



## **Students' Motivation and Attitude towards the Learning of Arabic Language: A Case Study of Arabic Students in Nigerian Universities**

**Kazeem Oluwatoyin Ajape<sup>1</sup>, Arifin Mamat<sup>2</sup>, Yusuf Abdul Azeez<sup>3\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Arabic, Michael Otedola College of Primary Education, Noforija-Epe, Lagos State, Nigeria, <sup>2</sup>Department of Islamic Law, Institute of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, <sup>3</sup>Department of Islamic Law, Faculty of Islamic Civilization, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 81310 Skudai, Johor, Malaysia. \*Email: [yusufaazeez@utm.my](mailto:yusufaazeez@utm.my)

### **ABSTRACT**

The study of students' motivation and attitude towards the usage of second language ( $L_2$ ) has recently become an important concept across the disciplines of second language acquisition and communication. This paper highlights the result of the survey questionnaire adopted from Gardner's (2009) attitude motivation test battery that was administered among 288 Arabic students from six universities in Nigeria. Principal component analysis was carried out to determine the validity of the items in the Nigerian context. 23 out of the 50 items with factor loading  $<0.40$  loaded on four factors with eigenvalue  $<1.0$ . Descriptive statistics, Pearson product moment correlation and multiple regression analyses were used to explore the students' attitude and motivation towards the learning of Arabic language. The four constructs of the questionnaire are: Integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation, motivation and instrumentality. The result showed that students have high level of both integrativeness and attitude towards the state of arts of learning, while their level of motivation and instrumentality is very low. In addition to that, there is positive and moderate correlation between integrativeness and attitude towards the state of arts of learning, while the correlation between attitude and motivation is very low. The same thing is applicable to integrativeness and motivation. Instrumentality, however, fails to correlate with any of the factors. The multiple regression analysis showed that attitude toward the state of arts of learning is a good predictor of the students' integrativeness. In the final analysis, some pedagogical recommendations were put forth in the paper to improve the students' motivation and positive attitude towards the learning of Arabic language in the Nigerian universities.

**Keywords:** Arabic Curriculum, Arabic Language, Attitude and Motivation, Arabic Students, Nigerian Universities

**JEL Classifications:** M000

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Arabic language has remained an essential religious education since its inception in Nigeria. The emergence of the language in the history of Nigeria which dates back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E shows that the early Nigerian Muslims gave much recognition to the language in order to understand their religion. As a result, Arabic and Islamic studies become a twin subject that cannot be easily separated from each other. The close relationship between Arabic and Islamic studies makes it easy for the students learning the language to access it from time to time, and it is against this

background that Muslims in Nigeria attached great commitments to the course of Arabic and Islamic studies.

Wherever there is a Muslim population, some kind of *Quranic* as well as advanced Arabic schools are established in which both Arabic and Islamic studies are taught simultaneously (Fafunwa, 1974). However, the emergence of the imperial forces of the European countries and the European Missionary activities with their fragile reconciliation between their beliefs and secular thoughts posed a serious threat to the well-organized Arabic and Islamic education in Nigeria (Danjuma and Rasli, 2013). As a

result of this, teaching and learning of Arabic language were given little or no attention, while the design and the development of Arabic curriculum and the methodology of teaching Arabic language became the sole effort and responsibility of the traditional private Arabic teachers. The learners of the language, within the society, were relegated to the lowest ebb, as they were not recognised by the government and were not allowed to take any post in the government's administration. Thus, the learning of the language was confined to the study of Islamic religion while the functions of the Arabic language graduates were restricted to the mosque affairs only. Hence, the non-challant attitude of the governments, especially in the southern part of the country, towards the development of the Arabic language. They see it as part of Islamic religion that needs to be handled with caution because of the multi religious nature of the country. Thus, Arabic language is assumed by many people as a course that is offered in most of the Nigerian institutions solely because of Islamic studies (Oderinde, 2007; Raji, 2002; Lawal, 2002). According to Ogunbiyi, "Arabic script is perceived as a veritable source of magic and a course learnt by religious militants" (Ogunbiyi, 1987. p. 12).

