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دمج المدوّنة اللغويّة في تدريس اللغة العربيّة في جنوب غرب نيجيريا

Integration of Corpus into Teaching Arabic Language in Southwest, Nigeria.

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ملخص

تتمتع اللغة العربيّة بأهميّة تاريخيّة في نيجيريا، حيث كانت ذات يوم لغتها الرسميّة. على الرغم من أنها أصبحت الآن لغة أجنبيّة في نيجيريا، إلا أنها تظل حيوية لمواطنيها لأسباب عديدة. وفي ضوء ذلك، تطوّر نهج تدريس اللغة وتعلّمها في جنوب غرب نيجيريا، المنطقة الناطقة بلغة اليوروبا. ومع ذلك، لم يتمّ التوصل بعُد إلى نهج مُرضٍ؛ يرى العديد من المتعلّمين اليوم أنّهم يظهرون مستوى غير مرضي من الكفاءة في اللغة بعد سنوات من التعلّم. وقد أشار الباحثون إلى أن المواد التعليميّة غير المناسبة- التي غالبًا ما يتمّ استيرادها من دول عربيّة مثل المملكة العربيّة السعوديّة والكويت ومصر دون مراعاة السياقات المحليّة- تساهم في هذه المشكلة. ولمعالجة هذه المشكلة، تقترح هذه الورقة دمج المنهج القائم على المدوّنة في تدريس اللغة العربيّة. ومن خلال استخدام مجموعة متوازية، يمكن تطوير مواد تعليميّة مخصّصة، مما قد يؤدّي إلى تقص وقت التعلّم وتعزيز الكفاءة لمتعلمي اليوروبا.

الكلمات المفاتيح: العربيّة؛ اليوروبا؛ التعليم والتعلّم؛ المدوّنة المتوازية.

Abstract

Arabic holds historical significance in Nigeria, once serving as its official language. Though it is now a foreign language in Nigeria, it remains vital to its citizens for numerous reasons. In view of that, the language teaching and learning approach in southwest, Nigeria's Yoruba-speaking region, has evolved. However, a satisfying approach has not yet been reached; several learners are today seeing displaying an unsatisfactory level of proficiency in the language after years of learning. Researchers have pinpointed that unsuitable learning materials, often imported from Arab countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Egypt without

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considering local contexts, contribute to this issue. To address it, this paper proposes integrating a corpus-based approach to teaching Arabic. By utilizing a parallel corpus, tailored instructional materials can be developed, potentially reducing learning time and enhancing proficiency for Yoruba learners.

Keywords: Arabic; Yoruba; Teaching and Learning; Parallel Corpus.

1. Introduction

The history of teaching and learning Arabic in Nigeria can be traced back to the 10th century when Arabs extended their commercial transactions to the northern parts of the country (Galadachii,1982:70). They came in as merchants. The Nigerian traders welcomed them to the extent of trying to speak Arabic with them by imitation to facilitate smooth transactions. In no time, some traders could transact with the Arabs in their language successfully. During that period, the Arabs were directly or indirectly introducing their religion, Islam, to the Nigerian traders as they were teaching their language. This is because Arabic and Islam are interwoven; almost all the linguistic aspects of the language are embedded in the Quran, the most fundamental source of Islamic religion. The number of Arabic learners and Muslims increased concurrently among Nigerians and reached the southern part of the country by the end of the 11th century (Abdulbaaki, 2022:13).

By the 14th century, Islam flourished all over southwest Nigeria. Muslims' quest to learn more about their religion led to the emergence of another approach to learning Arabic—the Traditional method. Some scholars call this the Quranic Approach because all the learning processes revolve around the Quran (Kamil, 2016: 198). The learners often sit in a semi-circular structure in front of the teacher while he recites the Quran, and they repeat it after him recursively.

At one point, a book that remains relevant to date, known as "Alqaʿidatu Albaghdadiyat", was introduced for beginners to improve their traditional learning approach. They were to study it at first before graduating to use the Quran. The book, whose author remains anonymous, comprises two phrases: The first contains Arabic letters and sounds, while the second contains the thirtieth and last part of the Quran (Al Shareedah, 2018). Exposure to the two phrases prepares learners for basic listening and reading skills in Arabic.

