

Standard Arabic vs Non Standard Arabic Use in the Algerian Classroom Case Studies: Primary School, Middle School, Secondary School

اللغة العربية الفصحى نضيرة اللغة العربية غير الفصحى داخل قاعة التدريس في المدرسة الجزائرية

Dr. Bourouina El-Hadj

Mail: elhadjbourouina@gmail.com

Hassiba Ben Bouali University of Chlef Algeria

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Abstract:

Language can be defined as a generic, communicative phenomenon, especially in descriptions of instruction. Conveying the meaning of the new material being taught and teaching the standard Arabic accordingly is the aim of this research that implies the need of a descriptive mixed method approach. Thus, this investigation is carried out by means of a classroom observation, and electronic survey handed out to 180 pupils from different schools (primary, Middle and secondary school), and 90 teachers, of different subject matter from different levels of school (primary, middle and secondary school) in Chlef. The findings reveal that teachers of the three schools do not very often use standard Arabic in their language classrooms. The study ends with some recommendations and pedagogical implications that attempt to help teachers of the three schools to make a balance between language as a medium of conveying the information and the information being conveyed.

Key words: Classroom, language, instruction, Standard Arabic, medium

ملخص :

تعتبر اللغة مجموعة مشتركة من الرموز اللفظية كما يمكن أن تعرف على أنها ظاهرة تواصلية عامة خاصة إذا تعلق الأمر بالتعليم. تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى تسليط الضوء على أهمية الاستناد إلى منهج وصفي مختلط عند نقل معنى المادة الجديدة التي يتم تدريسها باللغة العربية الفصحى. وعليه، تم إجراء هذا التحقيق بالاعتماد على المراقبة الصفية و الاستطلاع الإلكتروني الذي وزع على 180 تلميذاً من مدارس مختلفة (ابتدائي ومتوسط وثانوي) و 90 معلماً من مواد مختلفة من مستويات مختلفة من المدرسة (ابتدائي ، المتوسطة والثانوية) بالشلف. من خلال جلسات المراقبة الصفية، توصلت الدراسة إلى أن معلمي الأطوار الثلاثة لا

يستخدمون في كثير من الأحيان اللغة العربية الفصحى وهذا نتيجة التعامل باللغة الدارجة التي تعتبر اللغة الأم للتلميذ. وبعد مقارنة نتائج الملاحظة الصفية بتلك ذكرت في الاستبيان الإلكتروني للمعلمين والتلاميذ، أظهرت النتائج المحققة أن اللغة العربية الفصحى لم تستخدم على نطاق واسع من قبل معلمي اللغة العربية. وتنتهي الدراسة ببعض التوصيات والآثار التربوية التي تحاول مساعدة معلمي المدارس الثلاث على القيام بذلك لخلق التوازن اللغوي كوسيلة لنقل المعلومات والمعلومات التي يتم نقلها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القسم. المطلوب، العربية الفصحى. وسيلة

1. Introduction

It is argued that learning is better and more successful when conducted in the variety of spoken by students. In addition, it is claimed that the use of students' variety in education enables students to use their own potential and helps them to achieve 'deep learning.' Besides, the use of students' native dialect in education enhances the social, cognitive, emotional and linguistic development of learners' in and out of school. For these reasons, the Algerian classrooms witnessed the use of nonstandard Arabic language to help students assimilating the content of the lesson. The latter, is also a sound system for the teacher not to consume a high amount of energy on his part to spell out lessons content costly. It is also because it is the best way for setting a warm relationship between the learner and the teacher as well as bridging the gap between the teacher and those shy students.

Following, the spread of the new approaches adopted recently in the Algerian different schools, the need for the use of nonstandard Arabic to teach different subject matters seemed to be crucial. Yet, and in the primary school, for example, the heavy load of topics included in each curriculum required a heavy demand on the part of the teacher to seek for a suitable means of language to convey his message effortlessly.

In this respect, what consequences are remarkably deduced in terms of knowledge retention and the threat of the standard Arabic language vanishing from the classroom use?