The job opportunity of Arabic language graduates in Nigeria is threatened with the nature of the curriculum which is still very stagnant and yet to actualise the aims and objectives of teaching Arabic as a foreign language in Nigerian universities. This continues to be the main cause of the poor enrolment of students into the departments of Arabic language in many of the Nigerian Universities, most especially in the Southern part of the country. More so, when many students are not motivated to learn Arabic language. They perceive it's learning in tertiary institution as a waste of time and they see it as a course that is not lucrative enough to cater for their future needs (Raji, 2002; Lawal, 2002). While those that studied it in their first degree do not want to pursue it for their future academic endeavours. Thus, constructive, yet logical analyses of students' attitude and motivation towards the Arabic language in Nigerian Universities become necessary in order to determine the relevance and sustainability of the course in Nigerian system of education.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Modern language teaching and learning has emphasised the significance of learners' attitude and motivation towards the acquisition of the target language (Gardner, 1985; Dörnyei, 1990; 1994; Oxford and Shearin, 1994; Oxford, 1996; Belmechri and Hummel, 1998; Crookes and Schmidt, 1991; Ahmed and Jamshaid, 2014). Gardner (2009) asserts that before the establishment of his language attitude motivation test battery (AMTB) in early 1950s, there were no much literature associated with students' attitude and motivation towards the acquisition of second language. He observed that from the past literatures on the second language acquisition (SLA), it was generally believed that learning languages was the sign of an educated person. As a consequence, tests of intelligence came to be used as predictors of ultimate success (Gardner, 2009; Ahmed and Younis, 2014). However, social psychologists were the first to initiate serious research on motivation in language learning because of their awareness of the social and cultural effects on L<sub>2</sub> learning (Dörnyei, 2003). Some of the early models on

language motivation include that of Krashen's (1981) Monitor Model and Schumann's (1986) Acculturation Model. The most commonly used by various researchers is the Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model which is measured through the use of different attitudinal and motivational scales in what Gardner called the AMTB. Dörnyei (2003) asserts that, "the most famous language motivation questionnaire is Robert Gardner's (1985) and was assumed to be the biggest second language motivation research." Gardner highlighted two kinds of motivation, the integrative and the instrumental with much emphasis on the former. The integrative motivation refers to learners' desire to at least communicate or at most integrate (or even assimilate) with the members of the target language while the instrumental motivation on the other hand refers to more functional reasons for learning the language such as getting a good job or higher salary or passing an examination (Gardner, 1985). The model was subjected to series of criticism from large number of researchers despite acknowledging the breakthrough which the model is able to make in motivation research for second language education (Dörnyei, 1990; 1994; Oxford and Shearin, 1994; Oxford, 1996; Belmechri and Hummel, 1998; and Crookes and Schmidt, 1991). Controversies bemoaning the model made Gardner to re-examine and clarify his views in the paper which he presented at the annual meetings of the Canadian Association of Applied Linguistics, Ottawa. He asserts that, the AMTB has a definite structure that comprises 11 scales measuring six constructs. They are; Attitudes toward the learning situation (ALS), integrativeness (INT), motivation (MOT), language anxiety (ANX), instrumental orientation (INO) and parental encouragement (PE) (Gardner, 2009). The concept of these six construct reveal that, in general, motivation enhances SLA/foreign language acquisition, and that learners ranking high on integrative orientation work harder and learn faster than those who are low on integrative motivation (Clément et al., 1994; Tremblay and Gardner, 1995).

Different researches have also established the fact that integrative and instrumental orientations are not opposite ends of a continuum (Belmechri and Hummel, 1998; Dörnyei, 1994). Instead, they are positively related and both are affectively loaded goals that can sustain learning. However, some researchers believe that integrative orientation plays a more important role in second/foreign language learning than instrumental or extrinsic motivation (Gardner et al., 1987; Gardner et al., 1989; Noels et al., 2001; Iftikhar and Qureshi, 2014). Nevertheless, as to which one is more important varies from context to context. Attitude is yet another important effective factor in learning a second language. The successful acquisition of a second language seems to some extent, contingent upon learners' views of the language learning environment, the learning situation, and how they view the target language and its speakers. The relationship between motivation and attitudes has been considered a prime concern in language learning research. Gardner and Lambert (1972) state that the learner's motivation to learn is determined by his attitudes towards the other group in particular and by his orientation towards the learning task itself.

