

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL
CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

**Developing the Arabic Language Curriculum for Saudi
Intermediate and Secondary Schools.**
**An Empirical Study Involving Views of Practitioners and
Specialists in the City of Riyadh**

Being a Thesis Submitted for the
Degree of Ph.D in the University of Hull

By

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July 1999

Acknowledgements

First, All Praise and Thanks be to Allah, for His continuous help and guidance without which this thesis would not have been completed.

I am indebted to all those who helped and supported me in doing this study. Firstly, and more importantly I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Mr Wright, for his continuous help, support and efforts through out the period of the research.

Special acknowledgements are due to those who helped me in the course of this work. Professor McClelland, the former Head of Department, helped me in the first stage of my study during the absence of my supervisor. I thank Dr Whitehead for his time in reading and his valuable comments on a part of the study. Thanks must also go to Dr Moore for his continuous advice and help with developing the research instrument and with the statistical and analytical aspects of my study. Thanks also go to Mr Alan Reese for his help in selecting some statistical techniques. Kathryn Spry deserves special thanks for her valuable and honourable efforts in editing my work

I would like to thank my sponsor, Al-Imam University for offering the scholarship to enable me to continue my studies in Hull, specially Dr. Sulaiman Al-Odah, the former Dean of Arabic and Social Sciences Collage in Al-Qaseem for his lasting help and support. Thanks should also be given to my close friends for their valuable consultations and ideas, especially Dr. Salih Al-Sohaibani, Dr, Hamad Al-Majed, Dr. Abu khaldoon al-Hiti, Mr. Ahmad Alajlan, Mr. Ahamad As-Shabaan, Mr. Salih Al-Orainy, Mr. Salih Al-Ghamedi, and Mr. Amjad Maghrabi.

I take this opportunity to thank to those who agreed to be interviewed in the first stage of my study and those who responded to my questionnaire in the second part of the study. I would also like to thank those who helped in the administration of the research, especially the manager of the Research Centre at Riyadh Education District, Mr Al-Sulaiman and the Intermediate and Secondary school head teachers in Riyadh.

Finally, these acknowledgements would not be complete without expressing my thanks to my wife, Safeyah Al-Barrak and my four children, Roba, Thabet, Razan and Rafa, for sacrificing their time in order for me to complete my study.

Abstract

The evident weaknesses of Saudi students in Intermediate and Secondary schools in the field of Arabic language have raised concerns about the current Arabic language curriculum. This study examines the background to the problems, the current situation and the possibilities of solving them.

The study consisted of two main parts. The first part was a documentary study, which identified the main characteristics of the Arabic language and its historical pedagogy and examined the current situation of the Arabic language in Saudi Arabia. Literature on acquiring and learning language was reviewed, as was the curriculum-related literature, to find an appropriate model for developing the Arabic language curriculum.

This first part of the study provided the basis for the second, empirical part. To clarify the nature and extent of the problem and obtain some opinions about how it can be rectified, 24 interviews were conducted with some educational supervisors, Arabic language specialists and the most responsible personnel involved with the Arabic language curriculum in Saudi Arabia, which revealed the need to develop the curriculum and some suggested requirements for achieving this.

Based on both the documentary study and the exploratory interviews, a questionnaire was constructed, piloted and administered amongst all Arabic language intermediate and secondary teachers and educational supervisors in the city of Riyadh in addition to 50% of Al-Imam and King Saud University lecturers. Valid responses were received from 200 Intermediate teachers, 70 Secondary teachers, 18 educational supervisors and 45 University lecturers. The main findings led to identification of four lists of requirements covering the four components of the curriculum: the curriculum objectives, content, teaching methods and resources and evaluation. Other findings included the lack of training amongst teachers, the lack of experience amongst teachers and educational supervisors and the lack of recognition among samples of the importance of students' participation in the educational process. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations have been drawn up, which include a suggested framework for developing the curriculum, in addition to a model believed helpful for the decision-makers in Saudi Arabia.

Table of Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Acknowledgements	II
Abstract	III
Table of Contents.....	IV
List of Tables	X
List of Figures	XIII
List of Appendices	XIV
Abbreviations and Notes to Readers	XV

Chapter One:

The Problem of the Study 1

1.1 Introduction	2
1.2 Identifying the Study Problem.....	3
1.3 The Central Aims of the Study	7
1.4 The Rationale for the Investigation.....	8
1.5 Organisation of the Study	9

PART ONE

DOCUMENTARY STUDY 11

Chapter Two:

The Characteristics and the Pedagogic History of the Arabic Language 13

2.1 The Main Characteristics of the AL.....	14
2.1.1 The Semitic Origin of Arabic	14
2.1.2 Arabic Phonology and Grammar	16
2.1.3 The Arabic Writing System	17
2.1.4 The Types of language and Significance of Standard Arabic.....	18
2.2 Historical Perspective of AL Pedagogy.....	21
2.2.1 Learning AL in the Pre-Islamic period	22
2.2.2 Learning AL in the Early Islamic Period 622-750.....	24

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Academic Learning of the AL</i>	26
2.2.3 Learning AL in the Abbasid Period (750-1258).....	28
<i>Academic Learning of the AL</i>	30
a). <i>Elementary School</i>	31
b). <i>Higher Education</i>	33
2.2.4 Learning AL in the Period of Decline (1258-1798)	35
2.2.5 Learning AL in the Revival Period and the First Half of the Twentieth Century (1798-1950).....	39
2.2.6 Learning Arabic in Recent Times	45
2.2.7 Summary.....	48

Chapter Three:

The Educational System and Learning Arabic Language in Saudi Arabia 52

3.1 General Education in Saudi Arabia	53
3.1.1 The Main Features of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.....	53
3.1.2 Educational Development of Saudi Arabia.....	55
3.1.3 The Main Characteristics of the Saudi Education.....	60
3.1.4 General Education System in Saudi Arabia.....	63
3.2 Learning Arabic Language in Saudi Arabia	66
3.2.1 Overview of Learning AL in the Country.....	66
3.2.2 The Current Situation of ALC in Intermediate Schools	71
3.2.3 The Current Situation of ALC in Secondary Schools.....	78
3.3 Summary	86

Chapter Four:

Language Acquisition and Learning 88

4.1. Language principles and terms.....	89
4.1.1. Language Components and Varieties	89
4.1.2. First and Second Language	92
4.1.3. Language Acquisition or Learning	95
4.2. First Language Acquisition Theories	96
4.2.1. The Behaviourists' Theory	97
4.2.2. The Nativists' Theory	98

	<i>Page</i>
4.2.3. The Interactionists' Theory	100
4.3. Language Learning Approaches	102
4.3.1. Grammar Translation Method.....	104
4.3.2. The Series/ Direct Method	106
4.3.3. The Audiolingual Method.....	108
4.3.4. Community Language Learning Method.....	110
4.3.5. The Silent Method	111
4.3.6. Error Analysis and Correction	113
4.3.7. Total Physical Response Method.....	115
4.3.8. The Natural Approach.....	116
4.3.9. The Communicative Approach/ Notional-Functional Syllabus.....	117
4.4. Factors influencing Language Attainment	120
4.4.1. Attitude and Motivation.....	121
4.4.2. Language Aptitude.....	122
4.4.3. Learner Age or the Critical Period Hypothesis.....	123
4.4.4. Learning Styles and Strategies.....	126
4.4.5. Social Environment.....	128
4.5. Summary	129

Chapter Five:

The Requirements for Developing The Curriculum:

Concepts and Models 133

5.1 The Curriculum Development perspective.....	134
5.1.1 The Meaning and Significance of 'Development'	135
5.1.2 The Curriculum Concept.....	136
5.2 Curriculum Development Models	139
5.2.1 The Process Model.....	140
5.2.2 The Research Model	142
5.2.3 The Objectives Model.....	142
<i>Tyler's Model</i>	144
<i>Taba's Model</i>	144
<i>Skilbeck's Model</i>	145
<i>Robinson and his colleagues' Model</i>	145
5.3 The Concept of 'Requirements'	148

	<i>Page</i>
5.3.1 The Predefinition Usage of 'Requirements'	148
5.3.2 The North-Eastern Junior School Association' s Study (1960):.....	149
5.3.3 Daem's study(1987).....	151
5.3.4 Seyfried's Study (1990).....	151
5.3.5 The Concept Adopted of 'requirements'	152
5.4 The Dimensions of the Requirements for Developing the ALC	156
5.4.1 Curriculum Objectives.....	157
5.4.2 Curriculum Content	160
5.4.3 Teaching Methods.....	161
5.4.4 Curriculum Evaluation.....	163
5.5 Summary	164

Chapter Six:

Review of Empirical Studies Related to Developing the

Arabic Language Curriculum 168

6.1. Studies Related to Curriculum Objectives	170
6.2. Studies Related to the Curriculum Content.....	174
6.3. Studies Related to Teaching Methods	188
6.4. Studies Related to Evaluation	198
6.5. Summary	209

PART TWO

THE EMPIRICAL STUDY 218

Chapter Seven

Methodology 220

7.1 Selecting the Research Methodology.....	221
7.2 Phase One: Qualitative Data.....	224
7.2.1 Constructing the Appropriate Interview	227
7.2.2 Interview Sample	231
7.2.3 Conducting the Interviews	232
7.2.4 Analysing the Interviews	236

	<i>Page</i>
7.3 Phase Two: Quantitative Data	237
7.3.1 Constructing the Questionnaire.....	238
7.3.2 Standardising and Piloting the Questionnaire.....	243
7.3.3 Questionnaire Sample	249
7.3.4 Administering the Questionnaire	253
7.3.5 Analysing the Questionnaires	256
7.4 Summary.....	258

Chapter Eight:

Exploratory Interviews: The Current Situation of Learning the Arabic Language in SA 260

8.1. Sample Characteristics	261
8.2. The Current Situation of AL Education.....	263
8.3. The Media Role Toward Learning Arabic	270
8.4. The Problems and Obstacles to Learning AL.....	274
8.5. Possible Solutions to the Problems	281
8.6. Requirements For Developing the Learning of Arabic.....	286
8.7. Scaled Questionnaire Data	289
8.8. Summary.....	291

Chapter Nine

Quantitative Data: Tabulation and Discussion 295

9.1. Samples' Characteristics	296
9.1.1. The Questionnaires Returned.....	297
9.1.2. The Practitioners' Samples:	299
9.1.3. University Lecturers' Sample	308
9.2. The Requirements Related to Objectives	311
9.3. The Requirements Related to the Curriculum Content.....	329
9.4. The Requirements Related to Teaching Methods and Resources.....	346
9.5. The Requirements Related to Evaluation.....	362

	<i>Page</i>
9.6. Respondents Advice and Comments	375
9.6.1. Comments and Advice Related to Questionnaire Construction	376
9.6.2. Comments and Advice Related to the Requirements	378
9.6.3. General Comments, Advice and Suggestions.....	379
Summary	380
 <u>Chapter Ten:</u>	
<u>Study Conclusion 383</u>	
10.1 Summary of the Study	384
10.1.1 Part One.....	385
10.1.2 Part Two	388
10.2 Overview Discussion and Conclusions	396
10.3 Limitations of the Study.....	399
10.4 Recommendations of the Study.....	400
10.4.1. Recommendations at the Ministry of Education Level	401
10.4.2. Recommendations at Educational Districts Level.....	408
10.4.3. Recommendations at the School Level	410
10.4.4. Suggestions for Further Studies and Research	411
 <u>References.....</u>	 <u>413</u>
<u>Appendices.....</u>	<u>437</u>

<i>List of Tables</i>

	<i>Page</i>
Table 3.1.1 The Educational Quantitative Development at The Intermediate Level	57
Table 3.1.2 The Educational Quantitative Development at The Secondary Level ...	58
Table 3.1.3 Education Statistical Indicators.....	59
Table 3.2.1 Intermediate School Curriculum (Subjects and Hours Per Week)	72
Table 3.2.2 Arabic Intermediate Programme (Former and Present Plans).	74
Table 3.2.3 Secondary School's Curriculum (Subjects and Hours Per Week).....	81
Table 3.2.4 Arabic Language Share and Courses in Secondary School Programme	83
Table 7.2.1 The Actual Sizes of The Research Population and Sample	252
Table 8.1.1 Interviews Sample Categories.....	262
Table 8.1.2 The Time Spent in the Interviews	263
Table 8.7.1 The Statements of the Exploratory Study Questionnaire.....	290
Table 9.1.1 Detailed Numbers of Questionnaires Distributed And Collected.....	298
Table 9.1.2 Distribution of Practitioners by Sub-Supervision Bureaux.....	301
Table 9.1.3 Respondents' Qualifications	301
Table 9.1.4 The Practitioners' Experience After Graduation.	302
Table 9.1.5 In-Service Training	304
Table 9.1.6 In-Service Training of The Practitioners Among The Supervision Bureaux	306
Table 9.1.7 The Length of the Training Programmes that Were Received by Practitioners.....	306
Table 9.1.8 The Subjects of The Training Programmes	307
Table 9.1.9 The University Lecturers' (UL) Major Subjects.....	309
Table 9.1.10 University Lecturers' Qualifications.....	309
Table 9.1.11 The Experience of The UL With Their Qualifications.	310
Table 9.2.1 The Objective- Related Requirements For Developing The Arabic Language Curriculum.....	311
Table 9.2.2 Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 4 th Objectives-Related Requirement.....	318
Table 9.2.3 Views of Al-Imam UL and King Saud UL on the Importance Given to the 5 th Objectives-Related Requirement	321
Table 9.2.4 Views of Al-Imam UL and King Saud UL on the Importance Given to the 7 th Objectives-Related Requirement	322
Table 9.2.5 Views of Secondary Teachers (SeT) of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 8 th Objectives-Related Requirement.	323
Table 9.2.6 Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 12 th Objectives-Related Requirement	326

	<i>Page</i>
Table 9.3.1 The Content-Related Requirements as Perceived by the Four Research Samples	329
Table 9.3.2 Views of Intermediate Teachers (InT) of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 1 st Content-Related Requirement.....	333
Table 9.3.3 Views of InT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 3 rd Content-Related Requirement	334
Table 9.3.4 Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 3 rd Content-Related Requirement	335
Table 9.3.5 Views of ES of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 4 th Content-Related Requirement	336
Table 9.3.5 Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 9 th Content-Related Requirement	341
Table 9.3.6 Views of Educational Supervisors (ES) of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 9 th Content-Related Requirement.....	342
Table 9.3.7 Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 10 th Content-Related Requirement	343
Table 9.4.1 The Teaching Methods-Related Requirements for Developing the Arabic Language Curriculum	347
Table 9.4.2 Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 3 rd Teaching Methods-Related Requirement	351
Table 9.4.3 Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Givento the 7 th Teaching Methods-Related Requirement	355
Table 9.4.4 Views of ES of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 8 th Teaching Methods-Related Requirement	356
Table 9.4.5 Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 9 th Teaching Methods-Related Requirement.....	357
Table 9.5.1 The Evaluation-Related Requirements for Developing the Arabic Language Curriculum.....	362
Table 9.5.2 Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 4 th Evaluation -Related Requirement.....	368
Table 9.5.3 Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 5 th Evaluation -Related Requirement.....	369
Table 9.5.4 Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 6 th Evaluation -Related Requirement.....	370
Table 9.5.5 Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 9 th Evaluation -Related Requirement	373
Table 9.6.1 The Numbers of Questionnaires Returned With Comments Among The Four Samples	376

	<i>Page</i>
Table 10.1.1 The Objectives-Related Requirements for Developing the ALC as Prioritised by The Four Research Samples.....	392
Table 10.1.2 The Content-Related Requirements For Developing The ALC as Prioritised by The Four Research Samples.....	993
Table 10.1.3 The Teaching Methods And Resources -Related Requirements for Developing The ALC as Prioritised by the Four Research Samples...	394
Table 10.1.4 The Evaluation-Related Requirements for Developing The ALC as Prioritised by the Four Research Samples	395

List of Figures

	<i>Page</i>
Figure 3.2.1 The the Educational Aims and Objectives of the Arabic Language In SA.....	67
Figure 3.2.2 Arabic Language Share in Former and Current General Intermediate School Plans	74
Figure 3.2.3 Arabic Share Among The Three General Education Policies For Secondary School.....	82
Figure 7.1.1 Flow Diagram Of The Research Strategies	223
Figure 8.1.1 The Time Spent On Each Interview Case.....	263
Figure 9.1.1 The Research Samples.....	297
Figure 9.1.2 The Three Practitioners' Samples	300
Figure 9.1.3 The Experience After Being Supervisors	303
Figure 9.1.4 The Numbers of The Universities' Sample.....	308
Figure 10.4.1 The Recommended Curriculum Development Model.....	405

List of Appendices

Page

Appendix 1: Flow Chart of the Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.....	438
Appendix 2: The Interview Form.....	440
Appendix 3: Questionnaire Preparation	445
Appendix 3.1: English Version of a Letter Sent to Some Specialists to Evaluate and Judge the Questionnaire.....	446
Appendix 3.2: Arabic Version of a Letter Sent to Some Specialists to Evaluate and Judge the Questionnaire.....	448
Appendix 3.3: English Version of a Form Sent to Help With Translating the Questionnaire	450
Appendix 3.4: Arabic Version of a Form Sent to Help With Translating the Questionnaire	451
Appendix 4: The Actual Questionnaires	452
Appendix 4.1: The Arabic Version of The Questionnaires.....	453
Appendix 4.2: The English Version of The Questionnaires	460
Appendix 5: The Administration of the Questionnaires	467
Appendix 5.1: The Letter Given to the Researcher by his University Asking to Facilitate the Conduct of the Study	468
Appendix 5.2: The Letter Given to the Researcher by Riyadh Education District, Al-Imam University and King Saud University Asking Schools to Co-operate in Administering the Study	469
Appendix 5.3: An Example of the Letters Sent by the Researcher to the respondents Asking them to complete the Questionnaires	472
Appendix 5.4: An Example of the Letters Sent by Schools, Attached to the Returned Questionnaires	475
Appendix 6: The Use of the Term: Requirement in The National Curriculum of England and Wales and the Possibility of Benefiting From it in the Saudi Context.....	476

List of Abbreviations and Notes to Readers

1. List of Abbreviations:

The following abbreviations have been adopted and will be used in the current study:

AL:	Arabic Language.
ALC:	Arabic Language Curriculum .
SA:	The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
InT:	Intermediate School Teachers .
SeT:	Secondary School Teachers.
ES:	Educational Supervisors.
UL:	University Lecturers.