2. Literature Review

As indicated in the introduction, the use of the variety of language can be found within a language. There are infinite sources of variation in speech such as social status, gender, age, ethnicity, geographical location, profession and economic background of a speaker (Holmes, 2001). The social class or/and group in which language is used varies. In relation to this, Lehmann (1976:275) wrote that "Young speakers have their own special speech patterns, and in many societies there are considerable differences among the speech patterns of various

social classes. Therefore, Algerian young teachers seem to be the most code-switchers from the standard Arabic to the teacher's variety of language or the social milieu's variety of language where the teaching is taking place.

In this respect, the decrease, sometimes, the absence of the standard Arabic in the classroom has been the responsibility of the teacher and the educational staff as well. Yet, teachers should implement the content-based instruction approach because this kind of approach integrates the learning of the language with the learning of other content, often Subjects must provide natural content for language instruction. These types of subjects motivate 'the language across the curriculum'.

3. Standard and Non-Standard Dialects and their Use in Education

The language varieties spoken in certain community can be classified as standard and non-standard dialects. Standard Arabic is the standard dialect in Algeria. It is the prestigious codified dialect that has the highest social status and used in formal occasions. It is argued that the varieties of a language play an important role in educational context. In this connection, learning is claimed to be better and more successful when conducted in the variety spoken by students (Cheshire, 2005). However, deciding and compromising on the use of standard or non-standard varieties in education seems complex and controversial. The use of dialect in education is sometimes mandatory, for example, the use of standard Arabic to teach some subjects in some remotes of Tizi Ouzou or Touareg seems to be challenging. The latter may raise the concern of whether the focus should be on the medium, subject matter, or both.

Rationally, the use of content-based approach seems to be prominent in cases like these. Teaching mathematics using standard Arabic versus teaching a lesson of Islamic education in the same language may not help the teacher of mathematics to use the same concepts with the same rhyme and rhythm. Meanwhile, it may create a sort of cut between what is meant to be achieved mathematically and the development of the standard Arabic along with the development of the lesson. Hence, for a better preservation of standard Arabic inside the classroom, learners are invited to converse in this language, while their teachers should take initiations.

4. The Social Evaluation of a Language Variety and Its Influence on Their Use in Education

The use of non-standard varieties has a positive effect on the acquisition of the subject matter, self-esteem, performance and overall achievement. In spite of these merits, the issue of whether or not to teach using a non-standard language is a complicated matter in practice

rather than how it appears on the surface in conducting the lesson since the latter may restrict or even create a sort of extinction of the standard variety. However, if our objective of teaching standard Arabic is to produce citizens who are able to preserve it and therefore defend their identities as Arabs, we have to consider it as the only medium to be used in the classroom.

Paradigmatically, the teaching with standard Arabic or with a variety of it dispute is related to responsables in the field of education, namely inspectors. However, even those responsables have as a primary concern the transmission of the message of the subject matter rather than the medium by which it has been transmitted. Between prescriptivism and descriptivism, the secret of solving such controversies may lay. Therefore, in order to solve these controversies I believe, we should reconcile the two –isms first. Prescriptivism deals with what sort of language “should be used”, and it makes recommendation to use an ideal correct form (Standard Arabic).

On the other hand, descriptivism refers to how actually language “is used” and makes no recommendation as there is no imagined ideal state. Descriptivists look at what can possibly be conveyed in language and prescriptivist says that no matter what is being conveyed is rather important, this should not diminish the value of the language being used to convey it. To preserve the use of standard Arabic in the classroom, there must be a balance between the importance of the subject matter being taught and the standard language as being a crucial paramount in the learner’s identity as citizen.

5. The Impact of Using Dialects in Education on Students’ Learning and Achievements

Students who have been taught with a nonstandard dialect may be at a disadvantage if they are assessed with tests standardized on students who speak the standard. They may be perceived as being less intelligent (Charity Hudley & Mallinson, 2011) or as having a language delay or disorder (Ball & Bernhardt, 2008). If teachers use the nonstandard Arabic in the classroom and provide students with pedagogical practices in the standard Arabic, then they may negatively affect the student’s learning contribution. Thomas, Lawrence, and Salcedo (as cited in Rickford & Rickford, 1995) found that children who were constantly taught in a given variety of language related to their dialect and being confronted with a new variety of language became intimidated and participated less often in class.

