Open Access | Original Research
Journal of Intercultural Communication, 22(2), 2022 | PP: 33–40
https://doi.org/10.36923/jicc.v22i2.50

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Students' Involvement Level in Arabic Language Textbook Communication for Cycle One in the United Arab Emirates

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Abstract: The current study aims to identify students' level of involvement in the Arabic language textbook content provided in cycle one within the United Arab Emirates by addressing two questions: (i) What is the student's level of involvement in the scientific materials contained in Arabic language textbooks for cycle one within the United Arab Emirates? (ii) What is the student's level of involvement in the language activities contained in Arabic language textbooks for cycle one within the United Arab Emirates? A descriptive-analytical approach was employed with Romey's formula as an instrument and framework to ascertain students' involvement level in textbooks containing scientific materials and language activities post-instrument validity and reliability. The study sample encompassed 16 scientific lessons and 52 language activities from the first cycle of Arabic language textbooks. Frequencies and percentages were employed in the statistical treatment. The study concluded that the involvement coefficient of language activities did not fall within the proposed range for grades one, two, and three but fell within the acceptable range for grade four.

Keywords: Level of Involvement, Arabic Language, Textbooks, Intercultural Cycle One.

Article History:
Received: 17-02-2021
Accepted: 21-05-2022
Publication: 30-08-2022

Cite this article as:
Alwaely, S, A., & Al-Jasari, M, F. (2022). Students' Involvement Level in Arabic Language Textbook Content for Cycle One in the United Arab Emirates. *Journal of Intercultural Communication,* 22(2), 33-40. doi.org/10.36923/jicc.v22i2.50

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1. Introduction

Although teachers, students, the educational environment, and curricula prove pivotal in the educational process, teachers primarily rely on the curriculum to impart their knowledge and mould a generation that could catalyse national advancement by attaining core educational goals. Notably, a curriculum ascertains the type of information, concepts, facts, directions, skills, and values to be delivered to students. A textbook denotes a primary means of physically manifesting a curriculum, which significantly impacts teaching techniques, self-study aspects, and students' learning motivations (Al-Awadi, 2018). Teaching Arabic from the preliminary stage provides students with the necessary basics to master and adopt appropriate language practice techniques in facilitating their progress through different educational stages (Hussain, Akhter, Qureshi, & Khan, 2021).

Appropriate content selection from the Arabic language curriculum is deemed necessary to complement students' requirements and facilitate their engagement in the learning process for continuous development. Textbooks impact teachers' decision-making process as approximately 75% of teaching occurs within the classroom while 90% of homework relies on Arabic language school textbooks. Although grade-specific textbooks potentially affect the general and specific goals that teachers strive to attain (Lumpe, 2001), some studies implied that textbooks fail to catalyse student involvement in activities that require the implementation of cognitive, innovative, inquiry-based, and exploratory skills (Al-Hashmi & Musterehi, 2015). Other empirical works proposed modifying Arabic language teaching approaches to integrate more practical counterparts with relevant activities and exercises.

Textbook developers should design learning materials with a balanced proportion of interaction and involvement to highlight the essentiality of textbooks for a productive and efficient educational process. Khataibah (2005) asserted that students' learning involvement must be prioritised in textbook development as the pillar of the educational process. Specific standards were utilised to establish student-centric learning through self-study processes and the extent to which textbooks support students' involvement in their content. For example, educational textbook materials should be presented in a way that facilitates students' comprehension and motivates them to inquire, explore, and resolve issues with idea-sharing and discussions. Such stimulating instruments also catalyse students' self-learning (Chang, 2021).

