in Tatarstan to be able to assess the suitability of the content and approach and make amendments accordingly. This way, AFL textbooks will be beneficial for both AFL children and instructors and will help them achieve the desired language learning outcomes.

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