2. Notes to Readers:

- a. Unless the use of the Islamic Calendar (After 'Hijrah': A.H) or before Christ (B.C.) is explicitly mentioned in the text, all dates referred to in the study are after Christ (A.D.).
- b. Where Arabic words are used in the in the Latin alphabet, they will be presented in the format, 'Hijrah', i.e. underlined Italic form with single quotation marks.

Chapter One

The Problem of the Study

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Identifying the Study Problem

1.3 The Central Aims of the Study

1.4 The Rationale for the Investigation

1.5 Organisation of the Study

Chapter One:

The Problem of the Study

1.1 Introduction

The Arabic Language is the language of written and formal oral communication for speakers of Arabic dialects from Morocco to Iraq. It is the sixth most widely spoken language in the world, with approximately 186 million native speakers (Comrie 1996). The Arabic language is the main unifying bond among Arabs, and the main language of official communication, commercial, economic, social and cultural relations among Arabs in twenty-two countries.

Moreover, from the Islamic point of view the main sources of the religion : the Qur'an and the Sunah (all the traditions and practices of the prophet of Islam -peace be upon him-) are in Arabic. Thus, the language is, among Muslim people, considered sacred, since it is the language through which the Qur'an was revealed in the seventh century. It is, also, the medium for conveying the Arabic and Islamic culture and heritage.

From a pedagogic point of view, Arabic is the only language of learning and teaching in first, intermediate and high schools and in most colleges and universities. Not only that, but in Arab countries, Arabic is the most significant subject of the educational curriculum, taking the lion's share (31%) of the overall curricula of general education (Yeonis et al, undated, p. 29). According to Khater et al (1983, p. 68), the importance attached to Arabic is supported also by some research which found that high competence in Arabic language increased academic attainment in other subjects.

In Saudi Arabia, in particular, Arabic is the mother tongue for all Saudi citizens who number in excess of 13 million. It is the principal language for communications and

publications in the country. Except in some medical and engineering university departments, Arabic is the only language of instruction in Elementary, Intermediate, Secondary and higher education, universities and colleges in the state. In the current Saudi Educational System, Arabic is considered one of the main subjects, accounting for more than 29% of school time in Elementary school and around 20 % in Intermediate school and the first grade of Secondary school, varying in the next two grades according to whether the student specialises in Arts or Sciences.

All that suggests a focus on the teaching and learning of Arabic language and its problems as one of the most significant areas to be investigated in relation to the educational system in Saudi Arabia.

1.2 Identifying the Study Problem

Learning and teaching Arabic has been accorded huge importance in both official and academic circles during the last fifty years. At the official level, not only were Arabic education issues discussed in the earlier Arab League Conferences (Chejen, 1969), but the first conference for Arab Ministers of Education in 1964 in Baghdad and subsequent conferences in Kuwait 1968, in Tripoli, Libya, 1970 (Arab League 1986), and in Saana, Yemen, 1974(Arab League 1974), devoted many recommendations to aspects of Arabic Education. In the last of the above conferences, it was recommended that the Arabic language curriculum be discussed in special meetings and conferences. In response to that suggestion, the first conference for specialists and expert educationalists was held in Amman, Jordan, in 1974(Arab League 1974). A second meeting was held in Riyadh, 1977 for experts and directors of education (Arab League 1977) and then in 1985, another was held in Riyadh (Al-Imam University 1985). The last conference arranged at the Arab Countries official level was held also in Riyadh in 1995 (Al-Imam Uni. 1995) All of these conferences were concerned with the Arabic language curriculum,

and other relevant issues such as Arabic language teacher education and in-service training.

In the academic domain, studies and research have been conducted, focusing predominantly on theoretical and advisory considerations, with a relatively smaller number of empirical and analytical studies.

Despite the great importance given to this subject, many researchers and educationalists claim general a weakness of students in Arabic in the past twenty years and up to the present day in all Arab countries. Fraihat (1982, p. 5) states that:

The language level among the Arab students is less than satisfactory, and is steadily declining. The students' enthusiasm toward their mother tongue has diminished considerably.

This fact has been emphasised by many other researchers from different countries such as Abdurahman (1969), Abduttwab (1977); Kaheel (1977); Khater and others (1983); Jaber (1986); Al-Sayed (1987); Nasserallah (1988) Abu-Salih (1995); Al-Kandary (1995) and Mosa (1996). Conspicuous weaknesses have been highlighted in all aspects of Arabic; Reading, Writing and Speaking.

In this study, it would be appropriate to restrict our discussion to the most recent research findings about the Arabic language education; which conducted in the Saudi context within the last ten years.

It has been widely evidenced that observable weaknesses exist in the Arabic language competence of Saudi students in various stages and particularly in intermediate and secondary schools. This fact is evidenced empirically by relatively new studies of the Saudi context such those of Ismaiel (1990), Othman (1993), Al-Ghanim (1995) Al-Majed (1996), Al-Maigal, 1997 and Al-Hakami (1999). An analytical official report of students' performance in the examinations conducted by the Ministry of Education came to the same conclusion (Al-Rasheed, 1996).

Moreover, in practising language it was remarked that, among students, there is a huge gap between the desired standard language and the dialect used by students in less formal situations and in the street (Abozaed 1995; Tenbak 1995). This perceived weakness continues with students during their study in general school and at university (Abo-almakarem 1995). Furthermore, the standard of language skills is astonishingly low among professional people involved with the media or related fields, and even among the teachers of Arabic themselves (Al-Nashraty 1995; Al-Siny, 1995). Not only that, it has been claimed by many researchers such as Naserallah (1988), Al-Hogail (1992) and Al-Hakami (1999) that Saudi students lack motivation and have negative attitudes toward studying the Arabic language.

Although there might be other causes of the problem of the students' weaknesses, Othman (1993) and Aboalmakarem (1995) viewed the structure of the current curriculum as responsible for the current problem. They suggested that despite its huge importance, insufficient attention was paid to planning the curriculum. They claimed that many aspects of curriculum content, such as significance, interest and learnability, were not taken into account. They, also, believed that no linkage was made between different Arabic language courses (branches) nor between Arabic and other subjects. In this sense, some researchers have argued that there was not enough scientific basis for the building of the Arabic language curriculum and many educationalists still argue that it needs more academic attention, benefiting from the literature of the field of curriculum construction.

Al-zaizea (1989) and Othman (1993) blamed the lack of understanding of the aims of the Arabic language on the part of a large number of both teachers and parents. Curriculum content, also, has been subject to some criticism. In the light of the assumption that, as Mitchell (1988, p.22) put it,

There was a very widespread agreement that the language material taught should be 'useful' and relevant to the learners' perceived communicative needs

there are doubts about the functionality of the syllabus of the curriculum and the relationship between the current Arabic curriculum and the real needs and language use of students in their daily lives. This issue was raised by Al-zaizea (1989) and Al-Majed (1996).

Moreover, the methods used in presenting and teaching Arabic language skills were believed to be unsatisfactory by some researchers such as Al-Hogail (1992) and Al-Nassar (1997). The availability of teaching aids and the abilities of using them by Arabic language teachers have been criticised for a long time (Al-Damagh, 1995; Al-Hakami, 1999)

In Saudi Arabia the Arabic Language Curriculum (ALC) in intermediate and secondary schools is divided into six subjects: Reading, Literature and recitation, Composition (oral and written), Grammar, Dictation and Handwriting. This might create problems as for each course there is separate plan and a separate textbook, and different courses may be taught by different teachers.

In addition, the evaluation and the examination system for the Arabic language is considered to be counter-productive. The methods and techniques used have been strongly criticised by some researchers such as Al-Moaigail (1997) Al-Gahtaby (1998) and Al-Hakami (1999).

Indeed, these factors are suggested by some researchers to be aspects or even causes of the problem of students' low achievement and negative attitudes and are thought to be strongly related to the curriculum. Not only that, but many contemporary researchers such as Al-Ghanem (1995), Al-Damagh (1995), Al-Nasar (1997) Al-Maigail (1997) and Al-Gahtany (1998) have explicitly held the ALC, or aspects of it, to be largely

responsible for the current situation or as Al-Majed (1996) put it, the “*real crisis*”, claiming the vital need of developing the various aspects of the ALC. Undoubtedly although there are occasional piecemeal changes, especially in the textbook, such a comprehensive development of the curriculum has not yet been conducted.

Still to be added is that the Saudi Minister of Education in his report for the year 1996: “Our Education to Where” *‘Talemona Ila Ain’*, emphasised the significant weakness of students in Arabic, which had been noted from the Ministerial exams and from special field reports. He pointed to the critical need for studies to investigate such issues, and called on researchers to contribute toward solving the various educational problems (Al-Rasheed, 1996).

In sum, the research problem is that despite the great importance attached to Arabic, the attention paid to it is not reflected in the students’ levels of achievement and attitudes, which have been found to be unsatisfactory. Educationists believe this is largely due the current curriculum, which has not been developed comprehensively. This gives rise to a need for academic studies involving practitioners and specialists to contribute to setting the Arabic language curriculum on a more appropriate track.

1.3 The Central Aims of the Study:

In the light of the problem expounded earlier, two aims were set to contribute in identifying the solution. **The first aim is to investigate, via documentary evidence, how Arabic language was taught in its various historical periods, what is the current situation of the ALC, and how the curriculum could be developed** (see the Introduction of PART ONE of the study – page 11 – for the questions formed to facilitate achieving this aim). **The second aim is to identify, evaluate and prioritise, empirically, the requirements for developing the ALC in Saudi Arabia as perceived by practitioners and specialists involved with the AL** (see the Introduction

of PART TWO of the study – page 218 – for the questions formed to facilitate achieving this aim).

1.4 The Rationale for the Investigation:

The rationale for investigating the research problem can be summarised in three points: First, it has been indicated that observable weaknesses exist in the Arabic language competence of students in various stages and even educated people such as teachers and journalists, and the curriculum has been blamed for this. However, in spite of that, there is as yet no sign of remarkable development in this field in Saudi Arabia. A small number of studies have been conducted which recommended some solutions for some aspects of the curriculum. The need is for a study which deals with all aspects of the curriculum, identifying the requirements for developing the ALC and prioritising them. Secondly, curriculum development has been taken for granted by researchers and educationists yet

its cyclical nature suggests that it is an activity which has no beginning and no end. It is not an activity which can be undertaken once and then it is finished (Nicholls et al 1978 P 104).

This fact demands a continuous work to identify and prioritise the requirements to guide the development processes.

Thirdly, in Saudi Arabia, nowadays, educationalists and the responsible leaders are interested in and willing to carry out curriculum changes (Al-Rasheed, 1996; Ministry of Education 1996^a) and the Minister of Education, as indicated above (p. 6), has called researchers to help and participate. The field of Arabic language curriculum studies is the researcher's interest, since after graduating in Arabic language, working as an Arabic language teacher, and gaining a Master's degree in Curriculum and Teaching Methods, he has worked as a university lecturer in the field of Curriculum Studies. It is,

thus, the task of the researcher to contribute in this sense by offering an empirical basis for guiding the development of the ALC in Saudi Arabia.

Moreover, to date, as far as the researcher is aware, no similar study has treated this matter, either in Arabic or in English. Not only that, but many conceptual and methodological aspects used in the current study have not been explained or explored adequately in other studies. The researcher is mindful that adopting these aspects might be somewhat controversial. Nevertheless, it is the researcher's belief that it is appropriate to identify and apply such terms and methods in the field, since they appear helpful for developing the ALC in Saudi Arabia.

1.5 Organisation of the Study :

According to the study problem, and to achieve the aims set earlier, after this chapter the study will be in two parts, which will be followed by a conclusion.

The first part will seek to achieve the first aim and will incorporate a theoretical/documentary investigation of five aspects of the related literature. These aspects will be presented in chapters two, three, four, five and six.

In Chapter Two the main characteristics of the Arabic language will be presented, followed by a developmental study of learning and teaching the Arabic language in various historical periods. This study will trace some roots of the current problems of the AL curriculum and also will examine the possibility of benefiting from some of the appropriate methods used in certain periods. Chapter Three is concerned mainly with the current situation of the ALC within the context of the Saudi educational system.

The main methods of acquiring and learning language will be reviewed in Chapter Four, viewing the AL in the light of such literature. The literature of curriculum development will be examined in Chapter Five to examine the possibility of adopting a suitable model and strategy for developing the ALC, and also, to examine the relevant concepts.

Chapter Six will be devoted to reviewing the most recent, relevant empirical studies to contribute in developing the Arabic language curriculum in Saudi Arabia.

The first part of the study, i.e. the theoretical review, will help in identifying the background of the study, setting the appropriate framework for developing the ALC in SA, and offering a number of the requirements which will be examined and prioritised through the second, empirical, part of the study.

The second part – the empirical study – is intended to achieve the second aim of the study, **to identify and prioritise, empirically, the requirements for developing the ALC in Saudi Arabia as perceived by practitioners and specialists involved with the AL.** This part consists of three chapters; the seventh, the eighth, and the ninth chapters.

The research methodology will be explained in Chapter Seven, giving details of the plans followed in the two phases of the empirical study: the qualitative phase using interviews, and the quantitative phase using a questionnaire. The eighth chapter will present and discuss the interview results, and then in the ninth chapter, the main data will be tabulated and discussed

Chapter ten will conclude the study, providing a summary of the two parts of the study and an overall discussion. The limitations of the study will be considered, recommendations put forward, and suggestions made for further research.

PART ONE

Documentary Study

Part One Introduction

Part one of the study is devoted to achieving the first aim which is to identify, from documentary sources, how Arabic language was taught in its various historical periods, what is the current situation of the ALC, and how the curriculum can be developed.

It is clear that for this part a theoretical study is needed to achieve this aim. To facilitate achieving this aim, five questions were formulated.

Question One

‘What are the main characteristics of the Arabic language and how was it taught in the main periods of history?’

Question Two

‘What is the current situation of learning Arabic in modern Saudi Arabia?’

Question Three

‘What are the appropriate approaches and methods for acquiring and learning the Arabic language?’

Question Four

‘What is the appropriate model for developing the Arabic language curriculum in Saudi Arabia?’

Question Five

‘What are the findings of recent empirical studies for developing the Arabic language curriculum?’

In accordance with these questions, this part consists of five chapters : Chapters Two, Three, Four, Five and Six, in which these questions will be answered respectively.

Chapter Two

The Characteristics and the Pedagogic History of the Arabic Language

2.1 The Main Characteristics of the AL

- 2.1.1 The Semitic Origin of Arabic
- 2.1.2 Arabic Phonology and Grammar
- 2.1.3 The Arabic Writing System
- 2.1.4 The Types of Language and the Significance of Standard Arabic

2.2 Historical Perspective of AL Pedagogy

- 2.2.1 Learning AL in the Pre-Islamic period (500-622)
- 2.2.2 Learning AL in the Early Islamic Period (610-750)
- 2.2.3 Learning AL in the Abbasid Period (750-1258)
- 2.2.4 Learning AL in the Period of Decline (1258-1830)
- 2.2.5 Learning AL in the Revival Period and the First Half of the Twentieth Century (1830-1950)
- 2.2.6 Learning AL in Recent Times

2.3 Summary

Chapter Two

The Characteristics and the Pedagogic History of the Arabic Language

A historical view is always needed for clarifying the background of any phenomenon, in order for it to be understood and treated successfully. Given the long history of the Arabic language, such a precise developmental study of the characteristics and pedagogy would not be possible in this chapter. Therefore, the concentration in this chapter will be on the most relevant aspects, clarifying, in the first section, the main features of the Arabic language. The second section will present the position of Arabic in its various historical periods and clarify the most important strategies and contributions used to teach the Arabic language.

2.1. The Main Characteristics of the AL

In this section a brief description will be presented of the main characteristics of the Arabic Language (AL). The origin of the language will be explained, followed by the main historical and descriptive features of the AL phonology and grammar and also the Arabic writing system. An attempt will be made to indicate the status and importance of standard Arabic.

2.1.1. The Semitic Origin of Arabic

Although no one yet knows exactly when the Arabic language first began to be spoken, A.L is considered a member of a family of languages, the so-called Semitic languages, which have been spoken for millennia in areas where Arabic is now in use, and in immediately adjacent areas. In the field of language classification, Bateson (1967 p51) suggested,

there is considerable dispute about the precise relationships between these languages and groups of languages”.

but he believed that the Semitic languages' interrelationship is evident from similarities of structure which make it possible to reconstruct a parent language, Proto-Semitic, from which they are all descended. Besides Arabic, Semitic languages still in use are: Ethiopic, especially as Amharic, the modern language of Ethiopia; the south Arabic language, a group of languages including Mehri and Soqotri, spoken by a small population of the south of Arabia; Hebrew, the language of the state of Israel; Aramaic, spoken in a cluster of villages in the anti-Lebanon north of Damascus and Syriac, spoken by groups in Iran and Iraq (Hitti 1961 P 3-5).

'Arabic' in its widest signification, according to Della Vida (1996), has two principal dialects :

- a. South Arabic, spoken in Yemen and including Sabeian, Himyrite, Minean, with the kindred dialects of Mahra and Shihr.
- b. Arabic Proper (North Arabic) spoken in Arabia generally, exclusive of Yemen.