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Textbooks should also be developed with materials and activities that engage multiple physical senses in learning processes to attain student engagement towards optimal learning. Relevant psychologists affirmed that a multi-sensory learning process accelerates students' knowledge acquisition and learning (Al-Hailah, 2000). In this vein, the essentiality of involving students in textbook content has garnered much scholarly attention. This study examined students' level of involvement in the Arabic language textbook content for cycle one within the United Arab Emirates to provide insightful recommendations for decision-makers towards curriculum enhancement. Following the initiatives launched to improve the Arabic language, the United Arab Emirates intends to design a curriculum that parallels the positive international directives within the textbook writing field. For example, Al-Ashqar's (2020) Palestinian study measured students' level of involvement in upper-primary level (empowerment stage) Mathematics textbooks.

The descriptive-analytical approach in this study was employed for its relevance in analysing the content of grades seven, eight, and nine Mathematics textbooks. Following Romey's formula, the involvement level coefficient of material presentation and textbook graphs fell within an acceptable range (0.40-1.50) as opposed to the involvement level of activities in textbooks, which exceeded (1.50). No statistical variations were identified regarding the involvement of grades seven, eight, and nine Mathematics textbooks in presenting content, illustrations, graphs, and activities. Al-Deeb's (2020) descriptive-analytical research using a content analysis card and teacher assessment survey strived to determine the involvement level of the Mathematics textbook content designed for lower-basic grades under Romey's formula. The study sample encompassed 115 pages from a two-semester Mathematics textbook content from the first four primary grades and 41 teachers. Based on the teachers' assessment, the textbooks under examination involved students in the content, activities, illustrations, and graphs at a medium level (64.23%).

In Jordian, Al-Rawashdeh (2019) aimed to determine students' involvement level in a grade-nine computer textbook with Romey's formula and ascertain their engagement in presenting scientific materials and activities. The involvement coefficient of students in scientific materials (0.29) and textbook activities (0.25) was under the acceptable range of (0.4). Fadi's (2019) study intended to identify the range of general science textbook contributions regarding the involvement of students in early-stage learning. Although the study demonstrated a low contribution of coefficient levels on student involvement in the general science textbook content (0.35-0.09) and activities (0.03- 0.21), the contribution coefficients in drawings, figures, and graphs proved to be high (1.75-0.68). The teachers indicated no statistical differences regarding students' involvement level in early-stage science textbooks, which could be attributed to gender, qualification, and years of expertise.

In Palestine, Al-Ja'bari (2018) empirically measured the involvement coefficient of grade four Arabic language textbooks at the lower-basic stage using verbal and visual text content and activity-oriented interactions following Romey's formula. The study sample constituted 10% of the pages from a two-semester grade-four textbook following a randomised controlled trial where one out of 10 pages was consistently selected. The Azar tool (1982) was utilised for content analysis. Resultantly, the involvement coefficient of verbal and visual content and the activities presented in Arabic language textbooks for the target grade were acceptable (1.5-0.4) under Romey's formula. Al-Dghaiman's (2018) study strived to identify Jordanian fifth graders' readability and involvement levels in Arabic language textbooks. A random sample of 140 grade five students and two prose texts were selected from the aforementioned textbooks. Consequently, the students demonstrated a high level of involvement in Arabic language textbooks (1.9) and readability.

Ahmad (2018) intended to identify the range of grade 12 Somalian students' involvement in the History textbook based on the presentation of scientific materials, graphs, illustrations, figures, and activities. Romey's formula was employed to ascertain the involvement level. Based on the study outcomes, the involvement coefficient of students in the textbook based on scientific material proved to be good (0.56) as opposed to their engagement in graphs, drawings, and figures (0.3). Likewise, the activity involvement was below the acceptable level (0.15). As such, textbook developers were urged to re-order and publish the materials to boost practical involvement following the nature of the educational stage. Al-Awadi (2018) performed a similar study among grade 10 students in the United Arab Emirates to test their involvement in the History textbook and its role in skills optimisation. The textbook was measured using modern criteria to ascertain authors' compliance with global textbook development standards. Romey's formula was employed to compute the involvement coefficients of students in the textbook. Based on the study findings, the textbook was below standard regarding students' involvement in the presentation of scientific materials despite being inclusive in the adaptation of drawings, figures, and graphs.