However, the approach still needs to cover all the language skills that the learners need. It emphasizes on developing reading and listening skills in learners but ignores their writing and communicative skills. As a result of this deficiency, scholars later used small wooden boards where the intended lesson would be written, and the Yoruba learners would have to master the lesson before proceeding to the next one, regardless of the duration it takes. Eventually, learners were seen showcasing an improvement in their writing skills, in addition to their reading and listening skills, at graduation.

Moving forward, even though learners learned much vocabulary from their Quranic knowledge, Abolaji (2012) opined that they found it challenging to engage in basic conversation in Arabic as a result of not going through any systematic plan to develop their understanding and communicative competence (Norbert & Michael, 2020:21) in the language. To find a solution to deficiencies in Arabic teaching ways, grammar-translation approach and some others surface in Nigerian Arabic Education. The grammar-translation approach is a systematic study of the language grammar while the language is codified and arranged into fixed rules learned by heart. It remains the most common approach to date. However, it has witnessed many modifications, especially after the establishment of several modern Arabic schools at the start of the 20th century (Abdulbaaki, 2022: 21). For instance, in addition to Quranic studies, some religious textbooks about the fundamentals of Islam and general Arabic culture- which were majorly imported from Arab countries like Saudi Arabia and Egypt- are introduced to the learners.

Today, the effectiveness of the grammar-translation approach and other approaches used in Arabic learning is questioned. It fails to aim at solving the learners' immediate linguistic needs and appears to take a long learning duration. It is assumed to be a result of the learners being occupied with learning vocabulary from the literature designed mostly for native speakers or for describing other societies quite distinct from theirs (Kamil,2016:199; Mikail,2022:89). Besides, the learners are being overwhelmed with the metalinguistic knowledge of Arabic rather than the effective use of it, which should be their priority. To find an effective solution to this issue, this paper,

using descriptive and analytical approaches, suggests implementing a well-designed Yoruba Arabic parallel corpus approach in the teaching process.

2. Corpus-Based Approach in Teaching a Foreign Language

Corpora are electronically available collections of authentic written/spoken language, offering valuable insights into a language. They provide learners with the opportunity to identify linguistic and situational co-occurrence patterns of a language (Reppen 2010: 4). It does not only caution language learners against distorted representations of their targeted language by presenting authentic language texts but also unveil language features that intuition might overlook (O'Keeffe et al., 2007: 21).

Corpora are being introduced to the teaching and learning process in different ways. Leech (1997) categorizes them into direct, semi-direct, and indirect. Direct ways refer to all the logic of utilizing corpora to directly influence the teaching and learning process, like incorporating them while teaching. Indirect ways are used for descriptive activities relevant to teaching and learning, like reference work and curriculum development. At the same time, semi-direct application is the building of corpora tailored for teaching, like compiling learner corpora. However, some linguists, like Bernardini (2000:15), believe that semi-direct applications still come under indirect applications. Recognizing these ways is vital for educators, as corpora offer valuable insights into authentic language usage, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical language learning in classrooms.

Corpus-based instruction aligns with the principles of discovery learning and data-driven learning (DDL). As proposed by Bruner in 1961, discovery learning perceives learning as a process of uncovering new knowledge, emphasizing problem-solving as a means of acquiring understanding. In corpus-based tasks, learners utilize their existing knowledge to develop analytical skills. On the other hand, DDL, introduced by Johns in 1990, entails using computer-generated concordances in classrooms to investigate language usage patterns. Johns' methodology for DDL involves three stages: observation, classification, and generalization. Thus, the method fosters student engagement in analyzing regularities within the language they are studying. In the corpus-based approach,

students are viewed as researchers who enhance their learning by accessing linguistic data (Johns 1991: 2).