South Arabic resembles North Arabic in its grammatical forms, the dual sign and the demonstrative manner. In its vocabulary and its alphabet, which consists of twenty-nine letters, it is more nearly akin to the Ethiopic (Nicholson 1953).

South Arabic, with its main branches, the Minaean, Sabaeian, Qatabanian and Hadramautian, was the language of the South Arabian Peninsula civilisation until it was superseded by North Arabic by the time of Islam (Della Vida 1996). Nicholson (1953 P xxi) explains :

*By 600 A.D South Arabic had become a dead language.
From this time forward the dialect of the north established
an almost universal supremacy and won for itself the title of
'Arabic' par excellence.*

Thus, it is to this northern dialect of Arabic that the word ‘Arabic’ refers in this study.

Arabic, as one of the Semitic language, shows the features that characterise such languages. It has a rich inventory of consonants and a highly elaborated system of derivation from the tri-literal root. More details will be presented next.

2.1.2. Arabic Phonology and Grammar

It was noted by Bateson (1967) that Arabic phonology is very close to the reconstructed phonology of Proto-Semitic. The Arabic vowel system, with three vowel positions and phonemic length, seems to preserve the original system of the family.

Arabic, like Hebrew and Syriac, is written and read from right to left. The letters of the alphabet ‘*hurūf al-hiJa*’ are twenty-eight in number, and are all consonants, though three of them (*a, i and u*) are also used as vowels.

The terminology used in Arabic grammar is quite complicated. For instance, only three parts of speech are distinguished: nouns ‘*ism*’ verbs ‘*fi’l*’, and particles ‘*harf*’. What would be called adjectives, adverbs and pronouns in other languages are considered nouns in Arabic (See Wright, 1974).

As indicated, a great many words can be derived from a root consisting of three consonants called radicals. Words are formed from roots by the addition of vowels, prefixes, infixes, or suffixes according to certain fixed patterns. In Arabic, two genders, masculine and feminine, are distinguished for nouns, adjectives and also verbs.

Moreover, the basic syntax of an Arabic sentence is not unusually complex. There are two basic sentence types, traditionally referred to as nominal and verbal sentences. A highly generalised representation of these two sentence types follows:

nominal sentence = noun phrase + predicate;

verbal sentence = intransitive verb + noun phrase or transitive verb + noun phrase + noun phrase. More complex sentences and sentences which appear to deviate from these patterns can easily be explained as transformations of them (Wright 1974).

2.1.3. The Arabic Writing System

It seems that early Muslim writers did not have a clear conception about when and how writing began and only little was known even about the origin of Arabic script (Chejne 1969). However, one writer, Al-Baladhuri (1951 publication), who died 892, claims that Arabic script was derived from Syriac writing in the Arab Lakhmid capital of Al-Hirah, from where it was brought to Mecca then taught to some citizens of Mecca. Hitti (1961, p. 70) provides evidence to show that

*Nabataean cursive script, taken from the Aramaic,
developed in the third century of the Christian era into the
script of the North Arabic tongue, the Arabic of the Koran
and of the present day*

This view focuses on Arabic script as it is known today. However, taking a broader view of Arabic script, Chejne (1969) indicates that the dates of written Arabic are relatively recent as compared to those for Ak-Kadian, Ugaritic, Hebrew or Aramaic, all of which are abundantly documented. As for Arabic, the first extant written material appears in Assyrian records of the eighth to seventh centuries BC.

From about the second century, there are the Lihyanite, Thamudic and Sataitic inscriptions which seem to be of Arabic origin. These, together with the various dialects spoken by Palmyrene, Lakhmids, and Chassanids, constitute the main evidence for early Arabic (Chejne, 1969). Still, in a few words, there is some doubt about the earliest evidence of written Arabic. However, the earliest clearly Arabic inscriptions are dated as 512 and 568 and there is no abundance of written records until well into the Islamic period (Bateson 1967, p. 53).

Before and during early Islamic times, Arabic writing was quite deficient. There was no system at all for writing the vowels and the diacritical marks for distinguishing between similar letters did not exist. However, the writing system was refined and developed towards the end of the early Islamic period. Since that time, Bateson (1967, p.57) claims

almost all Muslim people have used the alphabet at some time or other; in addition to Arabic, it has been used for Persian, Osmanli, the Turkish of Turkey, Urdu and Malay. In Africa it has been used for Berber, Swahili, Hausa, dialects in the area of Lake Chad and occasional others.

2.1.4. The Types of Language and Significance of Standard Arabic:

Many researchers such as Bateson (1967), Chejne (1969) and Vida (1996) distinguished three types of Arabic: classical Arabic, literary Arabic and dialects.

Classical Arabic, was basically the language spoken in central Arabia in the sixth and seventh centuries of the Christian era. It was the Classical Arabic of Medieval times in which the Qur'an and a wealth of Islamic and Arabic literature is written. It was the language of administration and science and coexisted with many Arabic and non-Arabic dialects.

Modern literary or Standard Arabic is the second type of Arabic. It is common to all Arabic-speaking countries from Morocco in the West, to Iran in the East. It is sometimes called Modern Standard Arabic and it is based on and inspired by the classical Arabic of medieval times and has similar morphology, grammar and syntax. Some writers cannot see any difference between the classical and the literary Arabic as both of them are standard in nature. However, several important kinds of change are taking place, which are leading to an extensive differentiation.

- a. There exist a series of acceptable simplifications to classical Arabic, and there are a number of overlapping ways in which Classical Arabic is influenced by dialects or accommodates to them.
- b. There is a vast lexical shift, due to the need for technical terminology and new vocabulary. This sometimes has grammatical implications.
- c. There are a number of stylistic changes due to translations from European languages and extensive bilingualism.

This type is the language of the educated class and of a wide and varied literature, and it flourishes beside a large number of dialects. Indeed, since this type is standard in its Morphology and Phonetics, it has been the taught target since the second half of this century. In this study, the Standard form of language will be meant by the phrase “Arabic language”, which is often referred to as “Arabiyyah” or “Al- ‘Arabiyyah Al-foṣḥa”. It is sometimes called, especially by some European writers, classical Arabic or the literary Arabic of Islamic times.

The third type or level is the “Dialects” or the spoken street language which consists of a large number of features unique to it and other features characteristic of a large geographical area within the Arab world.

At present, the Arabic dialects might be classified, according to Della Vida (1996), into three groups: dialects of Arabic proper existing in the Arabian peninsula, which are more archaic than the others and may be compared to the dialects of the nomadic Bedouins outside of Arabia; eastern dialects, in Iraq, Syria, and Egypt; and western dialects from Libya westward. Many changes in phonetics, morphology and syntax are common to all dialects. However, generally, the Arabic dialects have enough in common so that a native speaker of one encounters no insurmountable difficulty in understanding a person speaking another.

The significance of Standard Arabic can be considered to be that it is an instrument of religion. Its significance is obvious in its religious use as the language of Islam. The intimate relationship between Arabic and Islam is reflected in the attitude and the beliefs of the Arab-Muslims over the centuries. Since the Qur’an, the Holy Book, which is believed to represent the highest linguistic achievement of the Arabic language was revealed, Arabic has been intimately connected with the “Divine Mission” whose success largely depended on the dissemination of the language (Chejne 1978, p. 6). The

second caliph, Umar (634-44), is reported to have instructed his governors to spread the knowledge of Arabic because *"it is part of the religion"* and he said, *"Learn Arabic just as you learn your religious obligation"* (Bahjat, 1982, p. 285).

The statement of the jurisconsult Al-Shafi (died 820, p. 40) says that *"every Muslim must learn the Arabic language in order to recite the Holy Book"*. On the other hand, the Holy Qur'an itself has conserved the Arabic language since it was revealed.

Nicholson (1953, p. 342) aptly expresses this fact as follows:

If the pride and delight of the Arabs in their noble language led them to regard the maintenance of its purity as a national duty, they were equally bound by their religious convictions to take decisive measures for ensuring the correct pronunciation and interpretation of that "Miracle of Divine eloquence" the Arabic Koran.

Furthermore, Standard Arabic is the medium of culture of Arabs, although a religion, sometimes, is considered a part of culture, there are other aspects of culture which give the Arabic language great importance and status. From humble beginnings, Arabic evolved as a literary language in the Muslim Empire and became the national language of the Muslim state, including Spain and India and other parts (Bahjat, 1982, p. 286).

As the medium of intellectual expression, Anwar Chejne (1969, p. 13) states that,

It had a general appeal among devout Muslims and non-Muslims as well. Arabic and Islam constituted a unifying factor among the various religious and ethnic groups, Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians, Arabs, Syrians, Persians, Egyptians, Spaniards and others. The language itself became an object of general acclaim.

In short, Standard Arabic is the language of the whole Arabic and Islamic heritage and tradition across their history and it is the only medium for Arabic literature.

Standard Arabic is now an international language in the Modern Middle East; it is the language which all Arab countries have in common. It has been adopted as an official language and is the only form of Arabic which achieves full official recognition. Its importance goes even further than this, as Bateson (1967, p. 79) states

for it is the chief symbol of ethnic unity among the Arabs

Moreover, it is also international in the sense that it is the form of Arabic which is most used in international contact and translation with non-Arab nations. International treaties and agreements with Arab nations are expressed in Standard Arabic.

A confrontation with the twentieth century has taken place in Standard Arabic because, as Bateson(1967, p. 83) believes, "*it is international, because it is eloquent and "significant " and because it is written "*". He explains further that Standard Arabic is not only the Arab's only entry to the cultural resources of his past and of other aspects of the Arab world, but it is his primary entry into the future.

Moreover, in the Modern Renaissance, the sphere of Standard Arabic has been greatly expanded because the new spheres of life in which Arabic is used in the twentieth century, tend to fall into the classical Arabic category: it is used on the radio, in drama, and for most advertising and other aspects of the media.

However, Standard Arabic faced some problems when a few researchers in the earlier period of this century called for Standard Arabic to be substituted with dialects or that the Latin script be used for writing Arabic. These ideas were strongly opposed by many researchers and scholars, as will be indicated later in this chapter.

2.2. Historical Perspective of AL Pedagogy

Despite the great importance of learning Arabic, the sources, as far as the researcher has seen, do not permit accurate determination of how Arabs taught language to their children. They reveal an extensive Arabic and Islamic history and civilisation, and aspects of pure Arabic, but unfortunately there is not enough evidence to draw a clear picture of Arabs' methods for teaching Arabic and its learning requirements. Based on some historical references and some books and studies concerning the Arabic language, a brief description will be given here of the history of Arabic language learning and curriculum design. For this purpose, six distinct historic periods can be identified:

- 2.1.1. The pre-Islamic period (500-622AD).
- 2.1.2. The Early Islamic period (622-750AD).
- 2.1.3. The Abbasid period (750-1258AD).
- 2.1.4. The Period of Decline (1258-1798AD).
- 2.1.5. The Revival Period and the first half of the twentieth century (1830-1950AD).
- 2.1.6. The Recent Times.

2.2.1. Learning AL in the Pre-Islamic period

The accurate history of Arabic begins in the sixth century with the highly institutionalised uses of poetry in the tribal society of Arabia. Pre-Islamic times are generally referred to by Muslim writers as the “Days of Ignorance” “*Ayyam al-jahiliyyah*”. The “*Jahiliyya*” period or Pre-Islamic age, as Nicholson (1953, p. 71) clarifies,

covers scarcely more than a century, from about 500AD, when the oldest poems of which we have any record were composed, to the year of Muhammad's flight to Medina `al-Hijrah` (622AD), which is the starting point of a new era in Arabic history.

Although there were settled people and famous cities such as Makkah, Taif and Hira, many Arabs in this period were nomadic “Bedouin” tribes of the central and northern Arabian peninsula, adopting nomadic values and their own style of living (Mansfield, 1992, p. 14 and forward). However, as Hitti (1961, p. 23) interprets,

The Bedouin is not a gypsy, roaming aimlessly for the sake of roaming. He represents the best adaptation of human life to desert conditions.

Bateson (1967) believes that Arabic developed in the Najd area, the centre of the Arabian Peninsula, combining features of several different dialects into a common language which was used for some kinds of inter-tribal communication. He suggested

that it is believed that the 'Arabiyyah' (Classical Arabic) was the normal speech of nomadic Arabia during the few decades of the pre-Islamic period.

Regarding Arabic learning, the main instrument for learning language and integrating its dialects was the poetry composed and recited within the tribe or at some general concourse of the Arabs, such as the fair of Ukkāḍ near Makkah (Dunlop, 1971). In the century before Islam, the classical Arabic was perfected and poetic language was already highly developed, so that Hitti (1961, p. 92) has said,

Poetry seems to have issued forth full grown.

As indicated, Arabs met each other in their concourses such as 'Ukkāḍ and 'Thi al-Majaz' to improve and rectify their language and to learn their classical Arabic. Within these gatherings or meetings, many discussion circles were held, in addition to some competitions between the tribes' orators and poets which helped the young and adults to learn a good style of language.

Concerning formal learning, especially reading and writing, al Baladhuri (died 892, published in 1951), related that writing was taught to some citizens of Makkah for the first time by Bisher Ibn Abdulmalik who brought it from al-Hirah. According to Nicholson (1953) very few among the pre-Islamic Arabs were able to read or write, which was mainly due to the influence of foreign culture radiating from Hirah and Ghassan. Moreover, some Islamic references related that by the beginning of Islam there were only seventeen men and two women in the city of Makkah and eleven people in the city of Madinah who were able to read and write (Al-Shakah, 1982, p. 17-18). Nevertheless, Professor Al-Hily holds the view that reading and writing were prevalent in the Arabian peninsula in pre-Islamic times. He cited three historical quotations which prove the existence of "kuttab" education (primary schools for teaching reading

and writing, usually run by one teacher) in Makkah and Madinah and mentioned the teacher by name (1982, p. 169).

It seems to the researcher that although they were not “ a very few” as some writers suggested, there were not a large number of people who were able to read and write, and they taught those children who desired to learn and were able to attend the *kuttab*. However, the people themselves, because of their lifestyle and needs, did not, in general, have a great interest in literacy. This view is supported by the fact that even the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) was unlettered, at the beginning of Islam, though some of his companions were able to read and write. Morsy (1987) stated that it is evident that the Prophet entrusted 24 of his companions with writing the Qur'an. Finally, it is very important to mention that with regard to oral language, Arabs in the Pre-Islamic period used to send their children to the desert to learn pure Arabic at first hand from the eloquent Bedouins. Indeed, it is reported that the Prophet Muhammad himself was sent, when he was a child, to Bani Sa'd, in order to acquire eloquence in Arabic (Al-Oumary 1996).

2.2.2. Learning AL in the Early Islamic Period 622-750

“*Iqra*” which means “Read” was the first word believed to be handed down to the Prophet Muhammad by the Archangel Gabriel. From then on, Muhammad started to spread his message among the Arabs and to teach his companions the Qur'an “The Holy Book”, which afterwards became the most important resource of Arabic language. Professor Chejne (1969) suggested that the Qur'an, since the spread and ascendancy of Islam, became the most perfect book in the Arabic tongue. The religion of Islam was the sole reason for the spread of Arabic language and, as was indicated earlier, best explained by Bateson (1967, p. 77-78):

classical Arabic must really be considered to date from the moment when the Islamic administration and the maintenance of religious orthodoxy put a premium on the use of a single, standardised and unifying dialect.

The Arabic Language Sciences and the study of the Qur'an, and the necessity of expounding it, gave rise to an increased interest in philology, lexicography, phonetics and rhetoric as well as to Muslim literary activity. Among these activities, poetry was the most important form, occupying a role similar to that of Pre-Islamic and early Islamic times. Next in importance to poetry was oratory, which took on a religious dimension. The orator or "*Khafib*", as Nicholson (1953) suggested, was expected to express his thoughts in eloquent and beautiful language.

Writing, in this period grew promptly, speedily and professionally. One of the most famous writers in this period was Abd-al-Hamid Al-Katib, the scribe or secretary of the last Umayyad Caliphs, said by many Islamic writers to be one of the best writers of the art of epistolary composition, '*insha*' in Arab history (Hitti, 1961, p. 250).

However, a large proportion of Arabic literary effort, at this time, was making use of Pre-Islamic Poetry and texts as linguistic evidence to be devoted to the interpretation of the Qur'an (Bateson, 1967, p. 59). So, for this reason,

the scientific study of the Arabic language and grammar was begun and carried on mainly for foreign converts and partly by them. The first impulse came from the desire to supply the linguistic needs of Neo-Moslems who wanted to study the Koran, (Hitti, 1961, p. 241).

This is believed to be the main reason. However another motive partly responsible for evoking such linguistic interest was the prevalence of the colloquial language, '*a'miah*', which caused an ever-widening gap between the classical language of the Qur'an and the everyday language corrupted by Syriac, Persian and other tongues and dialects (Hitti, 1961, p. 241).



Academic Learning of the AL

From a scholastic viewpoint, as soon as Islam began to take root, a class of people called "Qurra" (readers) at once came into being to teach reciting the Qur'an and spread knowledge about it (Totah 1926, p. 12). Although teaching was largely confined to the Qur'an and other related sciences, it seems to the researcher that this situation emboldened people and attracted their attention towards learning and studying other sorts of knowledge, in obedience to the general order of the prophet Muhammad to his companions: "*searching for knowledge is the duty of every Muslim*" (Morsy, 1987, p. 22). He also said, "*A person who goes in search of knowledge, he is on Allah's (God) way and he remains so until he returns*" (Al-Nawawi d.1277, Vol 1, p. 659).

The biographical references to Muhammad's life relate that after gaining victory in the Battle of Badger, he took some of the enemy as prisoners of war. He ordered those of the captives who were able to write each to teach ten Muslim children as ransom. When they had done this, he freed them and did not take any more hostages (Al-Hilly 1982, p. 182 quoted from Ibn Saad). Some writers consider this incident as the beginning of elementary school in Islam (Al-Hily 1982, p. 182). This can be accepted in the light of Totah's (1926, p. 12) view that whenever a man who knew how to read met another who was not quite so fortunate, yet willing to learn, a school was organised:

It may have been under a palm tree in a tent, or in a private house; nevertheless, it was a school.