In addition to that, Arabic language is taught as a foreign or second language to non-native speakers in different parts of the world

depending on the goals and objectives of acquiring the language. In the Nigerian context, Arabic is studied as a foreign language, therefore, it is expected that the instrumental motivation should play important role in the acquisition of the language since the ultimate aim of learning the language according to Nigeria's System of Education is to equip the students with adequate training for jobs in the fields of teaching, translation and interpretation, administration, journalism and diplomatic service (BMAS, 2007). Therefore, it will be interesting and worthwhile to investigate the Nigerian students' motivation and attitude towards the learning of Arabic language, an area in which not many empirical studies have been carried out.

### 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims at investigating the students' motivation and attitudes towards the learning of Arabic language and to:

1. Determine the levels of that motivation and attitude
2. Determine the relationship between the factors responsible for that attitude and motivation.

In that regard, the research questions flow thus:

1. How do students perceive their attitude and motivation towards the learning of Arabic language in the Nigerian universities?
2. What are the relationships between the factors of attitude and motivation towards the learning of Arabic language?

### 4. SAMPLING PROCEDURE

In order to ensure a fair representation of the targeted population in terms of ownership/proprietorship of universities in Nigeria, the universities selected were based on either being a Federal or State or Private owned. The existing six geo-political zones were utilised using the stratification adopted in the Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette of 19 December 1997, vol.84, No 74 that categorised the 36 states in Nigeria including the Federal Capital Territory into six geo-political zones. Therefore, the respondents for the questionnaire were chosen from six universities each from only four geo-political zones. The Federal universities among them are University of Maiduguri, Borno State (North-East), Bayero University Kano, Kano State (North-West), University of Ilorin, Kwara State (North-Central) and University of Ibadan, Oyo State (South-West). The State University, among the selected ones is the Lagos State University (South-West), while the selected private University is Al-Hikmah University Ilorin, Kwara State (North-Central).

The information gathered from the Arabic departments of these universities showed that the total number of students taking Arabic language as a course in all the selected universities during 2012/2013 academic session was 1148. Therefore, 288 students were randomly chosen as the sample size from the population number of 1148 students across the selected universities involved in this study. The selection mode of which is found to satisfy the sample size criteria of Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

## 5. INSTRUMENT

The AMTB: The Technical Report of Gardner (1985) was adopted alongside with the four constructs of Gardner's (2009) in order to explore the Arabic students' attitude and motivations toward the learning of Arabic language in the Nigerian institutions of higher learning. These constructs are:

- i. Integrativeness; it reflects an individual's inclination to interact or identify with the  $L_2$  community
- ii. Attitudes toward the learning situation; It subsumes the individual's evaluation of the language teacher and the  $L_2$  course
- iii. Motivation; It is the  $L_2$  learners' desire to learn the  $L_2$ , the effort invested and the attitude towards learning
- iv. Instrumentality; it refers more to the functional reasons for learning the language.

### 5.1. Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The 50 items measuring four constructs of the AMBT were adopted and modified to be in conformity with the study of Arabic language in the Nigerian context. The original items were used by Gardner to explore the factors in the attitude and motivation of Canadian students studying French. As a result, the researcher adopted it for the need to determine the validity of such items on Arabic students in Nigeria. Therefore, principal component analysis with a Varimax (orthogonal) rotation was conducted on the data gathered from 288 participants in the 50 surveyed questionnaires measuring the attitude and motivation of the Arabic students. An examination of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy suggested that the sample was factorable (KMO = 0.874) and Bartlett's test was highly significant ( $P < 0.0001$ ). The results of an orthogonal rotation of the solution as shown in Table 1 indicates that when loadings  $< 0.40$  were excluded, the K1-criterion analysis yielded a four-factor solution with Eigen value  $> 1.0$  and a simple structure (factor loadings  $\geq 0.30$ ). The first factor; attitude towards the learning situation (ALS) has nine items with 29.786% of the total variance explained. The second factor; instrumental orientation (INO) has five factors with 13.632% of the total variance explained. The third factor; intergrativeness (INT) has five factors with 10.891% of the total variance explained; and, the fourth factor; motivation intensity (MOT) has four factors with 6.837%. The outcome of the four factors explained is 61.146% of the total cumulative variance. Additionally, the internal consistency reliability of each item was determined through the measurement of the Cronbach's alpha. The internal consistency of the four factors are; attitude towards the learning situation (ALS)  $\alpha = 0.902$ , instrumental orientation (INO)  $\alpha = 0.859$ , intergrativeness (INT)  $\alpha = 0.841$ , and motivation intensity (MOT)  $\alpha = 0.825$ . All the items are, however,  $> 0.70$ .