Teachers may create a sort of confusion among students when it comes to provide them with summaries of their taught lessons. Summaries might be undertaken under the use of the standard Arabic, however, the same lesson has been presented with another variety which is not the standard language. Ford (1984) found that speaking style influenced how a teacher

assessed a student's writing. For instance, Ford found that teachers found themselves evaluating written works associated with students' spoken variety of language and those writing samples written only in standard Arabic. The latter raises the question of whether to use or not to use the student's dialect in the classroom.

6. Dialects Threat and the Standard Language Preservation

As the standard Arabic is relatively spoken in the Algerian educational places, nowadays its preservation is alarming. Yet, varieties of languages have been long taken the place of the standard Arabic as a vehicle in the teaching learning process. Currently, the need for supporting this language is everyone's concern because saving a language entails saving the culture of its community. It would be much easier for everyone if humanity had only one language, but what about cultures? When it comes to languages, it is just not possible to just overlook the cultural elements involved. Culture makes us who we are and language, if not anything else, is one of the many forms culture turned into. It can be seen as a tool to evaluate and shape our own culture. Nothing else other than language itself has such a capability and if it is changed in any way, the very same effect can be observed in culture as well. That is why language is directly related to human relations, traditions, customs, and even cuisine itself. Once a language is forgotten, all these along with history and more will be forgotten with it.

Written languages can also be potentially assimilated into other languages or suffer from solecism. Assimilation happens due to too much foreign influence on languages, and in our globalized world, many languages are at risk of assimilation due to the tremendous amount of loan foreign words. Solecism, on the other hand, refers to the transgression of grammar rules. It is caused by the fact that some grammatical errors are so frequent that they start to sound natural. Unfortunately, even language services providers may make such mistakes and come up with translations full of borrowed words and grammatical errors. Language is highly used and practised orally, for its preservation depends greatly on its amount of being practised. Therefore, both teachers and their students must use the standard Arabic in the classroom. They also should help students with difficulties to use the standard Arabic to be engaged in situations of communication where the medium of conversation should be the standard language.

7. Language Standardisation and Nationalism

Language is the basic instrument of communication among human beings and is the indispensable basis for the existence of cultures, civilisations and religion, and for social

reality in general. In the Algerian context, the standard Arabic language plays a rigid social cohesion both in tiny communities and extensive societies organised in the form of one nation known by its large confessing of one of the most dominated religion (Islam). Thus, if one assumes that language is the instrument by which it is possible to bond groups with a theoretically unlimited number of individuals, control over language or its use provides the most far-ranging possibilities of moulding and manipulating large groups of humans (Tollefson, 1991). From a social and geographical viewpoint, language is a continuous phenomenon. The most apt description of language at the exclusively oral stage when there was no script in use can be summarised as a continuum of sub dialects shading into one another, which corresponded to singular population concentrations usually actualised as villages and towns (Crystal 1987: 25).

According to Anderson 1991, a nation is simply an “imagined community”: imagined because the members of even the smallest nation are unknown and anonymous to one another, yet the image of their fellow citizens’ communion is undoubtedly in the minds of each one’s life (Anderson 1983: 15, 133). Anderson further states that the existence of the community or nation is often imagined through language, and thus stresses the role of language in imagining and creating the nationhood. In much the same way, Gellner (1964: 169) radically states that “nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist.

Because there are different types of nationalism and language. “Official nationalism” can often be a very obscure concept in terms of language usage. It conceals a discrepancy between the nation as a whole and its political sphere: the discrepancy is between national language (language spoken in everyday lives) and official language. A national language has more symbolic characteristics as an emblem of a community than an official language, which is used for practical purposes for communicating at a national level. Algeria is a rare nation in the sense that it calls its own language standard Arabic as a national and official language at the same time. Yet, nationalism can easily be that sort of a permanent state of mind in every Algerian citizen’s mind; however, it can be threaten by a variety of language, if logistically backed up by a foreign country.