With the advent of Data-Driven learning, various types of corpora have become focal points in foreign language education. Among these, parallel corpora—collections of aligned, translated texts in multiple languages—have garnered significant attention. Widely utilized in language learning, parallel corpora offer learners numerous benefits. For instance, they enable cross-linguistic searches, aiding in exploring linguistic and cultural disparities between languages (Xie, 2015), and are valuable in translation studies, among other advantages. Literature has shown the practicality and viability of parallel corpora in teaching and learning different linguistic phenomena of a foreign language. For instance, Csató et al. (2010) explored data-driven learning in teaching Turkish as a foreign language in Sweden. Using a Swedish–Turkish parallel corpus and collaborative tools, they facilitated students in formulating and testing hypotheses on lexical, morphological, and syntactic aspects. The result of the study showed that the learners exhibited significant improvement in their contrastive analysis and translation skills.

Furthermore, Bluemel (2014) employed a Chinese/English parallel corpus explicitly designed for pedagogical purposes to teach English to Chinese language learners at the beginners' level in a high school. The study showed that the corpus tool effectively aids the learners in reading comprehension and writing skills development.

In addition, Reynolds (2015) carried out a research on academic writing self-editing. He used an English Chinese parallel corpus and concordance on twenty-five Taiwanese medical students. Statistical analysis of its result indicated an improved verb-noun collocation accuracy in essay drafts, and qualitative feedback revealed varying levels of acceptance and success among the students.

In another study, Wong and Lee (2016) used a parallel corpus to instruct Mandarin-speaking beginners in Cantonese. The students independently explored sentence and word alignment, improving their Cantonese vocabulary knowledge.

The study highlights the effectiveness of data-driven learning at the beginner level and indicates potential applications for other closely related language pairs.

Similarly, researchers have shown the effectiveness of using the corpus-based approach in teaching Arabic as a foreign language. For instance, the studies of Zaki(2017) and Golfetto(2021) showed encouraging feedback on using the approach in vocabulary building and enhancing grammatical rules for both elementary and intermediate-level learners.

3. Demonstration of Corpus-Based Approach in Teaching Arabic in Southwest, Nigeria.

Given the advantages and successes recorded using the corpus-based approach in teaching and learning different foreign languages, including Arabic, discussed earlier, there is a high potentiality that the use of a properly built parallel corpus between Arabic and Yoruba would provide a significant improvement in learning Arabic to the learners in the southwest region of Nigeria. However, the corpus to be used should be carefully built for the same purpose. To achieve that, Hammed (2024: 50-52) discusses a detailed guideline for building such an Arabic/Yoruba parallel corpus, including some of the crucial features the corpus should exhibit and its challenges.

3.1. Building and Compiling a Yoruba/Arabic Corpus Relevant to Southwest, Nigeria.

For this paper, the design model of the British National Corpus (BNC) is used to build a linguistic Yoruba/Arabic parallel corpus for teaching and learning Arabic by the Yorubas from the basic level. That is to ensure a reasonably representative and balanced corpus, as there is no specific standard yardstick for that (McEnery et al., 2006: 16). BNC is chosen because it is widely considered balanced, as several corpora have been built based on its model. Among these corpora are the American National Corpus, the National Corpus of Polish, the 21st Century Sejong Corpus, and the Russian Reference Corpus (Sharoff, 2006:66).

Published Yoruba texts across different genres produced in southwest Nigeria, starting from the 21st century to date, are considered the population for

building the corpus, while the sample frame considered includes Yoruba online texts, novels, Islamic literature books, and spoken texts. Texts are then selected from these categories using the stratified sampling method, as shown in Table 1 below. The initial total number of words (tokens) was 150,354 but was reduced to 103,880 after final cleaning.

Table 1: Record of Raw Texts Compiled.