It may be of interest and profit to consider some quotations to draw a picture of the learning of Arabic in this period after the spread of Islam. To begin with, Philip Hitti (1961, p. 253-254) relates:

As early as the year 17 (638) the Caliph Umar sent such teachers in all directions and ordered the people to meet with them on Fridays in the Mosques. Umar II sent as Chief Judge to Egypt Yazid ibn-abi-Habib (died 746), who is said to have been the first to distinguish himself as teacher there. In Al-Kufah we read of a certain al-Dahhak ibn-Muzahim (died 723) who kept an elementary school (kuttab) and

made no charges for instruction. In the second Moslim century, we even hear of a Bedouin settling in al-Basrah and conducting a school where fees were charged.

Regarding arranged academic studies, the famous biographer Ibn-Khallikan related that Ali, the fourth orthodox caliph, instigated formal efforts to codify Arabic grammar by instructing Abual-Aswad al-Duali to prepare a complete grammar along lines laid down by the Caliph, (1983, vol 1, p. 429-30). He did so, then his teaching was passed on to subsequent generations of scholars. Abu-al-Aswad's pupil, al-Khalil bin Ahmad, was the most famous linguist and author of this period in both grammar (*nahw*) and lexicography (*lughah*), and left behind a very important book called '*al-Ain*' (Dhafa 1976, pp. 34-35). However, grammar and lexicography according to Haywood (1965, p. 18), were

closely inter-connected, and we find great scholars like al-Zamakhshari writing outstanding works in both fields "

At that time real efforts were made in two directions: to maintain classical Arabic through academic and pure linguistic studies, as mentioned, and also to learn or 'practise' pure language, as young men were sent to stay with Bedouin tribes. Hitti (1961, p. 253) specifies

The 'badiyah' Syrian desert, acted as a sort of school to which they sent their young sons to acquire the pure Arabic tongue and to become well versed in poetry.

This suggests that although there was some specialist study, Arabic language at this time was learned by ear rather than by eye, especially in the light of the essential role of the eloquent Arabs of the desert who, although they were illiterate, used to come to the cities and speak face to face with the scholars and reciters.

Accounts of learning in this period report that the public, desiring education, patronised the Mosques as learning centres and the children were sent to study the Qur'an, reading and writing for a period of about five years, between the ages of seven and twelve

(Totah, P 1926, pp. 49-50). However, high class people usually appointed a tutor or preceptor 'Muaddib' for their children. These teachers were required to teach the children poetry and Arabic grammar as well as moral principles (Hitti, 1961, p. 253).

2.2.3. Learning AL in the Abbasid Period (750-1258)

The annals of the Abbasid dynasty from the accession in (A.D 749) to the destruction of Baghdad by the Mongols (A.D 1258) make a round sum of five centuries. The Abbasids based their power on Islam, rather than identifying with the Arabs, and moved their capital to Baghdad, where they were enriched by the creativity of Persian converts to Islam (Bateson, 1967, p. 61). This marked the beginning of a socio-intellectual revolution which affected the mode of thinking of the Arab-Muslim people and, as it seems to the researcher, their methods of learning language as well. An intellectual efflorescence took place in the Arabic language that was to bear fruit for practically all branches of knowledge known at the time. Arabic developed its greatest potential for expression and supplanted various other languages, as Chejne (1969, p. 66) explains,

as it became the instrument of learning and society from the Eastern border of Persia in the East to the Pyrenees and Atlantic Ocean in the West. The best testimony to this linguistic ascendancy is the immense literary output of the Abbasid period.

In this period, Arabic literature knew its golden age and although poetry never lost its important position in Arab society, it seems that other linguistic activities also gained prominence and it is evident that the language was fully mature. In this period there was an enormous cultural and linguistic revolution, the main motive for which was the enlargement of the spread of Islam through new convents into Islamic and Arabic civilisation and conquest of new lands leading to a desire for knowledge of Islamic culture and Arabic language and its literature (Ashakah 1982). Moreover, there were other factors which contributed to this advancement. Bateson (1967, p.62) suggested that translations from Persian and from Greek, via Syriac provided an additional

stimulus. He also noted that the establishment of a paper factory in Baghdad made it possible to write and own many books and facilitated the transition from oral-dominated education to written forms of education.

Arabic grammar, which is one of the most important subjects of the Arabic language, was being investigated at Basra and Kufa, the garrison cities of Iraq. It is believed that scholars in these cities gathered linguistic data by collecting the ancient poetry and by asking Bedouins who were speaking a pure form of Arabic (Mahmod 1986, p.50 and foreword). Sibawayh (died 793) who was one of al-Khalil ibn-Ahmad's pupils, composed the first systematic textbook on Arabic grammar, known by the honorific title *al-Kitab* (the Book), which has ever since been the basis of all native studies of the subject. It was followed by a large number of books and studies, some of which later were influenced by some striking marks of Greek logic (Addageny 1982); (Bafadhl 1996).

However, it is the researcher's own view that although these grammatical efforts represented some of the most remarkable work in the Arabic language history, they marked the beginning of the most serious pedagogical problem. At that time, the concern changed from 'learning language' to 'describing language' or 'interpreting how Arabic language construction could be logicalised', problems which Arabic language still suffers from in schools today.

In the lexicographic field, Al-Khalil ibn Ahamad, at the end of the Umayyad period, had laid the foundations for the study of Arabic philology from internal evidence in his famous book, *'Al-'ain'*, which paved the way for numerous Arabic dictionaries. Al-Asmai (739-831) was the author of much work in this field. Ibn al-Mutazz (861-908) wrote a great book, *'Kitab al-Badiea'*, while Al-Jauhari (died 1005) wrote one of the

best Arabic lexicographic references and still occupies a prominent position in the Arabic library.

On the literary side, there were many activities such as poetry which had always been the Arab art par excellence although, in this period, literature was invaded by non-Arabs and the sphere was constantly expanded, so that poetry lost its position as the only medium, although it was an essential part of court life (Bateson, 1967, p. 65). Among the famous and greatest poets were : Abu Nuwas (d. 810), Abu al'Atahia (d. 828), Abu Firas (d. 968), Al-Mutanabbi (d. 968) and al-Ma'arri (d. 1057). At that time, *belles-lettres* 'adab' grew rapidly, beginning with Al-Jahiz (died 868-9) and culminating in the works of Badi al-Zaman al-Hamadani (d. 1008), al -Thaalibi (died 1038) and al-Hariri (d. 1122) (for more details see Hitti 1961, p. 403).

It is important to say that Muslim Spain or the Arabs of Al-Andalus in this age played an eminent role in various linguistic activities. Among those are al-Qali (d. 967), al-Zubaydi (989), Ibn Hazm (d.1064) and ibn-Khafajah (d. 1139).

Academic Learning of the AL:

The Abbasid is one of the brightest, most fortunate, educational periods in Arabic history. To this dynasty, the famous Harun al-Rashid and al-Mamun belonged and under the banner of those Abbasid Caliphs, the Arabs had their Golden Age of wealth, influence, power, learning and culture. When most of the world's children had no school to attend, their Arab contemporaries were enjoying the full benefits of education (Totah 1926, p. 50).

Describing this bright age, Nicholson (1953 p. 281) relates:

It may be recalled, however, that many commercial terms, eg. tariff, names of fabrics, occurring in English as well as in most European languages are of Arabic origin and were brought to Europe by merchants from Baghdad, Mosul,

Basra, and other cities of Western Asia. This material expansion was accompanied by an outburst of intellectual activity such as the East had never witnessed before. It seems as if all the world from the Caliph down to the humblest citizen suddenly became students or at least patrons of literature.

In the earlier Abbasid period, there was a certain spontaneity about the growth of educational opportunities. There was an eager thirst for knowledge which was slaked, mostly informally, at the nearest source, whether in Mosques, in elementary schools (*Kuttab*), in private houses or even in shops. The mosques, as seats of learning, were numerous in the cities and existed in every village (Totah 1926, p 15).

Regarding the learning of Arabic language in particular, it seems beneficial to divide it into two categories: Elementary School, and Higher Education

a). Elementary School

At about seven years of age, children were taken to the Elementary School, '*kuttab*'. When the foundation had been laid during the first three years, two or three more years were devoted to religious education, grammar and elementary literature (Totah 1926, p. 59). This kind of education usually took place in Mosques or in '*Kuttab*' or '*Maktab*' which might be established separately or sometimes attached to mosques.

Primary education was very widespread in all Muslim lands, according to Totah (1926, p. 15) who commented,

Al-Yaqubi, who has left us a description of Baghdad of the ninth century AD, states that there were in that capital, thirty thousand mosques and it must be remembered that each mosque was a potential school.

About another land at this time, Hitti (1961, p. 562) states

education was nevertheless so widely spread that a high percentage of Spanish Moslems could read and write, a situation unknown in Europe of that age.

Not only that but Al-Gabessy (d. 1012), one of the educators of this period, was believed to be the first who called for 'compulsory education for all children'. He believed that, regardless of the position and economic status of the child, "*it is necessary and a religious obligation of the society to teach children*" (Morsy 1987, p.115)

The elementary schools' curriculum had the Qur'an for its centre and the first course of study consisted in reading it as a text-book. With reading, went writing. In order to support interpretation of Qur'anic texts, teachers adduced some sayings of the Prophet (Totah 1926, p. 48-49).

Together with reading and penmanship, the students were taught Arabic grammar, stories about the prophets and poems, but not those of an erotic character. Throughout the whole curriculum, memory work was especially emphasised (Hitti 1961, p. 408). In some elementary schools, arithmetic and measurement of weights and volumes were included in the curriculum (Al-Hili 1982, p. 184). Memorisation of the Qur'an, however, continued to play a key role in the curriculum. Students were ordered to memorise it and achievement in this was highly regarded. Hitti (1961, p. 408) explained,

the scholars were granted a whole or partial holiday whenever one of them had finally mastered a section of the Koran.

However, in some Muslim schools in the western states, pupils started learning language, reading, and writing from poetry in order to master the language before studying the Qur'an because as they believed, a child should not be taught what is difficult for him to understand. (Repera, 1981, p. 45). In Damascus, as Ibn Jubayr (d. 1185) noted, the

writing exercises by the pupils were not from the Qur'an, but from secular poetry, for the act of erasing the word of Allah might discredit (Hitti 1961, p. 408).

As has already been suggested, Arabic grammar has some complicated logical aspects which make it hard to understand. Al-Jahedh (d. about 868) believed that it is a waste of time to teach a child all the details of grammar. He should be given the most important aspects of it, to help him when he wants to speak or write and protect him from the worst grammatical mistakes (Khater, and others, 1983, p. 200). In respect of this view, many scholars composed special text-books of the core grammar for learning or for young learners, avoiding detailed accounts of grammatical theories. Among them are Al-Nahas (d. 339), Ibn 'Ajarom al-Sanhaji (d. 723) and others.

Muslim Spain also had one of the best methods of teaching Arabic language. Children were taught grammar in a practical context, whereas in other Islamic areas, the student was taught grammar by theoretical methods, so, according to Repera (1981, p. 75), in Spain, children mastered their language skills earlier and better than in other areas.

Rural students could have had their elementary education at home, though they probably had to go away for their higher education. The famous grammarian, al-Zamaakhshari, came from such a village (Totah, 1926, p. 43).

b). Higher Education:

After several years of elementary education, students who desired to continue their studies could go to scholars and specialists in the mosques and study any subject they wanted. Linguistic studies were intimately related to the religious disciplines and to poetry, constituting the most important components of Arabic education. People were expected to be conversant in both Arabic grammar and lexicography and to be able to participate in linguistic discussions (Chejne 1969, p. 75).

The language curriculum at this stage was based on Qur'anic exegesis and theology, grammar, poetry and lexicography.

Two methods of presenting these subjects were prevalent. Within the first method, students were taught all these subjects in one class. For example, Tha'aleb (d. 904) and Al-Akhfash (d. 920) taught their students all these subjects together (see Dhafe 1976, pp. 95,225).

Some other scholars specialised in a single subject. Among grammarians were Sebawaih (d. 796) and Ibn-Kisan (d. 912) (Dhafe 1976), while scholars concerned with literary study included Ibn-Kutaibah (d.889) and Ibn Abd-rabbuh (d. 940) (see Al-Shakah 1982, pp. 184, 317).

Those scholars taught in the big cities such as Baghdad, al-Basrah, al-Kofah and other Arab cities. They attracted students from far and wide, so there was an excellent

practice of journeying away from home for the purpose of completing one's studies (Totah 1926, p. 98).

The oratory or the public speaking was given a higher importance as an ultimate target for learning Arabic. The orators or 'Khotaba', especially in the early period, were very keen to perform their speech, 'Khotbah', in standard, eloquent and beautiful language which encouraged people to improve their skills in standard language (Ghanim, 1997).

In the academic learning of Arabic language by adults three resources played very important roles in this period. They were:

- a. The establishment of the organised schools in the eleventh and twelfth centuries which quickly became prevalent in almost all Islamic cities. Ibn-Jubair, the famous explorer in the twelfth century, named thirty organised schools which acted as higher educational institutes in Baghdad alone (Morsy 1987). Moreover, it was in Abbasid times that the first prominent institution for higher learning in Islam was founded. This was 'Bayt al-Hikmah' (the House of Wisdom) founded by al-Mamun (830). It was mainly for translation and it was a model for later institutions of higher education such as Nizamiyah (founded in 1065-7) and al-Mustanseria

(founded in 1234). However, the latter were not concerned with Arabic language learning (Hitti 1961, pp. 409-411). (Al-Hili 1982, pp. 190-991).

- b. Libraries were used as one of the most important centres for teaching Arabic language. Libraries, maintenance of which was considered as one of the mosques' functions, were used as meeting places for discussions and debates and also for writing activities (Hitti 1961, p. 413; Morsy, 1987). Such discussions were also held in the court of the ruler or in the Caliph's house and he adjudged the outcome according to the evidence and proofs offered by the conversers (Mahmod 1986, p.42).
- c. Book shops: which acted as commercial and educational agencies. According to al-Yaqubi (d. 891), at that time there were over a hundred book dealers in one street. Some of these shops acted as centres of literary discussion (Hitti 1961, p. 414; Al-Hilly 1982, p. 193). Obviously, Arabic learning was facilitated, as indicated, by the introduction of paper. The manufacturing of this important material, in 794, by the prime minister of Al-Rasheed - the Abbasid Caliph - greatly increased the production and availability of books (Morsy, 1987), which was very helpful for learning language and the availability of reference materials.

2.2.4. Learning AL in the Period of Decline (1258-1798)

The murder of the Caliph in Baghdad in the year 1258, after the Mongol invasion, ended a very bright period and started what is often described by some writers as a decline in Arab history and in the language as well. Arabic literature lost most of its vigour, lasting slightly longer in Spain than in the East. The expansion of Arabic and literary production in the language began to lose momentum and headed for a slow but sure decline until they came to a complete standstill in the thirteenth century (Chejne 1969, p. 80). Poetry was the earliest genre to decline, for although there were always scores of poets ready to copy the old forms there were few voices who used poetry to express

their religious experiences. The Persian language replaced Arabic and many Persians began to glorify their own pre-Islamic past.

From the end of the fifteenth century to the beginning of the modern period, the Arabic lands were ruled by Ottoman Turks and these centuries were unproductive.

Membership of the ruling class was open only to those who had learned Turkish, so that talent from all over the empire was attracted to this new imperial identity. Arabic was no longer the only language of Islam, and the use of Arabic no longer conferred prestige and was required only in some specifically religious contexts where the concern was with continuity and memorisation, rather than with creativity (Bateson 1967, p 67).

The process of decline was going on at an alarming pace, leading the Arabic language to what might be called the Dark Ages. There were many factors which led to the decline of the Arabic language. The seeds of decline may be traced back to the division of the Islamic Empire against itself and the invading of the Crusaders when they set foot in the Islamic land, and the Reconquest gained momentum in Spain. A major factor contributing to the decline of Arabic was the invasions of Muslim lands by East Asiatic hordes. Although they embraced Islam they nevertheless encouraged their languages, Persian and other Asiatic languages, as the languages of state and literature. Ibn Manzur (d.1311) the author of the famous Arabic lexicon (*Lisan al-Arab*), complained about the decadent state of the Arabic language and the tendency of people to learn a foreign language in preference to Arabic (Chejne 1969, pp. 81-82).

From an educational perspective, although Arab educational levels had reached a high degree of development as mentioned in the last section, these soon began to decline. Learning and writing became inferior, as those who cultivated Arabic as a medium of literary expression were increasingly restricted to a minority whose intellectual horizons were very narrow and limited. Ibn Battutah on visiting Al-Basrah in 1327 described the

deterioration in the educational situation, reflected in serious mistakes of grammar made by a preacher while speaking from the pulpit. Ibn Batutah wrote:

I was astonished at this and spoke of it to the qadi (Mayor) who answered "In this town there is not one left who knows anything about grammar". Here, indeed, is a warning for men to reflect on. Magnified be He who changes all things and overturns all human affairs. This Basra, in whose people the mystery of grammar reached its height whence it had its origin and where it developed, which was the home of its leader whose prominence is undisputed, has no preacher who can deliver a sermon without breaking its rules. (Chejne 1969, pp. 82-83).