8. Methodology

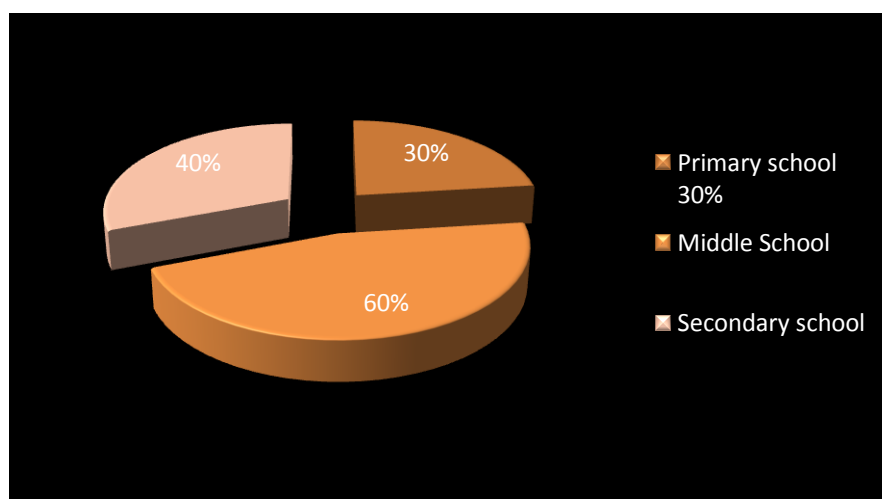
To contribute to the advancement of accurately scrutinizing effective teachers’ use of the medium in order to teach the new material, a descriptive-comparative design was used to explore what sort of language teachers use: the standard Arabic or a variety of language?

in the three schools. The descriptive method does not by itself tend to do the job of the current research and gives the expected results .Yet this research uses three case study approaches.

Each case study is the most flexible of all research designs, allowing the researcher to retain the holistic characteristics of real-life events while investigating empirical events in each school.

The present research deals with the first case study of the 5th year pupils at the primary school of Tahraoui (Chlef), the second case study is of 1st year middle school of Ben badis school, chlef and the third one is of 2nd year secondary school of Emir Abdelkader secondary school, chlef. They investigate what sort of language do teachers use in their classroom while presenting a new lesson. The three subject matters being tackled are respectively: Maths, Arabic language lesson and a lesson of geography. The purpose of using the three case studies besides the descriptive approach is to have the possibility to draw generalizations from that unit to the whole population.

9. Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings



A) Figure 1: Classroom Observation Findings

10. Classroom Observation Findings Discussion and Interpretation

Item1: Teachers’ use of the standard Arabic inside the classroom

Following the three classroom observations results, it is quite obvious that little care is given to the use of the standard Arabic in the classroom. Yet, from the first classroom of the primary school we learnt the teacher uses the standard Arabic while presenting a Maths lesson with a portion of 30% while the teacher tackled her lesson using a variety of a language most adopted in her class with a portion of use of 70%.It was definitely understood that the focus was on how to make the pupils understand the lesson since the subject matter is purely

characterized by symbols rather than language segments. Moving to the second class of the Middle school, the teacher was found using the standard Arabic with a portion of 60%, and seldom code switching to the pupils' variety of language. What may justify the use the standard Arabic inside the classroom is the nature of the subject matter being taught (Arabic lesson). Probably, it is the only session where teachers of the three different schools find themselves obliged to use the standard Arabic. Finally, from the third class of the secondary school, we observed the teacher rarely using the standard Arabic though the subject matter being taught was not underestimated (lesson of geography). To sum up, one can say the use of the standard Arabic in the three different schools was bashful. Except the teacher of the middle school, the two other teachers were deliberately using the pupil's variety of language to do their job in the classroom.

11. Pupils' Electronic Survey Findings Discussion and Interpretation

A) Primary Schools Pupils' Electronic Survey Findings.

-Item1: Teacher's use of the standard Arabic while conducting the lesson.

-Type of lesson: Maths

Option	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Number	02	10	15	25	08	60
%	3.33%	16.66%	25%	41.66%	13.33%	100%