Written Texts			Spoken Text
Online Texts	46,845	Formal Settings	6,205
Yoruba Novels	44,968	Informal Settings	4,348
Islamic Literature Books	1,514		
Total	93,327		10,553
Grand Total			103,880

The Table 1 shows that, in the end, the written compiled texts cover about 90% of the whole texts and are selected based on the field, period of production, and publication type. On the other hand, voice texts cover only about 10% of the total and are taken from formal and informal settings to complement each other. The texts are selected based on two criteria: demographic and context-controlled. The demographic component of the corpus consists of informal encounters recorded by 20 volunteers, selected according to their age group, gender, social class, and geographic region, while the context-controlled component consists of formal encounters, which include meetings, lectures, and radio programs recorded. Overall, texts were selected from different fields, including politics, sports, mathematics, economics, dialogue, and others, to ensure a reflection of contemporary Yoruba society. Furthermore, they are all categorized into nine files based on their fields for easy processing.

Out of the 103,880 tokens compiled (61,306 Yoruba tokens and 42,574 Arabic tokens), there are 28,997 words types distributed between the two languages. Regarding the word types, it is found that the number of words in Yoruba texts reached 11,090 words, while that of Arabic words is 17,907 words, as shown below in Table 2:

Table 2: Analyses of Raw Texts Compiled

S/N	Yoruba Tokens	Arabic Tokens	Yoruba Word types	Arabic Word types	Yoruba/ Arabic Tokens
1	6225	4277	1479	2029	10502

2	3184	2320	755	1275	5504
3	5988	3900	1112	1846	9888
4	6669	4296	1321	1960	10965
5	7186	4376	1508	1983	11562
6	12906	8897	1837	3497	21803
7	2523	1712	1479	1013	4235
8	15508	11221	755	4197	26729
9	1117	1575	1112	107	2692
Total	61306	42574	11090	17907	103880
%	59	41	28997		100

Looking at the Table 2 above from two perspectives- the frequency of tokens in each of the two languages and their word types, it showed that the frequency of the Yoruba tokens exceeds the corresponding Arabic tokens by a ratio of approximately 3:2. Why? It could indicate the flexibility of the Arabic language and that Arabs use fewer words in their expressions compared to Yoruba speakers. This implies that Yoruba speakers need fewer vocabulary to express themselves in Arabic than in their native language.

Conversely, the number of Arabic word types is greater than that of Yoruba in about 3:2. This illustrates that Arabic has more vocabulary than Yoruba. Thus, to master Arabic, Yoruba learners need to learn more Arabic vocabulary than their mother tongue.

Figure 1 : Tokens & Word types Comparism Between Arabic & Yoruba Texts.
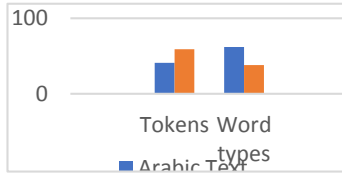
After getting the raw corpus text in UTF-8 encoded, it is uploaded to AntPConc, a parallel corpus analysis tool that works with line-break aligned in other to separate the Yoruba text from Arabic text.

Figure 2: Raw Yoruba and Arabic texts before separation
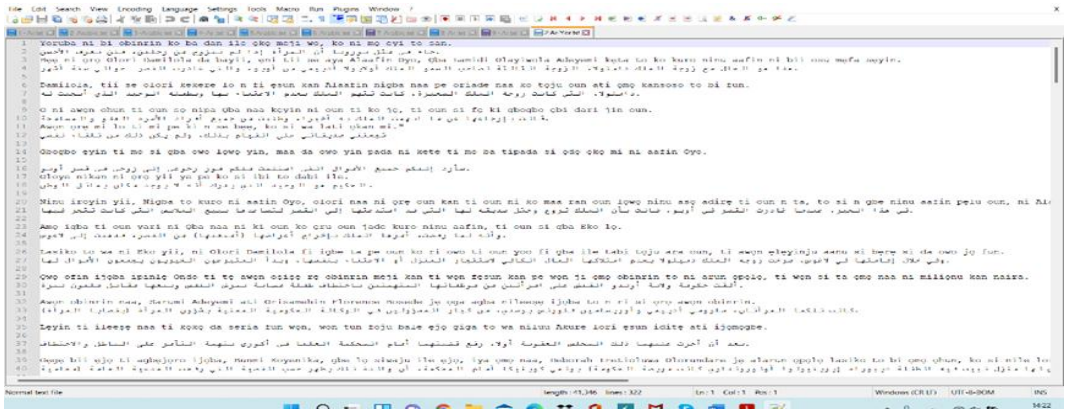
Once the clean raw texts are ready, the users can use any one of the several reasonably priced or free corpora tools (like AntConc, MonoConc, and WordSmith Tools, among others) to extract necessary linguistic structures needed at the word, phrase, or sentence level based on their linguistic urges. For instance, words can be accessed via the wordlist window of AntConc, while lexical phrases (Norbert & Michael, 2020:100) and sentences can be accessed via the cluster/ N-Gram window and concordance window. One of the common initial studies usually carried out at this stage is looking for the number of times and frequency