However, during the period of decline, noteworthy contributions were made in the field of compilation and encyclopaedias, without which our knowledge of Arabic lore and heritage would be very limited. In fact, many of the works of the period are still very important reference books. Two encyclopaedists, who belong to that time and are often quoted, are Ahmad al-Nuwayri (d. 1332), author of *'Nihayat al-Arab fi Funun al-Adab'*, and Ahmad al-Qashgalandi (d. 1418) whose *Subh al-A'asha'* was intended as a manual for those who held secretarial offices in the government (Hitti, 1961, p. 689). In fact, these two works are still very important reference books in the Arabic library. Ibnul-khatib (d.1374) and Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) were two other scholars whose names as Nicholson (1953, p. 435) suggests,

represent the highest literary accomplishment and historical comprehension of which this age was capable. The latter, indeed, has no parallel among Oriental Historians.

Al-Zarnoghy (d. about 1197), Ibn Jamaah (d. 1333) and Ibn Khaldun typify the superior educationalists of this period. Moreover, the famous lexicographers, Ibn Manzur (d.1311) author of *'Lisan al-'Arab'* (the Arab tongue) which is the most important Arabic dictionary and also Al-Fairuzabadi (d. 1415) whose *'al-Qamus al-Muhit'* is still very important, both came from this period.

It seems that, although we might describe this period as the period of Decline, in terms of the general academic and educational level, there were, nevertheless, many scholars and specialists in various subjects and sciences who devoted their efforts to research and compilation of existing knowledge. Thus, there were two intellectual classes in society. There was a small scholar class, concentrated in some Arab cities, and a large class of those who had little or no education. In other words, although there were many scholars, the situation of the society or the number of those involved in education declined.

In this period, the methods used in the Abbasid period continued but only in the largest Islamic cities. *Al-Kuttab* acted as elementary schools while *Al-Jami'* (the largest Mosque in each city) were considered the higher education centres.

However, at that time Ibn-Khaldun (d. 1406) criticised the methods used in teaching Arabic to younger children which started with teaching them the Qur'an in a very early age. He praised the method used in the western Islamic states, in which children were taught reading and writing, poems and calculation prior to the Qur'an, as that would enable them to understand and memorise the Qur'an (Morsy 1987).

Ibn-Khaldun also had a very innovative view, in that he emphasised teaching Arabic language to the children through *"training and practising the authentic forms of the language"*. He saw language skills as 'knacks' or 'faculties' which could only be improved through training with reading and memorising the Qur'an and the texts of the eloquent poets and orators. He believed that *"knowing rules and grammar cannot help the child to use the language"*. He explained, *"having some knowledge of how some thing is operated is not the work itself"*. (Ibn-Khaldun, published in 1986 p.526).

2.2.5. Learning AL in the Revival Period and the First Half of the Twentieth Century (1798-1950)

For some writers, the Revival Period opened for the Arabs in 1798 when Napoleon landed in Egypt. However, it was another fifty years before the Arab Renaissance, '*nahdah*', took shape, and marked the beginning of the break with the past. Napoleon brought an Arabic press which he had plundered from the Vatican and used it to issue propaganda sheets in Arabic.

Until that time, the people of the Arab World had achieved no progress and were even unmindful of the progress of the world outside; changes did not interest them.

However, this contact with the West gave them the first knock that awakened them from their medieval slumber. It was to set a corner of the Muslim world on fire (Hitti, 1961, p. 745).

In fact, contact between the West and Arabic world had begun earlier than this, according to Chejne (1969, p. 86). Lebanon had entered into contact with the West as early as the seventeenth century, owing to the interest of papal religious groups. Such contact made the Fertile Crescent the leader of the intellectual revival. Moreover, there were several significant developments which helped make Arab revival possible.

Among them was the introduction of the printing press, which made printed works accessible to a large number of people. Newspapers, magazines and books of all sorts were on the increase, as was the number of publishing houses.

Muhammad Ali, the Egyptian leader, started the process of inviting French and other European officers to train his army, and sent student missions to be trained in Europe. He proceeded to establish schools in his own land, not only for military science, but for various civic subjects. (Hitti, 1961, p. 745). In other parts of the Arab world, there were many political, social philanthropic and scientific organisations. Also, libraries

organised along modern lines contributed a great deal to the dissemination of learning. Private and public schools and universities were established in most Arab countries (Chejne 1969, p. 87).

One of the most significant developments for the success of Arab revivalism, as Morsy (1987) believes, was the appearance of a succession of reformers, mainly religious and social reformers such as Muhammad Ibn Abdul-Wahab (d. 1791) in Najd of the Arabian Peninsula, Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1897) and Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905) in Egypt.

Finally, a great deal of translating was done, both technical and literacy, and drama was introduced to Arabic via translations and early experiments in dramatic prose in Lebanon by the Naqqash family (Bateson 1967, p. 68).

Regarding the Arabic language and its learning, Chejne (1969, p. 125) suggested that the attempts at reviving and revitalising Arabic during the past century have been fairly successful. He explains his view as follows:

This literature covers every conceivable subject in modern times, and contains a large number of works which deal with many aspects of the language, including its virtues and defects, its role and significance in society, its various problems and need for reforms, its grammar and lexicon structure. The major linguistic issues could be elucidated by this literary productivity, as could the state of the language be by the vast modern literature.

Explicitly literary Arabic remained close to the classical Arabic, with all its traditions, until the beginning of the twentieth century when such poets as al-Barudi (d. 1904), Ahmad Showqi (d. 1932) and Hafidh Ibrahim (d. 1939) began to diverge from the classical and more abstract model. The next generation of Arabic writers were much more clearly in favour of liberty and freedom than the previous generation. Among them Muhammad Haykal (d.1956) and Abbas al-Aqqad (d. 1959)

This was the general status of Arabic outside school. However, the learning of Arabic at that time faced many problems and obstacles, with extensive attempts and efforts made to solve them. The most pressing problems might be summarised in the following points:

- a. In the earlier part of this period, the Arab countries were still ruled by Ottoman Turks and the membership of the ruling class was only open to those who had learned Turkish. The Ottomans displaced Arabic by using Turkish in governmental departments and councils and making it the official language. Arabic was affected by the use of Turkish words and terms and, in some cases, Turkish grammar. These effects and traces lasted for a long time, causing serious problems (Morsy, 1987).
- b. European colonialism was another source of problems. Arabic faced increasing encroachment of French and English at the official and educational levels. Arabic faced further difficulties at the end of the nineteenth century. The British regime, according to Yonos et al (undated, p. 18), had declared English to be the official language. They continue

The British closed the school of languages and made education available to the privileged class only, in either French or English... English made its way into the schools and administration, usurping many of the opportunities for the establishment of Arabic.

In Algeria, French was the instructional language throughout the educational system. There was no special attention to Arabic in the curriculum; it was treated as a foreign language and its share in the timetable was determined accordingly. Moreover, Arabic was taught in French, which was the official language. The French government intended to wipe Arabic out (Yonos et al, undated, p.28).

- c. The methods of teaching of Arabic in this period represented serious solemn problems. Chejne (1969, p. 102) claims:

Modern methods for teaching the language were not developed and traditional ways in which learning by rote was a basic technique, were adhered to.

Moreover, the availability and quality of Arabic teachers posed a serious difficulty (Al-Hamadi 1977 p. 53), while the absence of suitable instructional materials was another hindrance (Chejne 1969).

- d. Arabic grammar acquired a reputation for being difficult and complicated, which hindered the teaching of the language at that time. Although this was not the first time the grammar had appeared as a problem, it was the strongest claim which had been made since early Arabic history (Al-Sayed 1987).
- e. By the nineteenth century, classical Arabic had been almost relegated to oblivion, and local dialects had taken hold not only of the masses, but of the intelligentsia and scholars as well (Chejne 1978, p. 8.). This situation remained and still is one of the major obstacles to learning Arabic.

These losses, however, were partly compensated for by the increasing number of efforts by many intellectuals to solve Arabic language learning's problems and difficulties, although some of these efforts were unsuccessful and it may be said that some even compounded the problems in the way of learning Arabic. The following are some of the ways in which attempts were made to restore the status of Arabic and overcome obstacles to learning it:

- a. General demands were made for Arabic to be reinstated as the sole official language of each Arabic country and the principal medium of instruction during the 1930s and subsequently the elementary and secondary schools and universities endeavoured to give Arabic a prominent place in the curriculum.
- b. In 1914, a committee concerned with editing, translating and publishing (*Lijnat at-talif wa-ttarjumah wa-nnashir*) was established in Egypt. The committee succeeded

in some of its objectives, while it failed in many respects with regard to the standardisation and uniformity of Arabic expressions (Chejne 1978).

- c. There were many attempts to spread Arabic and particularly to expand the use of classical and literary Arabic among Arab communities or to close the gap between every day language and the standard language. For this purpose, several Academies and Committees were established, such as the Arabic Academy in Damascus (1919) and its main committee: Literary Linguistic Committee; The Royal Academy for the Arabic Language (1932) and the Iraqi Academy (1949). They aimed “at maintaining the purity of the language and making it adequate for the needs of modern life” and they also “proposed to undertake research in the field of Arabic literature” (Chejne 1978).
- d. At the official levels, numerous conferences were held in various Arab countries, in which linguistic problems occupied the forefront in the discussions. In 1948, the Arab League Congress recommended that each state should give Arabic as much time as possible of its curriculum. In 1974, the Arab countries recognised Arabic as the major subject and devoted between 22 – 40% of the time-table to it in elementary schools, and between 18 - 30 % in middle schools (Arab League 1974).
- e. One fundamental effort concerns simplifying Arabic and facilitating Arabic grammar. This attempt started at the official level in 1947, when the Arab League, in the First Arabic Cultural Conference, resolved that Arabic grammar in its various aspects, syntax, morphology and dictation needed to be facilitated and made more easy to be suitable for students, provided that this was achieved without harming any essential aspect of the language (Al-Sayed 1987)). Academics and educationalists have made various efforts in this regard, though, in the researcher’s view, although many suggestions ranging from the conservative to the radical have been made, no complete or successful work has been achieved so far. Recently,

educationalists have called for further study of this matter with a view to designing a new Arabic language curriculum, to facilitate the learning of Arabic grammar (Al-Sayed 1987; Al-Huggail 1995).

- f. Another suggestion has been to change the Arabic script, which is said to be one of the difficulties in learning, since it lacks a clear system of vowels and capital letters such as are used in European languages. This suggestion, although it has received some attention, has been the focus of much heated controversy. Experiments in changing from Arabic script to the Latin alphabet, and other similar attempts, have been made but without any conclusive results and Arabic academics have rejected them (Morsy, 1987).
- g. Nowhere is the difficulty more perceptible than in the relationship between classical Arabic used for writing and formal speaking and the different dialects. The gap has been great, and students have been generally handicapped in learning the language due to the lack of able teachers and modern textbooks, and to obsolete methods of instruction. Since the early 1920s, the argument has arisen whether or not Arabic should be presented in local dialects or in Standard Arabic. According to Chejne (1978, p. 35), the writers who favour the colloquial argue that

*the every day language is nearer to the hearts and minds of
the majority of the people.*

The great mass of scholars, however, argue that although the language should evolve in conformity with need, we should elevate the standard of the language and encourage its classical use and not lower it by the adoption of dialect and colloquial language. Arab scholars believe Standard Arabic possesses a great wealth of expression and flexibility, that it can adapt itself to new situations, and that it can absorb new words, in conformity with syntactical and grammatical patterns. For these reasons, they argue that only Standard Arabic can meet the Arab community's needs and serve the Arabic cultural and literary heritage.

It seems that the revival period has witnessed many attempts and activities in relation to studying aspects of Arabic and increasing interest in the way it is taught and learnt. It seems also that the efforts were generally successful, either in enhancing the level of education or closing the ways to some destructive movements such the substitution of colloquial dialects or the Latin script. These efforts have laid a good foundation for the next generation of Arab scholars and educationalists, i.e. after 1950, which will be clarified in the following section.

2.2.6. Learning Arabic in Recent Times:

The Arabic language did not have its rightful position in the Arab countries during the Colonialist period, indeed, it was neglected. In many instances it was not the language of instruction and it was taught as an elective subject. Under these circumstances, as indicated earlier, there were no efforts to reform the teaching of Arabic or develop the curriculum. On the contrary, the colonisers concentrated on their language and their culture in order to substitute them in the place of Arabic and to convert the mass to their language as the every day-language, to such an extent that Arabic, in some cases, was taught using the foreign languages (Bahjet, 1982, p.282; Yones et al, undated, p.18). Thus, when the Arab countries gained independence, they had to rebuild their educational system in general and their language curriculum in particular. However, the efforts of reform and development were not always arranged and planned successfully. In many cases, they relied on trial and error. Thus, improvement in Arabic learning came slowly until the 1950s when widespread attention was paid to promote the teaching of Arabic and its curriculum. So, during the last four decades Arabic teaching and curriculum design have witnessed many attempts to develop its contents, teaching approaches, introduce use of teaching aids, and prepare and train teachers, (Saber, 1985, p. 21) or even to change its policy and aims (Mosa, 1996, p. 74).

In sum, the reform efforts made in the various areas of the AL education, which included:

- a) Giving Arabic an appropriate position in General School plans;
- b) Developing the curriculum to facilitate study of the language and enable students to use it properly;
- c) Some administrative procedure to increase its importance and prestige;
- d) Making Arabic a fundamental and essential subject in all school grades, so that students could not go to the next grade if they could not succeed in Arabic.
- e) Paying attention to the preparation of Arabic Language teachers and to teaching methods.

Not only that but many studies and surveys have been carried out to improve the Arabic language curriculum and solve its miscellaneous problems (Gorah, 1996, p 44).

Therefore, since the 1970s, Arabic has been accorded its rightful status in all Arab states. Table 2.2.1 shows its share in four Arab countries in various geographical locations, with the view to representing other countries.

Table 2.2.1
Arabic Language Share Among General School Plans
in Four Arab Countries*

Country	Arabic language share		
	Elementary stage	Intermediate Stage	Secondary Stage
Egypt	32.2%	20.2%	16.2%
Iraq	21.1%	18.7 %	14.4%
Tunisia	34.33%	16.6 %	10.00%
Bahrain	35.05 %	22.25 %	18.00 %

*Sources: Arab League (1974); Yonis et al (undated); Khater et al (1983).

It appears from these figures that the average share of the timetable allocated to Arabic language in Arab states' General School Plans is 31.07 in Elementary School, 19.42 % in Intermediate School and 14.7 % in Secondary School. Although these are not accurate figures for all Arab countries, they contribute to draw a general picture and help us to draw three conclusions:

- a) A high position and status is given to Arabic language in the General School Plans.
- b) It takes about one-third of the timetable in the first stage then shrinks gradually in the next two stages.
- c) There are big differences among the countries indicated in the allocation to Arabic in their plans, and also among their three stages, reflecting differences in policy, according to different educationalists' viewpoint. It should be mentioned, however, that in some cases there is co-ordination between groups of Arab states such as Libya, Syria and the Sudan which are consistent with Egypt in its plans at the Elementary and Intermediate stages (Yones et al, undated, p.29).

Despite the importance of the quantitative time allowed for Arabic language, it does not reflect a perfect or even successful situation of Arabic learning throughout the Arab World. On the contrary, there is enormous doubt as to the value of the curriculum and its influence on teaching Arabic according to many educationalists who claim the curriculum is weak and ineffective. Examples are Khater et al (1983), Al-Sayed (1987), Al-Rabeea (1985) and Al-Hogail (1992) and many others who were named in Chapter One (p. 4) of this study.

Without being able to investigate the whole situation of the Arabic language education in the Arab countries, one point should be indicated that, there have been many considerations and proposals regarding the courses into which Arabic should be divided, so we can find several different forms in which Arabic is or had been taught. For

example, in Egypt prior to 1963, the School Plan for learning Arabic was divided into four courses:

1. Reading;
2. Writing;
3. Stories, Rhymes and Drama;
4. Language usage/utilisation (Khater, 1983, p. 58).

In Syria and Egypt in the 1970s Arabic language Plans consisted of six courses:

1. Reading and Writing;
2. Expression and Stories;
3. Rhymes and Recitation;
4. Dictation;
5. Handwriting;
6. Grammar (Khater et al, 1983, p 58; Yonis et al, undated, p 29).

In later plans in many Arab countries, Arabic, in Intermediate School, is taught through five courses:

1. Reading;
2. Expression;
3. Literature;
4. Dictation and Handwriting;
5. Grammar and Implementation (Gorah, 1986, table 10).

Regarding Arabic language in Secondary School, it consists of

1. Reading;
2. Expression;
3. Literature, Fine texts, Literary criticism and Rhetoric;
4. Grammar (Gorah, 1986, p57).

2.3. Summary

In this chapter, the main characteristics of the Arabic language were briefly presented, considering mainly its Semitic roots and complicated morphological system, which seems to preserve the original system of the family. Regarding the origin and development of the writing system, although there is some doubt about the earliest evidence of written Arabic, it is believed that the script of the North Arabic tongue was developed in the third century of the Christian era from Nabataean cursive script which was, in turn, taken from the Aramaic, an older developed Semitic language.

In the Arabic language in general there are three forms: Classical Arabic, Literary Arabic and Dialect Arabic. The first two forms are considered standard but the second, the literary form was developed within this century, taking some terms, styles and expressions from other modern languages. In this study and for the purpose of teaching language, the phrase 'standard language' will incorporate the second form, as it upholds the morphological and grammatical aspect of the Classical Arabic. The importance of Standard Arabic was clarified as it is the language of the Islamic traditions including the Qur'an and the Sunnah. It is considered a more developed form of language and capable of communicating more clearly than any of the dialects. Standard Arabic is the language which has been adopted as an official language and is the only form of Arabic which achieves full official recognition among the Arab countries.

In this chapter, it was shown that the past accomplishment in AL pedagogy had a modest beginning, followed by a period of development to which there were corresponding stages of adjustment and adaptation, a golden age of vigour and vitality, and a declining period of stagnation, reflecting Arabic society in different periods of history.