A recent Argentinian study (Lianos & Otero, 2019) after 67 years analysed the figures, school textbook attributes, concepts, and education level to which the high-school stage Mathematics textbook was targeted by assessing the variances between students' involvement and textbook graphs and figures. Resultantly, most textbooks integrated aesthetic figures without accompanying examples or connotations. The graphs were also irrelevant to the mathematical content. In this vein, the actual meaning between the graphs and functional mathematical knowledge was ambiguous. Another study that evaluated high school Mathematics textbooks based on graphs, drawings, and only non-verbal texts (Martin & Helena, 2016) revealed visual knowledge development by recognising textbook illustrations and geometric graphs (non-verbal elements) as the key component in teaching

Mathematics to explicitly improve and enhance students' educational process. Additionally, geometric graphs were extensively employed as non-verbal textbook elements for explanatory and inquiry-based purposes. Hodaian's (2017), Iranian study on grade three high school Biology textbooks analysed texts, illustrations, and graphs following Romey's formula to determine the involvement coefficient of 499 texts and 123 figures. The outcomes highlighted text vulnerability concerning students' engagement with an involvement coefficient of (0.023) while textbook figures and illustrations reflected a high involvement coefficient (1.35). In other words, the textbook significantly involved students through graphs and illustrations.

1.1. The Study Problems and Questions

This research aimed to determine students' level of involvement in Arabic language textbook content for cycle one in the United Arab Emirates. Specifically, students are required to engage their cognitive skills and seek information for active and interactive roles in the learning process, which minimises direct instruction with an appropriate proportion of materials to continuously engage their mental faculties. Consequently, the involvement coefficient of material presentation proved to be unacceptable following past literature (Ahmad, 2018). In line with Al-Ja'bari's (2018) recommendation on activating students' involvement in the Arabic language textbook through verbal content and activities for productive and entertaining interactions, the current study strived to address the following questions:

First question: What is the students' level of involvement in the scientific materials contained in Arabic language textbook content for cycle one within the United Arab Emirates? **Second question**: What is the students' level of involvement in the language activities contained in Arabic language textbooks for cycle one within the United Arab Emirates?

1.2. The Objective of the Study

This study aimed to determine students' level of involvement in Arabic language textbook content for cycle one in the United Arab Emirates-based on the presentation of scientific materials and language activities.

1.3. The Significance of the Study

1.3.1. Theoretical Importance

This study offered theoretical literature on students' involvement in Arabic language textbook content based on the presentation of scientific materials and language activities for cycle one, which denotes the cornerstone of the educational stage. The study significance was derived from the essentiality of involvement as a subject of life and educational priority.

1.3.2. Practical Importance

The current study outcomes have offered teachers and parents vital information on the essentiality of student involvement through the presentation of scientific materials and language activities with useful insights for relevant authorities and other stakeholders on (i) Arabic language textbooks in cycle one and (ii) students' level of textbook involvement.

1.3.3. Study Limitations

Place Constraints: The study solely involved Arabic language textbooks in cycle one and their respective grades (one, two, three, and four) that are prescribed by the Ministry of Education for 2020/2021.

Time constraints: The study was performed during the first semester of 2020/2021.

Subject constraints: The study was restricted to examining students' involvement in Arabic language textbook content for cycle one regarding the presentation of scientific materials and language activities. Notably, the study findings were determined with instrument validity and reliability.

1.4. Procedural Definitions

The Level of Involvement: Students' involvement based on the content presentation of scientific materials and language activities to provide an active role in the learning process. Romey's formula could effectively measure the involvement level.

The Content of Arabic Language Textbooks: The scientific materials and language activities prescribed in Arabic language textbooks on a quarterly basis (2020-2021).

Cycle one: The first of three educational stages in the United Arab Emirates schools involving grades one, two, three, and four.