### 5.2. Data Analysis Procedures

Respondents weighed each item on a Likert-type scale that was coded as follows (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree). Statistical Software Package SPSS for Windows (Version 16) was used for data analysis. The frequency of the demographic data: Age, sex, educational background, year of study and religion was analysed. Descriptive statistics analyses of frequencies, means and standard deviation of



**Table 1: Extraction method: Principal component analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with kaiser normalization**

| Rotated component matrix <sup>a</sup> | Component |        |        |       |        |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
|                                       | 1         | 2      | 3      | 4     |        |
| INT4                                  |           |        | 0.735  |       |        |
| INT5                                  |           |        | 0.696  |       |        |
| INT6                                  |           |        | 0.750  |       |        |
| INT7                                  |           |        | 0.752  |       |        |
| INT8                                  |           |        | 0.692  |       |        |
| INO15                                 |           | 0.795  |        |       |        |
| INO16                                 |           | 0.869  |        |       |        |
| INO17                                 |           | 0.850  |        |       |        |
| INO18                                 |           | 0.779  |        |       |        |
| INO19                                 |           | 0.641  |        |       |        |
| ALS21                                 | 0.749     |        |        |       |        |
| ALS22                                 | 0.752     |        |        |       |        |
| ALS23                                 | 0.753     |        |        |       |        |
| ALS24                                 | 0.646     |        |        |       |        |
| ALS25                                 | 0.696     |        |        |       |        |
| ALS26                                 | 0.711     |        |        |       |        |
| ALS28                                 | 0.740     |        |        |       |        |
| ALS29                                 | 0.730     |        |        |       |        |
| ALS30                                 | 0.687     |        |        |       |        |
| MOT34                                 |           |        |        |       | 0.769  |
| MOT37                                 |           |        |        |       | 0.749  |
| MOT42                                 |           |        |        |       | 0.871  |
| MOT43                                 |           |        |        |       | 0.806  |
| Eigenvalues                           | 6.851     | 3.135  | 2.505  | 1.573 | Total  |
| Percentage of total variance (%)      | 29.786    | 13.632 | 10.891 | 6.837 | 61.146 |
| Number of factors extracted           | 9         | 5      | 5      | 4     | 23     |

<sup>a</sup>Factor loading is above 0.50

each item was used to determine the students' rate of their attitude and motivation towards the learning of Arabic language.

## 6. ANALYSIS OF RESULT AND DEMOGRAPHIC REPORT

The total number of the participants; 288.214 (74.3%) were male, while that of the female is 74 (25.7%). Thus, in this study, the number of male participants was greater than that of the female. 65 students (22.6%) were between the ages of 18 and 25, 176 students (61.1%) were between the ages of 26 and 30, while the remaining 47 students (16.3%) were above the age of 30. Almost all the participants have good background in the study of Arabic language before joining the university. 273 (94.8%) of the participants indicated that they acquired the study of the language before their university education, while 15 (5.2%) participants do not have any background in Arabic language before joining the university. All the students that participated in the study are Muslims 288 (100%). There was no any indication whatsoever to show that any Nigerian University has Christian or other believer except Muslims in their Arabic departments.