Over this long history many methods and strategies have been used in teaching and learning the different aspects of Arabic. As the main purpose of this chapter is to clarify

the most important strategies and contributions which may be applied in teaching and learning the existing Arabic curriculum, they will be summarised here, regardless of the historical period from which they date. They are:

- a. Acquiring standard Arabic by hearing and using correct forms and usage. Arabs used to send their young children to the '*badiyah*' of the desert, to acquire the Pure Arabic Tongue. This was a strategy used in the pre-Islamic and in the time of the Umayyad Empire also (Hitti, 1961, p. 253).
- b. The first course of study consisted of reading and writing, beginning at about six years of age and lasting for three years. The curriculum had the Qur'an for its centre. Qur'anic texts used to be learnt by heart and pupils used to practise reading, writing and penmanship. Elementary schools concentrated on these subjects to give the child a strong grounding for further education.
- c. In some Muslim schools, writing exercises were not taken from the Qur'an, but from secular poetry, so that offence would not be caused by the act of erasing the Word of Allah. In some Muslim schools in the western states, pupils started learning both language skills, reading and writing from poetry in order to master the language before studying the Qur'an, because it was believed that a child should not be taught what is difficult for him to understand.
- d. Muslim Spain adopted some more special strategies for the AL instructions. From the beginning, pupils were taught reading and writing simultaneously and the Global Method was used, whereby pupils learned to recognise, write and copy whole words and sentences, rather than reading letter by letter.
- e. Some Muslim parents used to appoint a tutor to teach their children both the correct language and morality. This strategy suggests benefiting from other subjects to teach the standard language, as it is said: 'every teacher must be a language teacher'

and also benefiting from language texts to transmit beneficial moral, scientific or technical ideas.

- f. As Arabic grammar has some complicated logical aspects which make it hard to understand, it was suggested by some that it is a waste of time to teach a student all the details of grammar. Students should be given the most important and useable aspects of it, to help them when they want to speak or write and protect them from the worst errors. Moreover, language was considered by some thinkers as a series of skills which need to be trained, rather than as knowledge to be taught.
- g. Many Muslim scholars taught their students all aspects of language together. Many books which were dictated to the students, encompassed syntax, poetry, morphology, lexicography and rhetoric. The scholars taught the language and did not only describe it.
- h. Muslim Spain also had one of the best methods of teaching Arabic language. Children were taught grammar in a practical context, whereas in other Islamic areas, the student was taught grammar by theoretical methods. So, in Spain, children mastered their language skills earlier and better than in other (Repera, 1981, p. 75).

This is a brief account of the main strategies used for teaching the AL in its various historical periods. The need now is to clarify the current situation of the Arabic language education in relation to the Saudi context, which will be examined in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

The Education System and Learning Arabic

Language in Saudi Arabia

3.1 General Education in Saudi Arabia

- 3.1.1 The Main Features of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- 3.1.2 Educational Development of Saudi Arabia
- 3.1.3 The Main Characteristics of Saudi Education
- 3.1.4 General Education System in Saudi Arabia

3.2 Learning Arabic Language in Saudi Arabia

- 3.2.1 Overview of Learning AL in the Country
- 3.2.2 The Current Situation of ALC in Intermediate School
- 3.2.3 The Current Situation of ALC in Secondary School

3.3 Summary

Chapter Three

The Educational System and Learning Arabic Language in Saudi Arabia

The previous chapter presented a developmental study of learning Arabic language in its various historical stages. It is now necessary to consider the learning of Arabic in Saudi Arabia recently, as this is the main concern of the study. This chapter, therefore, will discuss, first, the educational system in the country, giving the background and allowing a deeper understanding of the current situation of learning Arabic, which will be explored in the second section of the chapter.

3.1 General Education in Saudi Arabia:

When the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was founded, education was not accessible to everyone but was limited to individualised instruction at religious classes held in mosques in urban areas. Saudi Arabia now has a nation-wide educational system that provides free education from pre-school to university to all citizens.

To clarify the status of education in Saudi Arabia four aspects will be addressed: a brief description of the most important features of the country which is believed to provide a framework of the educational system; an abstract of the educational development; then an overview of the main characteristics of Saudi education; followed by, in the fourth subsection, the arrangement of the education system of the country.

3.1.1 The Main Features of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia or what is generally referred to as Saudi Arabia (SA) is a founding member of the United Nations, the League of Arab States, the Organisation of

Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) (SA Information Centre 1996).

The country is one of the monarchical systems in the world. The country was named the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on September 23rd 1932. It was, at that time, very poor with the annual pilgrimage to Makkah as its main source of income (Al-Salloom, 1995, p 4). The most important event in the recent history of SA was the discovery of oil in the Gulf in 1932, and then in the country in December 1938, although these discoveries were not fully exploited until after World War II. The exportation of oil led to various changes in the social structure and other aspects of life (Lipsky, 1959).

According to the most accurate available population figures released in 1992 by the Directorate of Census at the Ministry of Finance and National Economy, the population was 16,929,264, of whom were 72.7 percent (12,310,053) were Saudi nationals (SA information Centre 1996, p. 13). In June 1996, the Central Department of Statistics estimated Saudi nationals as 17,000,000 (Al-Riyadh Newspaper, 3.6.1996). Figures from the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs indicated that 75 percent of Saudi Arabia's population now lives in cities, 22 percent lives in the country, and 3 percent is considered migratory (Al-Sweel, 1993, p. 7).

The Arabian peninsula, especially the territory of Saudi Arabia, is the centre from which Arabic spread after the appearance of Islam in the seventh century, and today, the people of Saudi Arabia speak north Arabic with some variations in speech between town dwellers and tribesmen. The written and spoken classical Arabic is similar to that found in other Arab lands (Killeen, 1996).

Saudi Arabia is considered as the centre of Islam, and it contains the religion's two holy cities, Mecca (*Makkah*) and Medina (*Al Madinah*) which are visited by well over two million pilgrims annually. Not only that but when Saudi Arabia was named in 1932 it was declared as

an Islamic state with Arabic designated as the national language and the "Shari'ah" (Islamic law) and the teachings of the prophet Muhammad as its constitution (SA information Centre, 1996, p 16).

These principles strongly influenced the Saudi society in general and the educational policy and system in particular, as will be seen later.

However, it seems to the researcher that the conservative perspective of the Saudi Society which might affect their views of different aspects of potential educational and social development is based on social construction rather than religious principles. As investigating this issue is outside the scope of the study, one evidence might be appropriate to support the researchers' view. When women's education was intended to be spread over the country, many people had very negative attitudes and hindered such a proposal. It is well-known that, at that time the religious scholars "Ualama", interposed in persuading people and facilitated such educational development. In Saudi Arabia, therefore, there are conservative religious values, but, in many cases, a greater deal of conservatism is related to unjustifiable social views and perceptions.

3.1.2 Educational Development of Saudi Arabia:

Historically, informal education in the Arabian Peninsula started very early, as indicated in the previous chapter, and such educational facilities as existed in the area before the First World War were a reflection of its administrative and social conditions. There were many traditional Muslims Schools and specialised religious circles in the mosques. The situation in Hijaz district (the Western area), was better, as the Turks during their rule introduced a rudimentary school system. In 1915 Hijaz had 78 state primary schools in addition to a few private schools such as Al-Falah which was sponsored by individual benefactors or other resident Muslim communities' school (Tibawi, 1972, p.178).

Although the first Education Directorate was founded in 1926, and the first Educational Council was formed in 1928 (Al-Saloom, 1988), formal governmental primary education

in SA is considered to have begun in the 1930s as the Governmental Authorities, in 1938, had complete supervision over all educational affairs in the country (Al-Salloom, 1995, p. 9). By 1945, an extensive programme had been initiated to establish schools in the Kingdom. Six years later, in 1951 the country had 226 schools, mainly of Elementary level, with 29,887 students (SA Information Centre, 1996, p 48).

A 1950 UNESCO publication, however, estimated the percentage of illiteracy in Saudi Arabia to be 92 % to 95 % (Al-Salloom, 1995, p. 10). This figure caused a great deal of concern to the government, so, beginning in the 1950s, a considerable effort was made to extend education throughout society. A Ministry of Education was established in 1953 (Al-Salloom, 1988) to initiate an educational programme in which emphasis was placed upon elementary education and vocational training, as well as religious studies. The programme was expanded in the late 1950s to include secondary schools with unprecedented expansion and modernisation of educational resources (The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission, 1991, p 5).

Prior to 1942 there was no uniform educational ladder in the country. In Al-Solatieh School (Makkah) it was in four levels: 4 years preparatory, 4 years Elementary, 4 years Secondary and 2 years Higher level (Zaid, 1990), while other schools had different systems (Baghdadi, 1985). According to Al-Salloom (1988), the system was exposed to many national changes until 1952 when it was amended to one, which later was adopted at the Arab League level. In 1964, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, along with other members of the Arab League,

agreed upon a uniform educational system, that provided for a 6-year elementary, a 3-year intermediate and 3-year secondary cycle with a separate higher education programme" (Arab League, 1986, p.21).

The 1960s witnessed a massive effort in the development of higher education as well as the attempt to develop a curriculum that is uniquely Saudi. The seventies coincided with two five-year National development Plans (1970-1975 and 1975-1980), that stressed a basic philosophy for the successful modernisation of Saudi Arabia based on developing the needed human resources through education and building a comprehensive economic infrastructure. This period witnessed mammoth development of the infrastructure and an increase in school facilities and numbers, and sought the continuation of human resources development through the improvement of the quality of education, which continued in the eighties in order to achieve the ultimate objective of meeting workforce demands. In this decade, some important educational innovations and reforms were introduced related to the implementation of a new curriculum, the phasing out of the credit hours system in the secondary level and some other aspects in Special Education.

Today, Saudi Arabia boasts over 17,500 educational institutions spread throughout the country (Al-Rasheed, 1996, p. 12). The nation-wide educational system provides free tuition, books and health service to students at all levels. Whilst it is not possible, here, to highlight all aspects of the educational development, the following tables illustrate the increasing development in the two stages, Intermediate and Secondary, in the country

Table 3.1.1

The Educational Quantitative Development at the Intermediate Level (the Schools Sponsored by The Ministry of Education Only)*

	1960	1970	1980	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998
Schools	24	330	1 027	1 860	2 202	2 501	2 598	2 690
Students	3 020	55 890	165 107	292 895	378 909	429 469	448 277	468 905
Teachers	230	3 292	1 1239	22 502	31 098	32 544	33 966	35 238
Teacher/ pupil ratio**	13.1	17	14.6	13	12.2	13.2	13.2	13.3

* Sources: Al-Salloom (1988), Al-Hogail (1989), Ministry of Planning (1995), and Ministry of Education (1996^b, 1997^a, and 1998^a) ** Calculated by the researcher.

Table 3.1.2**The Educational Quantitative Development at the Secondary Level (Included the Schools Sponsored by the Ministry of Education Only)***

	1960	1970	1980	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998
Schools	16	110	343	638	764	1 043	1 121	1 220
Students	1 260	14 085	64 627	139 555	174 826	221 949	250 384	280 754
Teachers	105	504	3 377	9 058	13 001	14 290	16 252	17 884
Teacher/ pupil ratio**	12	27.9	19.1	15.4	13.44	15.5	15.4	15.7

* Sources: Al-Salloom (1988), Al-Hogail (1989), Ministry of Planning (1995), and Ministry of Education (1996^b, 1997^a, and 1998^a) ** Calculated by the researcher.

The tables show the great quantitative growth in educational provision since the introduction of the first attempts at development planning in the late 1950s. This has been considerably matched, to some extent, by an improvement in the quality of education. One measure of this fact is that although the number of students in the educational system increased sharply, the ratio of students per teacher decreased. In the years; 1970, 1980, 1990 and 1995 the ratio in Intermediate schools was: 17, 14.6, 13, and 12.2 respectively, and in Secondary schools, 27.9, 19.1, 15.4 and 13.4 per teacher, making Saudi student to teacher ratios among the most favourable in any educational system. The ratio has increased again slightly in the last three years, as shown earlier. However, despite this rapid increase in student numbers in recent years, one cannot fully assess the status of education in Saudi Arabia because no information is available as to the number or percentage of children who are of school age but do not attend school. Such information would be particularly valuable, in the light of the high rate of illiteracy at the beginning of the educational revolution in Saudi Arabia. In this respect it would be appropriate to indicate that as education is made available in everywhere in the country, including all rural (Bedouins) areas, the Deputy Minister of Education, recently, assumed that *“there was no child in the country without education”* (Ministry of Education, 1997 b, final session) claiming that the “quantitative” demand of education has been achieved and indicating the Ministry’s intention to focus on “qualitative” development.

Despite the great importance of understanding the development of the education in the country, recognising the current situation and the annual growth rate is even more necessary. Table 3.1.3 shows some details in this respect for the year 1998.

Table 3.1.3**Education Statistical Indicators for the Year 1998***

		Elementary	Intermediate	Secondary
Schools % Growth		1.21	3.54	8.83
Classes % Growth		0.34	3.67	9.57
Students % Growth		- 0.77	4.60	12.13
Teachers % Growth		1.60	3.74	10.04
Student	In School	185.3	174.7	231.7
Ratios	In class	19.6	25.3	28
	For teacher**	13.3	12.6	14.4

* Source: Ministry of Education (1998^a)

** As it was worked out by the Ministry, this is affected by including the assistant administrators with the teachers number.

From this table it can be noted that there is a high rate of growth in intermediate and secondary schools in contrast with the elementary level which witnessed some decrease. In view of the Deputy Minister's assumption mentioned earlier, this might suggest the Ministry's successes in the last few years in bringing into the education system children who had previously not been enrolled. Subsequently, it has not been necessary to enrol children outside the normal age-range for Elementary education, and so the growth rate has levelled off.

Aside from the central issue of this study, i.e. intermediate and secondary schools in the Ministry of Education, a few points should be summarised.

First, Elementary Education in Saudi Arabia started early and witnessed rapid development, paving the way for the other two stages. In 1998 the total number of students in Elementary Education in the Ministry Schools was 1,050,547 (Ministry of Education 1998^a)

Second, although the Ministry of Education is the dominant provider of education for boys, there are other institutes which are under the supervision of the ministry but sponsored either as private schools or by other governmental authorities. In 1998 the total number of students including those enrolled in the non-Ministry of Education sponsored schools in the three general education levels, Elementary, Intermediate and Secondary were 1,165,378, 537,635, and 335,013 respectively (Ministry of Education, 1998^a).

Thirdly, education for Girls in Saudi Arabia started around twenty years later than that for boys. However, it has recently caught up with that of boys. In 1996 the total number of female students in the three general education levels were: Elementary: 1,042,415 Intermediate: 390,432 and Secondary: 230,660 (General Presidency of Girls' Education 1997).

Finally, regarding Higher Education, the first university in Saudi Arabia, known as King Saud University, was founded in Riyadh in 1957. In 1996, there were seven universities and 94 colleges with more than 170,000 students, a dramatic improvement over the 7,000 students enrolled in 1970. Of that number, more than 83,000 are female students (Saudi Arabian Information Centre, 1996).

3.1.3 The Main Characteristics of Saudi Education:

In 1970 the Supreme Committee for Education Policy published the comprehensive document, "*Educational Policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*" which serves as the main reference in the formulation of ideas and provides the main principles that direct the various aspects of education. In this document, the national educational policy states the ultimate broad general aim of education with 33 general aims and goals of education in Saudi Arabia. These aims can be summarised as follows:

- a) "to cultivate a comprehensive understanding of Islam;
- b) to implant and spread the Islamic creed;

- c) to instil in every student the values, teachings and ideas of Islam;
- d) to equip students with various skills and knowledge;
- e) to develop constructive ways of behaviour;
- f) to promote the society economically, socially and culturally;
- g) to prepare individuals so as to help build their communities”.

This document contains a total of 236 articles covering the objectives, principles and arrangements of all levels of general education.

According to the current Minister of Education (Al-Rasheed, 1996), the major sources of educational principles and objectives in Saudi Arabia are,:

- a) Islamic belief, culture and education;
- b) Arab nationalism and its heritage and culture, and its current and futuristic affairs and wishes;
- c) Social, economic and environmental conditions and development requirements;
- d) Advances in thought, science and technology which are adaptable to Islamic culture;
- e) Saudi citizens' needs and requirements.

The Saudi educational system is characterised by four distinctive features. First, state financial support: the state does not charge tuition fees for any programmes, in recognition that education is the cornerstone for the achievement of the national development plans. A measure of the government's substantial commitment to this sector is the allocation of approximately 18 per cent of expenditure, or SR153 billion (£28 billion sterling) to education and human resources under the Fifth Development Plan. The education sector received an allocation of SR 27.5 billion (£5 billion sterling) in the 1996 budget (Saudi Arabian Information Centre, 1996, p.48).

The second feature is the Centralised Education System: The Supreme Commission on Educational Policy sets basic policy, goals and major structural elements for the national education up to secondary level. The Ministry of Education and General Presidency of Girls' Education are responsible for implementing these policies in virtually all stages in the Kingdom.

Thirdly, the Importance of Islamic Studies: Religious studies are integrated into the curriculum at all levels, not as a collection of verses and rituals to be memorised, but as a way of life for the present and the future and a very important source of Saudi education. Fourthly, Separate Male and Female Education: equal but strictly separate schooling for male and female students is maintained throughout the educational system. In general, separate staff of the same gender teach them. However, so far, both sexes study the same curriculum, except for small gender-based differences in home economics and physical education (The SA Cultural Mission, 1991; Al-Salloom, 1995).

The Ministry of Education, as indicated, is the main authority responsible for the education in the country and it primarily supervises general education, from the kindergarten to secondary level, for male students. However, other administrative responsibility for other segments of the Saudi educational system is distributed among three agencies involved, alongside the Ministry of Education, with administering and implementing the overall educational policy in Saudi Arabia. These are:

- a) The General Presidency of Girls' Education, managing programmes for female students including all levels of general education and post-secondary training.
- b) The Ministry of Higher Education, which supervises post-secondary education for male and for female studying at the universities.
- c) The General Organisation for Technical Education and Vocational Training, responsible for the varied training programmes that specialise in industrial, trade and agricultural subjects.