Table 1: Primary School Teacher's rate of Standard Arabic use in the classroom

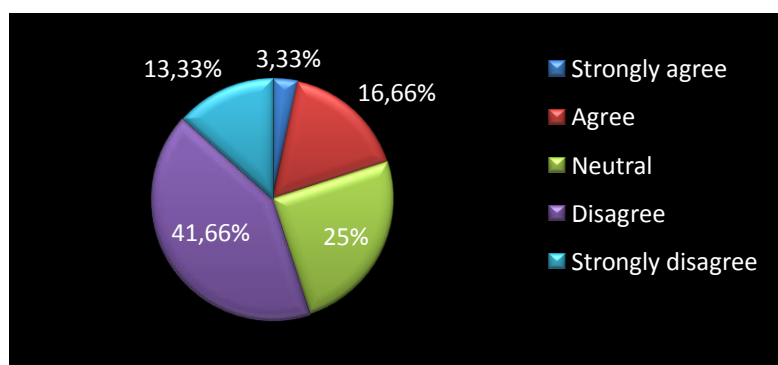


Figure2: Primary School Teacher's rate of Standard Arabic use in the classroom

From table 1 as well as figure 2, we learnt that 41, 66% of the pupils argued that their teacher does not use the standard Arabic inside the classroom.16.66 of the respondents believed that their teacher used the standard language in the classroom while explaining the new material; however, 25% of their schoolmate were neutral. This claim may be interpreted by the pupils' age not to be adequate enough to respond to such question like this.

B) Middle Schools Pupils’ Electronic Survey Findings.

-Item1: Teacher’s use of the standard Arabic while conducting the lesson.

-Type of lesson: Arabic lesson

Option	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Number	06	13	11	21	09	60
%	10%	21.66%	18.33%	35%	15%	100%

Table 2: Middle School Teacher of Arabic rate of Standard Arabic use in the classroom

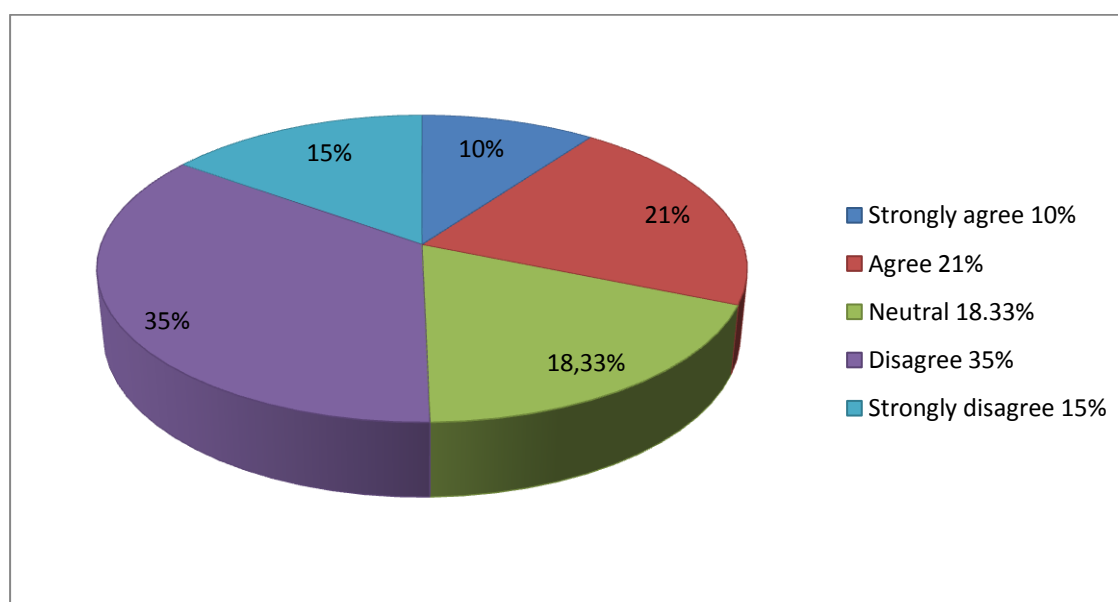


Figure3: Middle School Teacher of Arabic Rate of Standard Arabic use in the classroom

Table 2 and figure 3, indicate that 35 % of the pupils responded that their teacher of Arabic did not use the standard Arabic inside the classroom as a medium while presenting a new material. He code switched to a variety of language most understood by the pupils to facilitate their job, and perhaps teachers themselves are not accustomed to use the standard Arabic inside the classroom. Few would agree that their teacher used the standard language in the classroom with a rate of 21.66; however, 25% of their schoolmate was neutral.

C) Secondary Schools Pupils’ Electronic Survey Findings.

-Item1: Teacher’s use of the standard Arabic while conducting the lesson.

-Type of lesson: Lesson of geography.