### 6.1. Result of the Students' Perception Attitude and Motivation towards the Learning of Arabic Language

#### 6.2.1. Integrativeness

The result of the integrative orientation shows that students at the level of integrativeness are very high and they are positively

influenced by their integration with the native speakers. The mean score of the five questionnaire items on integration intensity shows a high tendency of the students integrating with the native speakers. The items with highest mean score is item 4 ( $M = 4.4$ , standard deviation [SD] = 0.77) in which 261 (90%) of the students agreed or strongly agreed that *"the more they get to know the Arabians, the more they want to be fluent in their language."* The same is applicable to item 8 ( $M = 4.4$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ) in which 261 (90%) of the students agreed or strongly agreed that *"studying Arabic can be important for them because it will enable them to better understand and appreciate Arabic art and literature."* In item 6 ( $M = 4.4$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ), 259 (89%) of the students agreed or strongly agreed that *"studying Arabic can be important to them because it will allow them to be more at ease with Arabic speakers."* Item 7 ( $M = 4.3$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ), 247 (84%) shows that students agreed or strongly agreed that studying Arabic can be important for them because *"it will allow them to meet and converse with many Muslims of diverse backgrounds."* Item 5 ( $M = 4.1$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ), indicates that 225 (77%) of the students agreed or strongly agreed that they *"always admire the Arabs."*

#### 6.2.2. Attitudes towards the state of arts of learning

Students, in their attitude towards the state of arts of learning, showed positive response to their teachers and the Arabic course. 139 (82.9%); ( $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ ) agreed or strongly agreed that their teachers are competent. 226 (78.5%); ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 0.1.1$ ) agreed or strongly agreed that their teachers are approachable and 226 (78.5%); ( $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ) agreed or strongly agreed that their teachers are pleasant while 238 (83%); ( $M = 4.17$ ,  $SD = 1.0$ ) agreed or strongly agreed that their teachers are intelligent. On their attitude towards their Arabic courses, 241 (83%); ( $M = 4.3$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ) agreed or strongly agreed that their Arabic courses are meaningful, 228 (79.1%); ( $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 1.0$ ) agreed or strongly agreed that their Arabic courses are enjoyable, 118 (76%); ( $M = 4.0$ ,  $SD = 1.0$ ) agreed or strongly agreed that their Arabic courses are pleasantry, 209 (72.5%); ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ) agreed or strongly agreed that their Arabic courses are rewarding and 232 (80.6%); ( $M = 4.1$ ,  $SD = 1.0$ ) agreed or strongly agreed that their Arabic courses are educational.

#### 6.2.3. Motivation

The result of the motivation intensity showed that students are not so well motivated to learn Arabic language. The means scores of the 5 times tend to the middle side of the scale between  $M = 2.2$  and  $M = 2.9$ . The highest mean is item 34 ( $M = 2.9$ ,  $SD = 1.4$ ) which states that *"When I have any problem in understanding something we are learning in Arabic class, I only seek help for the sake of examination."* 126 (43%) students strongly agreed or disagreed with the statement, and 30 (10.4%) remained neutral while 132 (45.8%) students agreed or strongly agreed with such a kind of statement. 189 (65.6%); ( $M = 2.2$ ,  $SD = 1.4$ ) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they *"do not like people to know that they are studying Arabic in the university,"* 17 (5.9%) remained neutral while 82 (28.5%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. 155 (53.8%) ( $M = 2.5$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ) disagreed or strongly disagreed that *"if the choice is given to them on whether to take Arabic or not, they would have dropped it."* 89 (30.9%) students agreed or strongly agreed with that statement, while 44 (15%) maintained

neutral positions. The last item on the issue of motivation is item 43 which states that “*If there are Arabic-speaking families in my neighborhood, I would never speak Arabic to them.*” 167 (58%); (M = 2.5, SD = 1.4) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. 100 (34%) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, while 21 (7.3%) maintained neutral positions.