These three agencies with co-operation with the Ministry of Education share a common mission of implementing new and forward-thinking school programmes for Saudi citizens (The SA Cultural Mission, 1991).

3.1.4 General Education System in Saudi Arabia:

General Education in the Kingdom consists of four levels: kindergarten, six years of primary school and three years each of intermediate and high school (see figure 3.1.1). The objectives specified for different educational levels are listed fully in national educational policy. The system provides students with free education, books and health service and is open to every citizen, but it is not compulsory after the elementary stage. The Ministry of Education sets overall standards for the country's education system and also supervises or oversees special education for the handicapped (Zaid, 1990).

The school year has two semesters, each with fourteen weeks of classes and a two-week exam period. The school schedule has between six and seven daily class periods which are each forty-five minutes long (Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission, 1991).

Regarding general education system in the country, it is divided, after Kindergarten, to three main stages as it is shown in Figure 3.1.1 (see Appendix 1 for detailed flow chart of the whole Education System in the country)

Kindergarten is co-educational and the government is not committed to offer this stage for all students, so, private foundations play an important role in provision at this stage, under the supervision of the General Presidency of Girls' Education.

The next level of education is the Elementary School, which is compulsory and also regarded as the foundation for the development of an overall education programme. Public schools accounted for about 95 percent of the elementary schools in the Kingdom in 1994 (Al-Salloom, 1995, p. 37). The other schools, whether private or supervised by other government agencies, must meet all the standards established by the Ministry of Education (Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission, 1991).

Figure 3.1.1

General Educational Stages and System in Saudi Arabia

Age	Year (Grade)	Stage (Cycle)	Class
Under 4	Prelimin ary	<u>Kindergarten</u>	Infant
4-5			Nursery
5-6			Preliminar y
6+	1	Elementary (Primary) School	I
7+	2		II
8+	3		III
9+	4		IV
10+	5		V
11+	6		VI
12+	7	Intermediate (Middle) School	I
13+	8		II
14+	9		III
15+	10	Secondary (High) School	I
16+	11		II
17+	12		III

Intermediate school consists of three grades serving students between the age of twelve and fifteen. Special attention will be paid later to this stage and the Secondary stage, as the focus of the present study.

Upon completion of the three-year intermediate level, a student may proceed to choose from the following two options:

- a) regular secondary education which will be described;
- b) vocational and technical education.

Related to Special Education, there is a department in the Ministry of Education which operates schools for the blind, deaf and the physically and mentally handicapped as a part of the effort to encourage every individual to reach his or her full potential. Under the

sponsorship of the Ministry of Education, 7040 students were enrolled in special education in 1998 (Ministry of Education 1998^a). Adult education is another important sector of the educational system which is committed to making education available to all and eradicating illiteracy. The Kingdom has established 2,343 adult education centres. In isolated rural areas, the government conducts intensive three-month adult courses during the summer (Saudi Arabian Information Centre, 1996). In 1998 the number of adult students in the Ministry of Education centres was 39,212 (Ministry of Education 1999^a).

A Critical View

This account of the General Education System in Saudi Arabia shows that there have been massive efforts to develop education quantitatively and “assumably” qualitatively. However, three points are of some interest.

First, the UNESCO Office in Riyadh estimated that in 1985 the rate of illiteracy in Saudi Arabia among those aged 15 or more was 33 % among males and 65 % among females. Last year, i.e. 1998, a new estimation was published that the proportion is 14.78 % among males and 25 % among females, but its accuracy was questioned by some of those interested (Al-Hosain, 1998). In fact, one problem of the Ministerial education development reports is that the focus, generally, is on the achievement rather than the targets, i.e. on giving detailed numbers of those attending education at different levels, but not those who should but do not. The Ministry has not conducted a study of the level of illiteracy in the country yet.

Secondly, although quantitative development can be seen, qualitative development is doubted. In a new survey of 100 eminent educators, only 54 % of them believed that education nowadays is better than that of the past – around 40-50 years ago – (Ministry of Education 1999^b).

Thirdly, it can be noted, also, that the General Education System covers twelve years from the age of six to eighteen. However, the compulsory period of education is for six years of primary school only. That means a child can leave school at the age of twelve or thirteen, which is a very dangerous period for children.

Nevertheless, according to the Minister of Education's Report (Al-Rasheed, 1996) there is currently a strong desire to reform the educational system; not just to amend one aspect or another but to reform the whole system of General Education. He mentions that the responsible officials are fully aware of this need. The Directorate General Manager announced that the Ministry is about to start a general review of all curricula. He named in particular the aims and syllabus of the content as part of whole plan of development or what he called "*the investment for the future*" (AL Riyadh newspaper, 3rd July 1998). Most recently this intention has been confirmed in a Ministerial report (AL Riyadh newspaper, 6th May 1999).

3.2 Learning Arabic Language in Saudi Arabia;

In SA the learning of Arabic is accorded high status in both formal and informal education. In the following discussion, the situation of learning Arabic in intermediate and secondary schools will be presented in two sections. First, however, an overview of the learning of Arabic in the country will be provided.

3.2.1 Overview of Learning AL in the Country

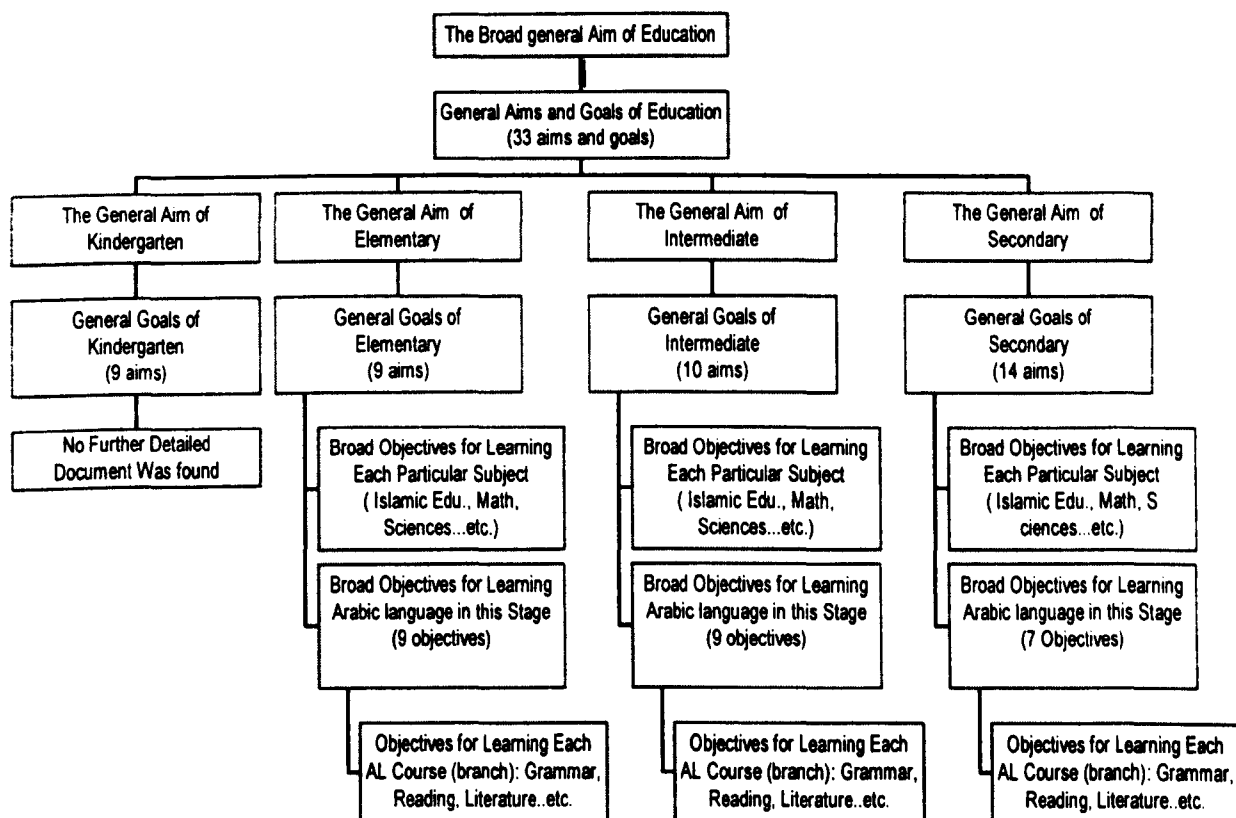
The learning of Arabic in Saudi Arabia is based on a deep belief in its huge importance as the medium of the Qur'an and Islamic heritage, its ability to meet society's needs and requirements, and its position in maintaining the intellectual and social life of Arabs. In accordance with those beliefs, the Ministry of Education has given the learning of Arabic and its curriculum some importance for a long time. It will be examined in some depth from different angles.

Arabic Language Objectives

To identify the general objectives of learning the Arabic language in the country, the available resources and Ministerial Documents were examined to clarify, first, the arrangement of the educational aims and objectives of the Arabic language in SA, which can be summarised in the following diagram.

Figure 3.2.1

The Arrangement of the Educational Aims and Objectives of the Education in Saudi Arabia



From this figure, it is clear that no aims or goals were set for learning the Arabic language in general, i.e. as a subject, regardless of the particular level of education. Instead, there are several aims for studying Arabic within each level. Those aims, specifically for intermediate and secondary schools, will be clarified in the following two sections. The need now is to identify the general aims for learning AL in the general education, elementary, intermediate and secondary levels.

In 1984 new document was released by the Arabic Bureau of Education for Gulf States, which is considered as semi-governmental agency, suggesting a unified formulation of the aims of each subjects in Gulf states' general educational systems. This document contains a detailed description of all the aims, goals, and objectives of learning Arabic, including some examples of their translation into behavioural objectives.

According to this document, the Broad Aims and Tasks of learning Arabic are (Arabic Bureau, 1984) :

1. Language is a thinking device;
2. Language is an instrument to unify thought and strengthen relationships;
3. Language is a device of social communication;
4. Language is an instrument of cultivation, obtaining information and experience, teaching and learning;
5. Language is an instrument for achieving emotional growth;
6. Language is a device for giving expression to the soul and the society;
7. Arabic language is the device for maintaining the Qur'an and the Prophet's traditions;
8. Arabic Language is the tool of Arabic and Islamic civilisation and their development;
9. Arabic Language is an instrument of assimilation, modernity and life requirements.

One of the most remarkable features of the Arabic language education in Saudi Arabia is its heavy reliance on the other Arab countries' curriculum, particularly that of Egypt. It is well-known that, because of the rapid development in the education in the country – after the discovery of oil – it was necessary at first for Arabic to be taught by Egyptian teachers who brought with them the content and methods of teaching Arabic used in their country at that time. Although the education system has witnessed some development,

the Egyptian model is still the basis of the curriculum in the country. Arabic has been presented as several subjects – five or six branches – which are taught, in many cases, by different teachers. More details about the content and teaching methods of Arabic in each stage in particular, i.e. intermediate and secondary, will be provided later.

Examination:

The Saudi school system, at all level of general education, is built on a series of yearly promotion examinations which all students must pass in each subject in order to progress to the next grade. It is the responsibility of individual school to prepare and administer these examinations for their own students, except for the Secondary School Certificate Exam which is nationally standardised. Students must pass in all subjects. If they fail any subject, they are required to be retested before the end of the summer. If the retest is failed, however, students must repeat the grade. However, it is well-known among teachers that a student may fail in the Grammar course, for example, if he cannot ‘remember’ the ‘rules and the theoretical conditions’, even if he can apply them perfectly in using standard Arabic. Recently the examination system has been questioned as it relies on memorisation and recitation, concentrating on knowledge rather than skills. Al-Majed (1996), according to his official evidence, stated that the pass rate in the Arabic language is very high (90% - 97%), but, as he believed, without being reflected in the students’ abilities and skills. This indicates, on the one hand, the actual problem of Arabic language education, and on the other, the interaction among the curriculum components, which suggests the necessity of developing the whole educational system rather than changing one part or another separately.

The Ministry of Education started, recently, to review the examination system and issued a new system for the Elementary education (Ukadh Newspaper, 1st December 1998).

Curriculum Development:

The curricula used throughout the educational system in SA have undergone a constant process of change and improvement in response to social and economic developments in the state, as well as developments in information, teaching approaches and methods, and technology. However, the Arabic language curriculum has been less affected by the changeable plans and policies and has witnessed only minor development and changes since formal education started in SA. The first curriculum, released in 1940, set a pattern which was followed until the establishment of the Ministry of Education in 1953, then the curriculum was temporarily based on other Arab curricula, adapting them to the special features of Saudi society. In 1967 a new department was established (Directorate for Curriculum and Planning) to contribute to curriculum development. This department was modified to become the Assistant Deputy for Education Development. composed of three divisions: the General Directorate for Designing and Developing Curriculum, the General Directorate for Education Technology, and the General Directorate for Educational Research (Al-Salloom, 1988, p.328). These different foundations have supported the curriculum taught in schools at different levels with some development of textbooks, measurement and testing, audiovisual aids, and teaching skills.

The first comprehensive plan, however, to developing learning Arabic was released in 1968 and determined the share of Arabic courses in the General School plan. Several piecemeal changes and amendments followed this scheme till the Second Plan was applied in 1979 and for the following three years (Al-Falih, 1988). This was followed also by minor changes and developments in some aspects of the curriculum at all stages mainly for the textbooks, which have been exposed to almost yearly piecemeal changes. In 1983 an Arabic Language National Committee (Family) was established to co-operate in developing and reviewing the curriculum and to advise the Ministry of Education (Al-Rasheed, 1996, p33). More details of the previous and the current plans for ALC in Intermediate and in Secondary Schools will be presented next.

However, whilst the Elementary school curriculum is outside the scope of this study, it deserves to be mentioned briefly that learning Arabic in this stage dominates 29.88 percent of the current general school plan: 32.14 percent in the first three grades 30 percent in the fourth grade and 26.6 percent in the last two years of this stage. Arabic is divided into two courses in the first two years, ' Spelling and writing' and 'Anthem and memorised material' becoming five courses in third grade and six courses in the last three grades, namely: Grammar, Composition, Handwriting, Dictation, Song and memorised material, and Reading.

3.2.2 The Current Situation of ALC in Intermediate School

Intermediate schools, as indicated, incorporates three grades, serving students of about the ages twelve to fifteen. 10 general goals of intermediate education were outlined in state policy as follows: (The Supreme Committee, 1970)

1. Give children a comprehensive Islamic education to enrich body, mind and soul;
2. Teach students skills and knowledge that suit their age and stage of development;
3. Stimulate students to seek knowledge through meditation and scientific reasoning;
4. Develop, orientate and refine students' intellectual skills;
5. Breed respect for the social life of Islam, which is marked by fraternity, co-operation, sense of duty and responsibility;
6. Train students to serve their communities and countries, and strengthen their loyalty to the country;
7. Stimulate students to restore the glory of the Islamic nation and march on the path of dignity and glory;
8. Train students to devote their time to useful reading, invest their leisure time in constructive activities and work toward strengthening and advancing their Islamic character;

9. Enable students to be aware of and confront misleading propaganda, subversive doctrines and principles foreign to Islamic values;
10. Prepare students for the next stage of life.

To meet these objectives, in the current plan the following subjects are taught to students in this stage:

Table 3.2.1

Intermediate School Curriculum (Subjects and Hours Per Week) *

Subjects	Grades		
	First	Second	Third
Islamic Studies	8	8	8
Arabic studies	6	6	6
English	4	4	4
Science	4	4	4
Mathematics	4	4	4
Geography end History	4	4	4
Art Education	2	2	2
Physical education	1	1	1
Total Hours per week	33	33	33

*Source: Al-Rasheed, (the Minister of Education), 1996.

It is clear that AL is allocated the second largest weekly hours, which reflect the importance given to this subject. Clearly 18.2 % of the whole timetable in this stage is devoted to achieving the Arabic language aims and objectives.

However, it would take too long to mention all the levels of aims and objectives put forward for the teaching of Arabic. Thus, we will restrict ourselves to the Broad Objectives of learning Arabic in Intermediate Schools. Special objectives for individual courses will not be mentioned now, but some of them will be discussed later.

The Broad Objectives of learning Arabic in Intermediate School in Saudi Arabia are cited in the document of 'Intermediate School Curriculum' (Ministry of Education, 1974) as follows:

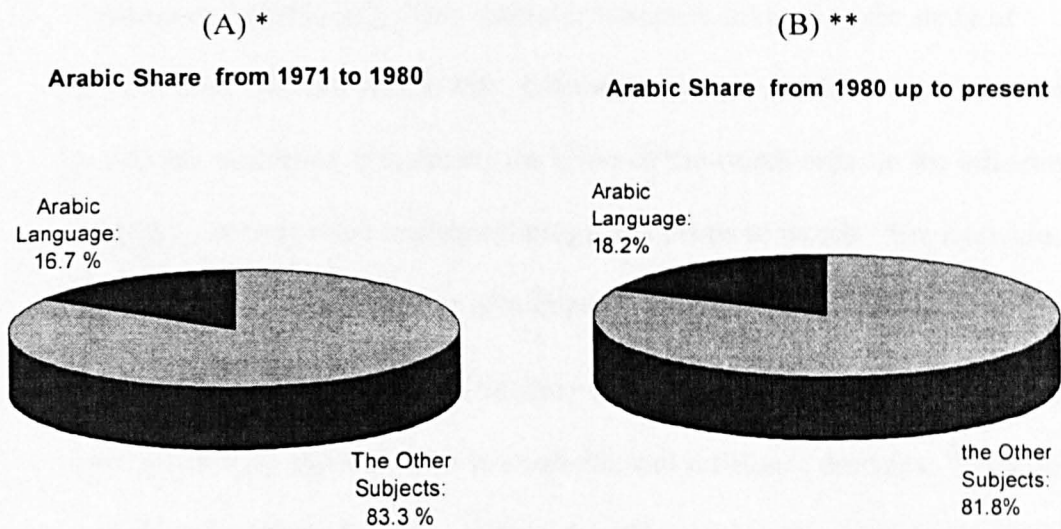
1. Making students proud of their language, to love it as it has maintained the Islamic heritage and glory in various aspects such as truthfulness, fidelity, courage, generosity, relief, chastity, and sense of honour;
2. Obtaining the ability of expression, speaking, and writing properly;
3. Practising correct reading and vocalisation, understanding reading and making reading useful for increasing their linguistic and intellectual outputs.
4. Training students in the various sorts of reading after their reading skills have been developed;
5. Promoting students' literary aptitude so that they can distinguish beautiful and poor styles of language;
6. Developing students' abilities of listening comprehension and summarizing the main points and ideas;
7. Enabling students to use the library and to look up and search for Arabic lexicographic references;
8. Understanding the main Arabic Grammar and practical use of language;
9. Enabling students to use their study of language as a device for understanding the Qur'an and the tradition of the prophet '*Al-Sunnah*', realising Islamic principles and morals, being proud of its civilisation and pursuing the ways of developing their nation.