Option	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
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Number	05	12	16	23	04	60
%	08.33%	20%	26.66%	38.33%	06.66%	100%

Table 3: Secondary School Teacher of Geography Rate of Standard Arabic use in the classroom

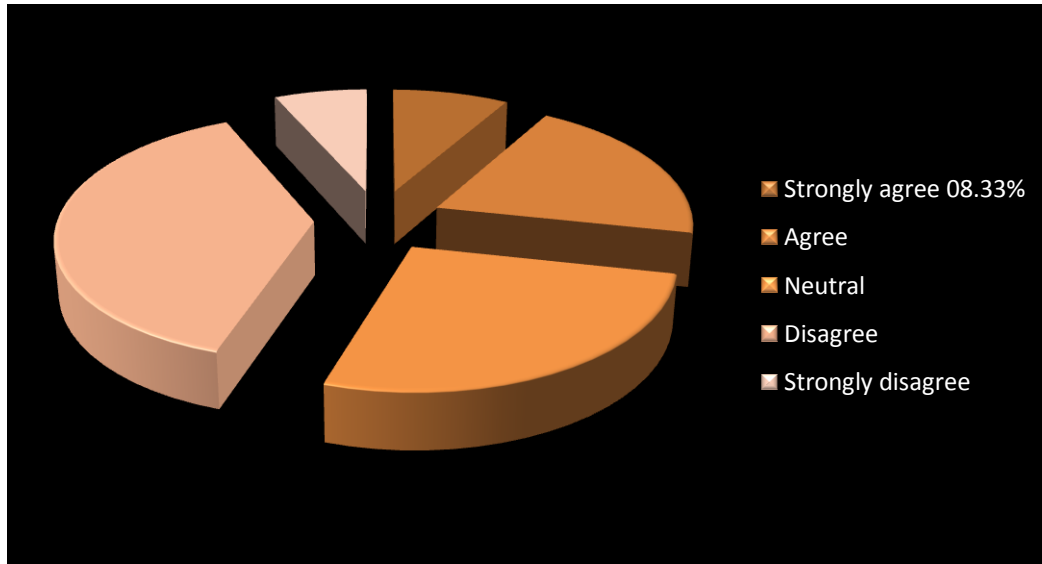


Figure 4: Secondary School Teacher of Geography Rate of Standard Arabic use in the classroom

Table 2 and figure 4, showed that 35 % of the pupils responded that their teacher of geography did not use the standard Arabic as a medium while presenting a new lesson. She was noticed from time to time using a variety of language most understood by the pupils to facilitate her task, few of the respondents would agree that their teacher used the standard language in the classroom with a rate of 20%; however, 26.66% of their schoolmate was neutral.

12. Conclusion

It is clear that from the three schools, and except for the teacher of Arabic of the middle school, the standard language was almost absent inside the three classrooms. The latter entails pupils' ignorance of using the standard Arabic since their teachers were reluctant to take the initiative. For a better preservation of the standard language, ways of teaching should be phased out and replaced by a new philosophy that marks the use of the standard Arabic as a prominent factor in preserving the learners' identity. This study underscores the vital educative potential and numerous benefits of using the standard language in the classroom for positive learning outcomes, the intellectual implications of setting up the infrastructure, and encouraging teachers to overcome their anxieties of using Arabic language as a vehicle to

present their lessons. Of course, the purpose of both the standard Arabic and the variety of language is to maximize pupils' understanding and provide a space where learning can be best facilitated for both the learner and the teacher. One of the ultimate goals of focusing on the use of Arabic language inside the classroom is to actively engage pupils in language use and motivate them to use it even out of the classroom doors in a practical and realistic way. This can be achieved through an open learning context which fosters openness and access to the subjects and information through modern technology means, wherein pupils are motivated and directed to communicate with each other using the standard Arabic.

In terms of future development, it is clear that using Arabic language will be integral to the pupil-centered process of teaching Arabic to modern standards. As such, the quality of teaching and the teacher, and application of pupils to modern educational foundations would benefit from an extensive survey of Arabic language skills to improve the overall communication proficiency. In conclusion, we believe that this process can fully enrich pupil thinking and practical language skills and promote improved efficacy in overall teaching and learning. Indeed it is evident that many routine learning issues that can be overcome through the effective decisions and appropriately insist on teachers, while funding ramifications can be addressed through ministerial planning and the establishment of an infrastructure which prioritizes the interests of effective learning.

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