at which a word or linguistic pattern appears in the texts. It helps to know what to prioritize above others within the teaching/learning process. For instance, as stated by Leech (2001:1), it is rational for a teacher to start teaching more frequent vocabulary before proceeding to fewer common ones. So, the corpus tools can be used to extract the necessary teaching materials with ease.

Figure 3: Sample of using cluster/N-Gram window to extract common phrases used in Arabic.
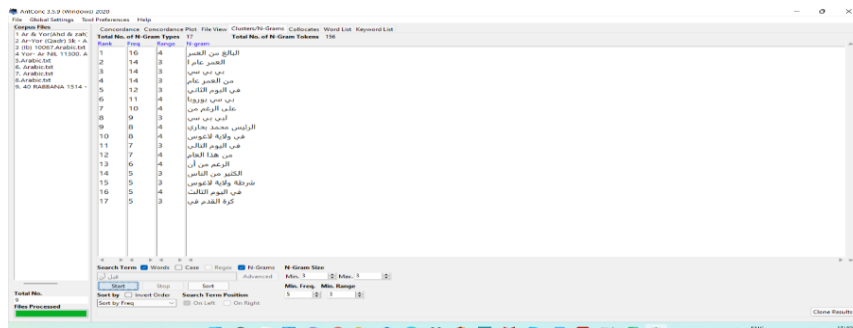
The table 3 and 4 below, for example, illustrates some useful outputs discovered from the corpus.

Table 3: Some Common Idiomatic Expressions Used in The Yoruba Society.

S/N	Idiomatic Expression	Arabic Usage
1	Aikowo rin ejo ni omo araye fin pawon.	إنما يأكل الذئب من الغنم القاصية.
2	Obirin bimo fun ni ko ni ki o ma pani je.	إذا أردتَ فضح سرّك سلمه إلى امرأة.
3	Bi ina ko ba tan laso eje ko le tan lee kanna.	لا راحة في الدنيا.
4	Kekere ni mo fi ba o tan ko see fi obe ge.	القرابة بين إنسان وآخر لا يمكن فصلها على أيّ حال.
5	Agba kii wa loja ki ori omo titun wo.	لا يعوج صفوف الصغار بوجود الكبار.
6	Bi ebiti ko ba p'eku a m'eyin f'eleyin.	إن لم أنَل منك الفرَجَ فلا يأتِيني منك الحَرج.
7	Bi iya nla ba gbeni sanle kekeke a gori eni.	إذا جاءت السنة جاء معها أعوانها.
8	Eniti ko se oran itufu kii kiyesi ekule.	من لم يقترف لا يرتجف.
9	Bi koko ban feni lefee a ki r'awujo kumo.	رحم الله امرءا عَرف قَدر نفسه.
10	Bi a ba fi owo we owo nse ni owo n mo.	يد واحدة لا تصفّق.