2. Methodology

2.1. The Study Approach

This descriptive-analytical method was selected following its pertinence in addressing the study questions to identify grade one, two, three, and four students' involvement in Arabic language content for cycle one in the United Arab Emirates while objectively justifying the phenomena. As a standard quantitative measure,

this approach constitutes content analysis and the conversion of parts into numbers through categories, frequencies, and percentages (Al-Jadri & Abo Helo, 2008).

2.2. The Community and Sample of the Study

The study community involved scientific materials and language activities within the Arabic language textbook prescribed for 2020/2021 in cycle one and its respective grades (one, two, three, and four) in the United Arab Emirates to assess students' level of involvement in scientific materials and language activities. A total of 16 texts and 52 language activities were employed in this research.

2.3. Study Tool

The current study incorporated Romey's formula to compute the degree of students' involvement in the Arabic language textbook content for cycle one based on presenting scientific materials and language activities. Romey's formula could be summarised as follows:

First: Textbook Involvement through Presentation of Scientific Materials

Scientific material is categorised as follows:

A. Statement of facts: valid data, events, or phenomena.
B. Conclusions or explicit circulars: authors' opinions summarised from the meaning of or links between paragraphs.
C. Definitions: statements that offer the connotation of textbook terms and notions.
D. Questions that are directly raised and addressed by the textbook.
E. Questions that require students to perform information analysis.
F. Declarative sentences that require students to perform information analysis.
G. Guidelines for students to perform and analyse activity and problem-solving statements.
H. Questions with no explicit textbook answers to garner students' interest.
I. Sentences that direct readers to observe graphs or illustrations, procedural instructions for activities, and other sentences that do not fall under previous categories.
J. Rhetorical questions: raised to influence people rather than address an issue.

Based on the aforementioned classifications, the coefficient of students' involvement in textbooks regarding the presentation of scientific material is computed with the following formula:

$$\frac{E+F+G+H}{A+B+C+D}$$

The coefficient of students' involvement in scientific materials

Notably, paragraphs a, b, c, and d do not require students' involvement or scientific inquiry skills given their low-level representation while paragraphs e, f, g, and h denote a high-level representation of students' involvement and provoke inquisitiveness. Paragraphs I + j were disregarded from the computations as they do not essentially influence the degree to which students are involved in textbooks, so they (Celinmar, 2021).

Second: Textbook Involvement through Language Activities

All the textbook language activities designated for students were counted. Students' involvement in textbooks through language activities was computed as follows:

The coefficient of students' involvement in language activities

The equation indicates the following elements:

(a) The number of language activities that students need to perform.

(b) The number of pages analysing language activities.

2.4. Interpretation of Coefficients Values

The following criteria introduced by Romey (Romey,1986) could be adopted when the outcomes are interpreted based on the past rules employed to compute the coefficient of students' involvement in textbooks:

I. Students are not involved in the textbook if the involvement coefficient is zero.
II. Students are actively involved in half of the textbook statements if the involvement coefficient is one.
III. Students are highly involved in textbooks if the involvement coefficient ranges between 0.4 and 1.5.
IV. The textbook is not intellectually provoking if the involvement coefficient is under (0.4).
V. The textbook merely contains questions if the involvement coefficient exceeds (1.5). Thus, such textbooks fail to offer adequate information for students' involvement.

2.5. Analysis Unit

The analysis unit in this study entailed sentences consisting of words or phrases. The sentence unit was selected for a large-scale and comprehensive content analysis unit in line with the study nature.

2.5.1. Instrument Validity

The study instrument was presented in its original form to a group of judges and specialists in education and teaching techniques for the experts to review the questionnaire categories, language precision, or appropriate modifications for instrument validity. The expert's comments were duly regarded for refinement purposes. The final questionnaire encompassed 10 categories of post-instrument validity: facts, conclusions or explicit generalisations, definitions, questions directly raised and answered by the textbook, questions requiring students to answer them, declarative sentences, guidelines for students, questions with no direct answer in the textbook to raise students' interest, and rhetorical questions.