#### 6.2.4. Instrumental orientation

The result of the students' instrumental orientation showed certain negative response except in item 19, which state that “*studying Arabic is important to me because I want to become a great Islamic scholar.*” (M = 3.1, SD = 1.3); 107 (37.1%) students disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, 109 (44.8%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while 52 (18.1%) students remained neutral. 172 (59.7%); (M = 2.5, SD = 1.4) disagreed or strongly disagreed that “*Arabic language can be important for them only because they need it for their future career.*” 71 (24.7%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while 45 (15.6) students remained neutral. 171 (59.3%) students disagreed or strongly disagreed that “*studying Arabic can let them become a knowledgeable person.*” (M = 2.7, SD = 1.2); 86 (29.9%) agreed with the statement. While 31 (10.8%) remained neutral. 182 (63.2%) students disagreed or strongly disagreed that learning Arabic language will make them “*to get a good job.*” 67 (24.3%); (M = 2.4, SD = 1.2) students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement while 39 (13.5%) remained neutral. 142 (49.3%) students disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that “*other people will respect them more if they have the knowledge of a foreign language.*” 91 (29.6%); (M = 2.7, SD = 1.2) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while 53 (18.1%) remained neutral.

#### 6.2.5. Correlation between students' attitudes and motivation towards the learning of Arabic language

In addition to the statistical analysis used in assessing the students' level of attitudes and motivation towards the learning of Arabic language, a correlation analysis using Pearson product moment was conducted to explore the relationships between the four factors relating to students' attitudes and motivation. The result derived indicates that out of all the four factors, integrative orientation and attitude towards learning stimulation have moderate and positive correlation ( $r = 0.596, P < 0.01$ ). The more the students' positive attention towards their teachers and their courses, the more they want to integrate and interact with the native speakers. There is low and negative correlation between integrative orientation and motivation ( $r = 0.179, P < 0.01$ ). The same result is also derived on their attitudes and motivations ( $r = 0.146, P < 0.05$ ), which implies that the more the students integrate with the native speakers, the lower their motivation. This same result is also arrived at while comparing the students' attitude and motivation, a situation where instrumental orientation does not correlate with any of the other factors. In order to examine the predictive power of the other factors on integrative orientation, multiple regression analysis was performed. The regression analysis revealed that attitude towards the learning and stimulation is the only significant predictor of the integrativeness  $R^2 = 0.367, F(3, 284) = 54.99, P < 0.001$ . This, after conducting all other variables, implies that students who are highly motivated to the study of Arabic and to

their teachers will be more integrated and be more attractive to the native speakers among the teachers.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The outcome of this research does not only clearly demonstrate that Arabic students in the Nigerian universities enjoy high integrative orientation but also show that they have good relationship with their teachers and they have much interest in the Arabic course. However, they do not agree that the Arabic program could fetch them good job or give them the opportunity to achieve their aims and objectives in their future carriers. The only area they believed that the language will be helpful and useful is for the better understanding of Islamic religion. As a result of that, they were not motivated to learn the language. Therefore, their morale and motivation to learn the language are very low. Worth mentioning is that many of the Arabic students in Nigerian universities are product of Arabic schools (*Madrasah Arabiyyah*). These schools are either owned by an individual, as being operated in both the Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria or owned by the State governments as in the case of the North. In addition to that, the certificates obtained from these Arabic schools are not recognised by the government. Again, the products of these Arabic schools do not only need to take any of the government recognised examinations like the West Africa Examination Council, General Certificate of Education, and the National Examination Council, etc., but they will have to pass the requisite subjects before they could gain admission into any of the Nigerian universities, be it government or private owned.

The advantage they will have after gaining admission into the university to read Arabic language is that the orientation gained by them in the *Madrasah* influences their attitude and motivation towards the study of the language. They usually find the course to be simple and pleasantry since they will resort to almost what they might have gone through in their previous Arabic schools. More so, the kind of good empathy and culture that have been imbibed in them by their teachers, especially the Arab native speakers among them, motivates their attitude towards learning and stimulation at the university level. However, most of the students often get upset to continue their studies at the university level because they realised that most of the courses taught in the university only prepare them to become Arabic teachers in either primary or secondary schools. This is simply because of the design and methodology adopted in teaching the language to non-native speakers, that which is not tailored towards practical skills and specific purposes. They believe that they will not be productive members of the society and they will have little or no meaningful contributions to the development of the society in terms of economic, social, political, technological and intellectual advancement. This paper, therefore suggests that the undergraduate Arabic curriculum in the Nigerian universities should be re-examined and redesigned for more purposeful future careers.

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