Table 4: Some Common Yoruba Tokens Differentiated by Diacritics

S\N	Yoruba Token Without Diacritics	Its Different Forms with Diacritics	Its Arabic Word	Its English Meaning
1	Owo	Owó	مال	Money
		Òwò	تجارة	Trade
		Ówo	جرحة	infection
2	Ọwọ	Ọwò	مكنسة	Broom
		Ọ̀wò	شرف	Honour
		ọwó	يدّ	Hand
		ọ̀wọ́	مجموعة	Group
3	Ọkọ	Ọkọ́	مجرفة	Hoe
		Ọkọ̀	سيارة	Vehicle
		Ọkọ	زوج	Husband
		Ọ̀kọ̀	رمح	Spear
4	Ogun	Ògùn	سحر	Charm
		Ọ̀gùn	اسم ولاية	State Name
		Ogun	حرب	War
		Ogún	عشرون	Twenty
		Ògún	إله	god of Iron
5	Igba	Igbá	إناء تقليدي	Calabash
		Ìgbà	وقت	Time
		Ìgbá	نوع الفاكهة	Fruit
		Igba	مائتان	Two Hundred
		Igbà	أداة التسلق(للتمر)	Date Climbing Tool
6	Aro	Aró	صبغ	Dye
		Arò	مديح	Eulogy
		Árò	رثاء	Remembrance
		Àrò	حجر الطبخ	Cooking Stone

3.2. Implementation of the Corpus-Based Approach in Teaching.

It is pertinent for curriculum designers, authors, and teachers to keep learners in mind when preparing their educational resources. For instance, in the process of using corpus materials, the corpus outputs can be arranged based on the level of the learners. This represents starting with the words that the learners need to fulfill their daily needs in their environment, such as words or phrases for greeting and getting to know each other, then moving on to what they need less often (Norbert & Michael, 2020:29). Also starting with the concept of concrete things before moving on to abstract concepts would facilitate their mental conceptualization ability. Also, as proposed by the contrastive analysis hypothesis (Norbert & Michael, 2020:114), Yoruba learners are likely to find assimilation of the linguistic knowledge where Arabic and Yoruba are crystal different difficult but learn where similarities exist between the languages with ease. Thus, more focus should be on the texts exhibiting linguistic differences. The opinions of those who are of the view of commencing teaching process from introducing easy vocabulary to difficult ones, in terms of pronunciation and writing, should be revisited (Badr, 2013: 133); Because the goal of learning may not be achieved in the expected manner by learning easy but uncommon vocabulary, while neglecting complex but common vocabulary. Therefore, it is better to prioritize the learners' linguistic needs in their environment.

Furthermore, in order to logically implement the corpus to facilitate the teaching/learning of Arabic, the general regulations in the 2001 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, designed by the Council of Europe and recommended by the European Union Council Resolution for teaching foreign languages inside and outside Europe, is considered a valuable material. It does not only considers all four linguistic skills but also gives room for the changes that may occur based on learners' linguistic needs and environment. Besides, it is also considered a coherent, clear, and comprehensive reference developed to clarify the way forward for learners and teachers of foreign languages.

In consideration of the general regulations, learners can be divided into three educational stages, with the objectives of each stage corresponding to that of three levels (A, B, C) in the European Framework of Reference for languages, which are as follows:

i. The basic stage aims to prepare Yoruba learners to learn the Arabic language at the basic level. The stage has two levels: Basic level - A and Basic level - B.

ii. The preparatory stage aims to prepare learners to use the target language independently. It has two levels: primary level A and primary level B.

iii. The secondary stage aims to prepare learners to the level where they can use the Arabic language proficiently. This stage also has two levels: secondary level - A and secondary level - B.

The aims and objectives of each level can be presented across the four language skills as follows:

Table 5: The Educational Aims and Objectives Across the Four Language Skills.