2.5.2. Instrument Reliability

The intercoder agreement was employed to authenticate instrument reliability where re-analysis was performed upon providing the researchers with specific elements to conduct the analysis process. Holsti's equation (Holsti, 1969) was utilised for analysis reliability. Resultantly, the reliability coefficient between the researchers' analysis and that of the second analyst on the questionnaire categories ranged between 0.87 and 0.95 while the overall analysis questionnaire reflected (0.92): a high-reliability rate.

2.5.3. Statistical Treatments

The Holsti equation was employed to compute instrument reliability with Romey's formula in ascertaining the extent of students' involvement in the Arabic language textbook content for cycle one based on the presentation of scientific materials and language activities using frequencies and percentages.

3. Results and Discussion

Results from the First Question

The first question is presented as follows:

"**To what extent are students involved in the Arabic language textbook content for cycle one in the United Arab Emirates-based on the presentation of scientific material?"**

The scientific materials were analysed following the categories derived from Romey's formula to determine the degree to which students are involved in the textbooks based on the presentation of educational materials. The frequency of categories was computed for each lesson in the Arabic language textbooks for cycle one (grades one to four). Table 3 presents the study outcomes.

Table 1: Frequency of Categories adopted in the Classification of Presenting Scientific Materials in Arabic Language Textbook Topics for Cycle One

Classification	Categories	Four Grades of Cycle One			
		First	Second	Third	Fourth
a.	Facts	11	15	9	16
b.	Conclusions or explicit generalisations	8	9	13	11
c.	Definitions	10	9	8	9
d.	Questions directly raised and answered by the textbook	2	6	12	8
e.	Questions requiring students to analyse information	0	0	0	0
f.	Declarative sentences requiring students to articulate their conclusions	1	2	1	2
g.	Guidelines for students to perform or analyse an activity or solve a problem	0	0	0	1
h.	Questions with no direct answer in the textbook may provoke students' interest	1	2	2	1
i.	Sentences that direct readers to look at graphs or illustrations, which are not previously mentioned	0	0	0	0
j.	Rhetorical questions	0	0	0	0
Involvement Coefficient for each of the Four Grades		**0.06**	**0.10**	**0.07**	**0.09**
Total Involvement Coefficient for all Grades		**0.32**			

Source: Calculated by the author.

In line with Table 1, the involvement coefficient to present the scientific material in Arabic language textbooks for all four grades did not fall within Romey's acceptable range (0.40-1.5). The involvement coefficients

were (0.06), (0.10), (0.07), and (0.09) for grades one, two, three, and four, respectively. The overall involvement coefficient for all the grades was (0.32), which proved to be unacceptable. Based on the first question results, the overall student involvement in textbooks regarding the presentation of educational materials for all four grades (0.32) was low and unacceptable based on Romey's proposed criterion (0.40). Specifically, textbooks reflect dominance in the form of facts, conclusions, and information with limited opportunities for active student involvement. For example, the textbook topics adopted plain language without presenting them in the form of problems or issues for student involvement. Most writers remain oblivious to the involvement concept following the prevalence of and their familiarisation with conventional approaches.

"Arabic language materials present such content following the attributes that distinguish them from other courses while disregarding higher-order thinking that necessitates inductive and problem-solving skills". In this point, we mean that the Arabic language course is different from other courses. Also, the materials or lessons being taught, in Arabic courses, are different from other course, for example, Math, science …etc. since these courses do not have rhetorical aspects, syntax and other aspects related to the language. The lack of recent developments in textbook writing and the conventionality of establishing textbook-writing committees restricted to official works and their laws have also caused such circumstances. Similarly, Al-Ashqar (2020), Al-Rawashdeh (2019), and Ahmad (2018) implied a low involvement of textbooks in terms of presenting the scientific material.