Learner Level	Writing	Conversation	Reading	Listen
Basic level A	Ability to write general basic vocabulary, such as information about oneself from one's name, country...	The ability to express in a simple sentence about their daily life, such as asking and answering simple questions.	Recognize general vocabulary and simple structures.	Ability to understand some of the most common vocabulary and short familiar structures.
Basic level B	Ability to write a short text about his daily life, such as a word of thanks.	The ability to express in a simple sentence to describe his environment and study him well, and the ability to participate in simple dialogue on familiar topics.	The ability to read some vocabulary in familiar texts.	Ability to understand vocabulary related to their daily needs, such as family, shopping, and school topics.
Primary level A	The ability to write an essay on familiar topics, such as an essay about oneself.	The ability to engage in improvisational dialogue on familiar topics, such as objects in the room.	The ability to read and understand the most rotating texts in his environment.	Understand the butter of speech on familiar subjects, such as leisure, school.
Primary level B	The ability to write the letter, report, etc. on various	The ability to express fluently and derive the content of speech.	The ability to read articles on familiar topics and find out the	Understand harmonious speech in detail on familiar topics.

	topics in a good way.		position of the writer.	
Secondary level A	Ability to write where he explains his position on the topic in details.	The ability to express what he heard or read in his own phrases.	The ability to read a realistic and literary text and relate cause and effect relationships in it.	Understanding even clearly unstructured extended speech and the ability to obtain implicit understanding.
Secondary level B	Ability to write in a sound academic manner.	The ability to discuss different topics in logical ways that make it easier for the addressee to understand.	The ability to read any type of writing even competent.	Understand speech on any topic regardless of the speaker's accent without much effort.

Once the aims and objectives of each level are known, the needed educational material corresponding to each level can be easily found in the corpus. The Table 6 below can be used to extract the targeted linguistic phenomena from the corpus for each level based on the Arabic level of the learner.

Table 6 : Useful Guide for Curriculum Design Across the Learners' Level.

Learner Level	Output		
	Grammar	Phrases	vocabulary
Basic level A	Basic	Familiar short phrases related to his daily needs.	Common public words related to his daily needs.
Basic level B	Basic	Familiar short phrases.	The most common and general words.
Primary level A	Secondary	Familiar medium phhrases about his environment.	General less common than the previous vocabulary.
Primary level B	Secondary	Diverse in terms of	General less

		subject matter and length.	common than the previous vocabulary.
Secondary level A	Open	Focus on writing on familiar topics.	Less common in use around the learner.
Secondary level B	Open	Focus on writing on diverse topics	Less common in use.

3.3. Challenges of Using the Corpus-Based Approach in Teaching/Learning of Arabic in South West, Nigeria.

One of the major issues that discourages the use of corpora in language teaching in Nigeria is the scarcity of suitable ones for the task. Most corpora are built for purposes other than teaching and learning, like translation and research. In fact, no Yoruba/ Arabic parallel corpus purposely designed and developed for pedagogical motive can be found in circulation (Hammed, 2024). The wrong choice of corpus could be misleading to users. So, users are advised to build their intended corpus for effective learning.

In addition, it is unfortunate that most Arabic teachers/learners in the region lack corpus-building and utilization skills. This constitutes another challenge. Even if a suitable corpus is provided to average Nigerians, most of them might not be able to use the corpus' basic tools to conduct simple linguistics and arithmetic research and interpret and present their findings in a logical manner. This could result from the poor implementation of information and communication technology (ICT) policy in Nigeria (Ajayi, 2023).

4. Conclusion

The Arabic language came to Nigeria in the 10th century. Unfortunately, after different teaching and learning approaches, the people of the southwest region are still struggling to reach their native-like level after almost a decade of learning. Approaches used over the decades, like imitation, tradition, and grammar-translation, have proved not to be successful in one aspect or the other.

This paper shows that incorporating a Yoruba/Arabic parallel corpus into the teaching and learning process may provide the holistic learning experience needed by the learners. Once a well-designed, purposeful corpus is built, it could

be used to identify and correct the lapses in the existing teaching and learning approaches, especially in terms of inappropriate learning texts and long learning duration.

However, it should be noted that a corpus-based approach is suggested to supplement, not replace, the existing approaches to attain an all-inclusive learning experience. Also, the users (both teachers and students) are required to have basic corpus utilization skills to maximize the corpus's benefits.

The limitation of this paper lies in the small size of the corpus built and the inability to execute it in real life due to time constraints. Thus, it is recommended that future researchers cover these aspects.

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