Results from the Second Question

The second question is presented as follows: "To what extent are students involved in Arabic language textbook content for cycle one in the United Arab Emirates-based on language activities?"

Language activities were analysed using Romey's formula to identify students' level of involvement in textbooks based on language activities. Table 2 presents the research outcomes.

Table 2: Frequency of Categories Adopted in the Classification of Language Activities in Arabic Language Textbook Topics for Cycle One

Classification	Language Activities	Four Grades of Cycle One			
		First	Second	Third	Fourth
A	The number of language activities students are required to perform	12	17	21	**44**
B	The number of pages analysing language activities	93	113	103	**95**
Involvement Coefficient for each of the Four Grades		0.12	0.15	0.20	**0.46**
Total Involvement Coefficient for all Grades		**0.93**			

Source: Calculated by the author.

In Table 2, part of the involvement coefficient of language activities in Arabic language textbooks did not fall within Romey's acceptable range (0.40-1.5) for the first four grades. The involvement coefficients for grades one, two, three, and four were (0.12), (0.15), (0.20), and (0.46), respectively, thus falling within Romey's acceptable range. The overall involvement coefficient of all grades (0.93) proved to be acceptable. Based on the research outcomes, students' involvement in textbooks regarding language activities for all grades (0.93) was acceptable under Romey's specified criterion. In other words, the textbooks involved students in language activities.

Textbooks have proposed language activities that facilitate students' participation, interaction, and self-study given the emphasis on questions (understanding, comprehension, analysis, evaluation, and vocabulary development) regarding language activities and exercises to attain the desired course-oriented goals in terms of Arabic language topics. This statement applies to grade four with an acceptable rate (0.46) as opposed to the remaining counterparts (one, two, and three).

Summarily, Arabic language textbooks are developed following a conventional teacher-centric curriculum where students function as listeners who passively receive the information provided to them. To note an example, grade three textbook developers lack the expertise of educational, psychological science, and curriculum development specialists to structure a viable and student-centric curriculum. This finding corresponded to that of Al-Awadi (2018) and Ahmed (2018) where the examined textbook achieved acceptable textbook involvement levels with regard to language activities.

4. Conclusion

The study concluded that overall student involvement in textbooks regarding the presentation of educational materials for all four grades (0.32) was low and unacceptable against Romey's proposed criterion (0.40). Specifically, textbooks reflect dominance in the form of facts, conclusions, and information with limited opportunities for students' active involvement. The textbook topics adopted plain language without presenting them through problems or issues for student involvement. Most writers remain oblivious to the involvement concept following the prevalence of and their familiarisation with conventional approaches. Also, students' involvement in textbooks regarding language activities for all grades (0.93) was acceptable under Romey's

specified criterion. In other words, the textbooks involved students in language activities. Textbooks have proposed language activities that facilitate students' participation, interaction, and self-study given the emphasis on questions (understanding, comprehension, analysis, evaluation, and vocabulary development) regarding language activities and exercises to attain the desired goals set by the course in terms of Arabic language topics. Perceivably, the textbooks were developed following a conventional teacher-centric curriculum where students function as passive listeners who receive the information provided to them. Grade three textbook developers lack the expertise of educational, psychological science, and curriculum development specialists to structure a viable and student-centric curriculum.

5. Recommendations and Suggestions

The recommendations and suggestions elicited from this study are presented as follows:

1. Increase students' involvement in Arabic language textbook content based on the presentation of scientific materials for productive student interactions that parallel the educational objectives.
2. Present the educational materials in Arabic language textbooks through thought-provoking issues and problems that stimulate students to acquire self-study skills.
3. Enrich the Arabic language textbooks from grades one, two, and three with educational language activities that engage students in the learning process.
4. Perform similar studies on Arabic language textbooks for other grades.
5. Promote the interest of stakeholders in charge of teaching and training teachers on the necessary skills to improve their teaching competencies and establish a student-centric educational process.

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