The ALC in Intermediate schools has not witnessed major change for a long time.

Figures 3.2.2 (A,B) show former and present two plans of learning Arabic share and courses in this stage.

Figure 3.2.2

Arabic Language Share in Former and Current General Intermediate School Plans



Source *: Al-Falih, (1988). ** Al-Rasheed (1996)

The current proportion of 18.2 %, is devoted for achieving the aims of the Arabic language mentioned earlier. Within the current plan, ALC is divided into several courses. Table 3.2.2 presents further details.

Table 3.2.2

Arabic Intermediate Programme (Weekly Study Hours Attended by Students) for Former and Present Plans.

Courses	Former Plan			Current Plan		
	1 st Stage	2 nd stage	3 rd stage	1 st Stage	2 nd stage	3 rd stage
Grammar	2	2	2	2	2	2
Phraseology and memorisation	1	2	2	1	1**	1**
Reading	1	1	1	1	1	1
Composition	1	1	1	1	1	1
Dictation and Handwriting	1	---	---	1	1**	1**
Total	6	6	6	6	6	6

*Source: Al-Falih, (1988), with amendment according to Al-Rasheed, (1996).
** Since 1995 Dictation has been taught in all grades of this stage, instead of giving Phraseology two hours a week.

It can be seen that these two plans are equal in the number of weekly hours devoted to Arabic. However, the total number of hours in the whole current plan (i.e. for all

subjects) is less than in the former plan. These plans divide Arabic into five courses.

They are:

- a) **Grammar, '*Alghau'id*'**: This course or branch is devoted to the study of grammatical rules for both syntax: forming sentences and for the combination of words into sentences recognising the affect of the words order in the inflection "*'i'arab*", of each word, and morphology: the forms of words. The main aim of learning grammar in this stage is to improve students' ability to speak, write and read standard Arabic properly (Ministry of Education 1971^a). The Grammar has been given high attention both in academic and scholastic domains. In the academic domain, it is reflected in the number of studies given to this subject (see Chapter Six pp. 210-212) while the scholastic attention can be seen through the amount of time devoted to this subject in the timetable of general education. Within the time given to the Arabic language subject, the grammar course starts in fourth grade of elementary school and becomes the dominating course by secondary school level, especially for non-Arabic specialist students, as can be noted from the next section. The content of the course textbook has similarity in style in all three education stages. It consists of examples (either passage or single sentence examples), then some discussion and clarification, followed by the summary of the rule which is usually required to be memorised by the student. At the end of each unit there are some exercises. In teaching grammar there are two classroom techniques, which are called method in the Arabic literature; inductive and deductive. Both methods have been supported and criticised theoretically and empirically (Abdulmajeed, 1986). According to the introduction to the course textbook, rules are studied, not for their own sake, but only to help students to avoid grammatical mistakes and enable them to comprehend correctly (Ministry of Education, Grammar Intermediate textbook, 1998^b). However, the teaching of grammar is still more theoretically reliant on the conditions and roles of explaining how to construct the language rather than training

the students to use language correctly. The large concentration in the Grammar textbooks, and the end of semester exams is on the grammar itself, rather than its application or the use of standard language.

- b) **Phraseology and memorisation** or recitation, "An-Nusūs": The main aim of this course is to provide students with fine-text, increasing their vocabulary and language style in order to be used and recited in actual life (Ministry of Education 1971). This course consists of texts taken from the Qur'an, the Prophet's sayings, and literary rhyme, poetry and prose of various historical stages. Some of these texts are required to be memorised by students, while others are for reading and understanding. The textbooks' authors advised teachers to concentrate on language practice and 'language skills', encouraging students to use Arabic dictionaries and use new vocabulary and language styles. The literature textbook is generally concerned with giving the background of the text, i.e. identifying the author and his historical context, then the text is either memorised or used for comprehension. For each year in intermediate schools the texts are taken from a variety of historical periods
- c. **Reading**, "Al-Qir'ā 'h": the main aim of this course is to read in standard Arabic, increase students' linguistic skills and lexicographic abilities and enable them to read and understand fluently and correctly (Ministry of Education 1971). There is a high similarity between literature and reading and in this stage both are in one textbook with separate sections for each. For literature, because some of the texts have to be memorized, they are shorter in length than reading passages. Texts for reading are composed by the textbook compilers, while literature texts are collected as fine-art from the work of the author.
- d. **Composition**, "Al-Insha'" or "Al-T'bīr": This is sometimes called Expression or creative writing. This aims to enable students to compose and formulate their ideas and feelings orally or in writing, in functional styles. In the literature, high

significance is given to this course, due to its responsibility for writing, but it is given less importance in the Saudi scholastic domain. The objectives of composition have not been identified by the Ministry of Education, and no teacher guide or instructions for teaching this course have been offered to teachers.

- e. **Dictation and Handwriting, “*Al-Imla’ ual-Khaf’*”**. This course which is divided in the Elementary School into two sub-courses, aims to teach students to write properly, correctly, legibly and in a pleasing style (Ministry of Education 1971). This course is composed of grammatical writing guidelines and principles and practical texts. Dictation has recently been given higher importance in intermediate schools It was formerly taught only in the first year, but it is now extended to all three years, as shown already in table 3.2.2. Also, a student textbook has been made available recently.

These textbooks in the Saudi system are given, free, to each student, and they are coloured in order to highlight the important sentences or verses. Reading textbooks are illustrated with some coloured pictures and paintings. However, it should be noted that:

- a. There is as yet no material or textbook for Composition in any grade, although its importance has been claimed in many studies (Madkor, 1986, p38; Madkor, 1991).
- b. Textbooks are for students only. Except for very short general advice in the textbooks introductions, teachers are not given any special guide or teacher’s book to help them to teach these different courses. It should be noted also that for English, Maths, and Sciences there are detailed teachers’ books associated with students’ book for each semester.
- c. Although Arabic courses' textbooks have been changed almost every year, by adding and deleting some texts and exercises, the aims and objectives of each course are not set out in the student’s book yet, (in the 1998 textbooks).

With regard to the curriculum in general, there is doubt as to the basis of the division of Arabic into separate courses and whether it assists in arranging cover of all the skills or confuses teachers and students, particularly when different courses are covered by different teachers. Some points that may support the later view are:

- a. The aims, contents and teaching methods of some courses such as Reading and Phraseology are very similar and they use similar texts, to the extent that they have been incorporated in one textbook. The same can be said about Grammar and Dictation. The authors of the Dictation textbook point out the similarity of these two courses in their aims and their contents as well (Ministry of Education, 1998^b, Dictation textbook).
- b. A question which, strangely enough, no one seems yet to have asked is when this separation started. As far as the researcher is aware, such separation did not exist over the history of learning Arabic prior to the contemporary time. This point will be discussed further in Chapter Nine.
- c. The special aims for the courses refer to other course objectives to be achieved and there is no accurate definition or determination for these various courses, whether in the general curriculum documents or in the introductions to course textbooks.

3.2.3 The Current Situation of ALC in Secondary School

During the past fifteen years or so, Secondary Education in Saudi Arabia has undergone many changes and amendments. The older twin-stream type of education divided into “Humanities Section” and “Science Section” for a time co-existed with an experimental modern secondary programme that allowed students greater flexibility in shaping their education. By 1993, however, the experimental programme was phased out and since then, a new adapted programme with fixed subjects and hours has been implemented.

Secondary Education spans three grades and generally serves students in the fifteen to nineteen year-old age group. Saudi educational policy (the Supreme Committee, 1970) specifies the following objectives for the secondary level

1. Strengthening all aspects of Islamic faith and compliance with Islamic principles in all deeds;
2. Strengthening students' knowledge of Islamic doctrine as instilling pride in Islam so they can preach and defend their faith;
3. Confirming students' membership in the Islamic nation and belief in the one God;
4. Instilling allegiance to the wide Islamic homeland and private homeland;
5. Directing students' talents and skills into the most fruitful paths to serve their personal goals and the objectives of general education;
6. Developing students' scientific thinking and the spirit of research, systematic analysis, and sound academic methods;
7. Opening opportunities to capable students and enabling them to continue their studies in all levels and specialties of higher education;
8. Preparing students (not destined for further academic study) for fulfilling and appropriate work;
9. Graduating technically and morally qualified students to fill the country's need in elementary teaching, religious duties and occupations in farming, trade and industry.
10. Establishing the importance of a solid, Islamic family unit;
11. Developing students' strength physically and spiritually;
12. Providing students with guidance through the emotional turmoil and development of the teenage years;
13. Instilling in students the virtues of useful reading, the desire for knowledge, the value of fruitful work, and the importance of using their time to benefit their personal goals and community condition;
14. Enhancing students' consciousness so they can confront misleading ideas.

It is quickly apparent that, the educational objectives for Secondary Schools present this stage as being designed solely to enable students to enter the work market. Preparing students to study at the university is not one of the aims of this stage although, in fact, recently, most students who complete secondary school have gone on to university, and demand has exceeded the capacity of the universities in the country (Al-Riyadh Newspaper, Issue 9th July 1999). Clearly, these objectives are out of date and do not reflect the present reality. For example, objective number 9 refers to the preparation of elementary school teachers, although the Ministry of Education has not accepted secondary graduates as teachers for more than ten years and has provided programmes to upgrade the qualification of less-qualified serving teachers, through a four-year bachelor programme. The Educational Aims and Policy document was released in 1970 and has not been developed or changed since that time, although the country has witnessed a very notable development during the last twenty-five years.

In the Secondary School, all students study a general curriculum for the first year and choose one of four fields of specialisation for the remaining two years, each of which consists of two semesters. The curriculum includes the courses listed in Table 3.2.3.

Table 3.2.3**Secondary School's Curriculum (Subjects and Hours Per Week)**

Subject	First year (General)	Field of specialisation							
		Arabic and Islamic Studies		Administrative and Social Studies		Natural Studies		Technical Studies	
		2 nd year	3 rd year	2 nd year	3 rd year	2 nd year	3 rd year	2 nd year	3 rd year
Islamic sciences	5	12	12	6	6	5	5	5	5
Arabic language	6	9	9	4	4	3	3	3	3
Social Sciences	2	3	3	5	5	---	---	---	---
Administrative sciences	---	---	---	5	5	---	---	---	---
Sciences	6	---	---	---	---	13	13	14	14
Mathematics	5	---	---	4	5	6	6	5	5
English	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Computer	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
Library and Research	1	1	1	1	1	---	---	---	---
Physical Education	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Free Activities	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	---	---
Total	32	32	32	32	32	34	34	34	34

*Source: Al-Rasheed, The Minister of Education, (1996)

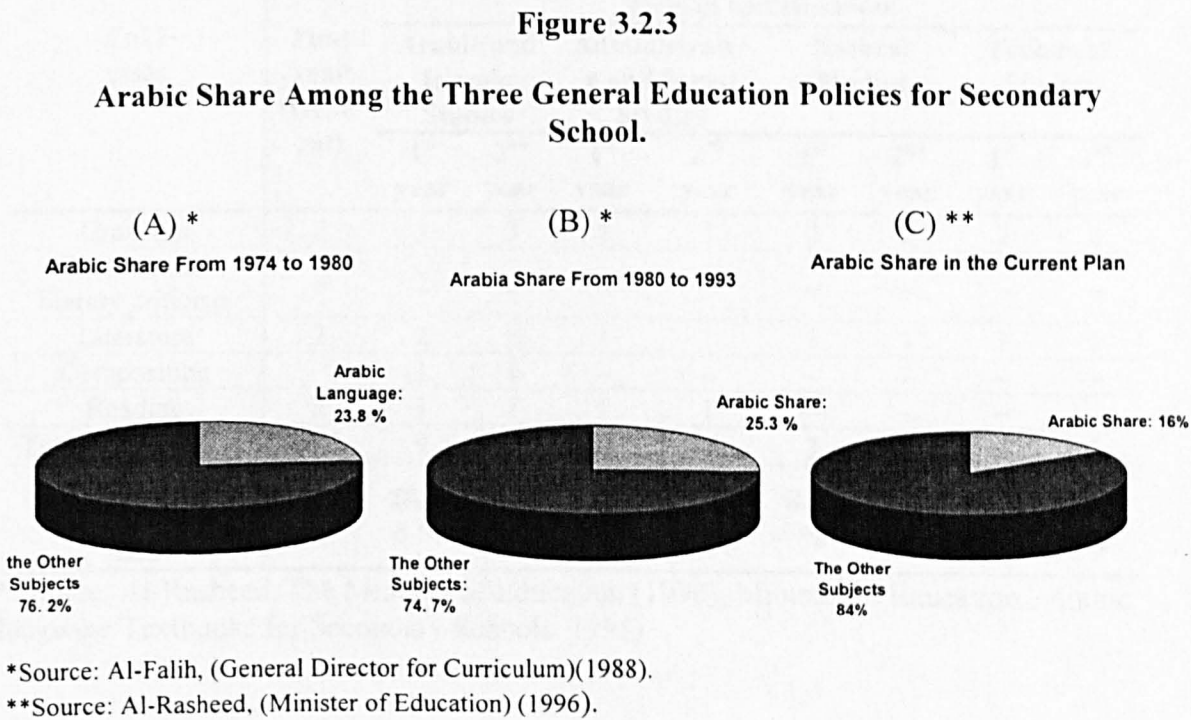
This new Secondary programmes is for boys only, while girls follow the old programme which consists of a first year general programme followed by two choices: the Humanities Section or the Science Section, for the remaining two years. However, it is expected in the future to develop the system to become the same as that of boys' Secondary School.

The Saudi "Secondary School Curriculum" document states that the objectives of learning Arabic in this stage are (Ministry of Education, 1974) :

1. Maintaining Allah's book (the Qur'an) and the tradition of the prophet (Al-Sunnah), realizing the principles of Islam and its basic law, 'Shariah', being proud of the Islamic nation's civilization and pursuing ways of developing their nation;
2. Developing the linguistic ability of students and enabling them to express properly their ideas, meaning and concepts;

3. Intensifying students’ literary abilities to be able to identify linguistic styles,
distinguish the manners of expression and recognise the crucial sentences.
4. Enabling students to use standard Arabic properly in speaking and maintain their
reading and writing free from any incorrect usage;
5. Helping students to understand the Qur’an and the prophet’s sayings and realise the
gracefulness of poetry and prose in standard Arabic;
6. Accustoming students to using the Arabic library, looking into references, summing
up their reading and carrying out assignments on Arabic subjects;
7. Enabling students to raise standard Arabic and spread it among Arabs to support the
relationship between them.

As indicated, Secondary School has undergone many innovations and developments since the first comprehensive plan for education was applied in 19974. Figure 3.2.3 (A, B and C) shows the share of Arabic among the three General Education Policies of this stage.



It is clear that, although the Arabic share was increased in the second plan to become 25.33 percent, it has been reduced sharply in the present plan to 15.96 percent. This drop is partly influenced by the division of Secondary education into four specialized areas, of which only one involves Arabic studies, whereas there were two areas one of them involving Arabic, in the former plan. However, this reduction extends to the first grade, which was and still is, general. The share of Arabic was 27.27 % and now is 18.75 %, taking 6 hours a week instead of 9 hours as in the past.

Secondary School at present, as mentioned earlier, consists of four specialised areas.

Table 3.2.4 shows the share of Arabic among the different grades and areas of study in this stage, broken down according to the individual course components which make up Arabic studies.

Table 3.2.4

Arabic Language Share and Courses in Secondary School Programme (Subjects and Hours Per Week)

Courses	First year (General)	Field of specialisation							
		Arabic and Islamic Studies		Administrative and Social Studies		Natural Studies		Technical Studies	
		1 st year	2 nd year	1 st year	2 nd year	1 st year	2 nd year	1 st year	2 nd year
Grammar	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
Rhetoric and literary criticism	--	2	2	--	--	--	--	--	--
Literature	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Composition		1	1	--	--	--	--	--	--
Reading	2	1	1	1	1	--	--	--	--
Total weekly hours	6	9	9	4	4	3	3	3	3
Arabic Share among General plan	18.75 %	28.1 3 %	28.1 3%	12.0 0 %	12.00 %	8.82 %	8.82 %	8.82 %	8.82 %

*Source: Al-Rasheed, The Minister of Education (1996); Ministry of Education , Arabic language Textbooks for Secondary Schools, 1998).

In this programme, Arabic is learned through five courses, some of which resemble those taught in intermediate school. They are:

- a) **Grammar and Morphology:** The main aims of this course at this stage are to train students to use standard Arabic, enable them to comprehend precisely what they hear or read and increase their knowledge about for using Arabic properly (Ministry of Education , 1974). This course contains more morphology than that in the Intermediate stage.
- b) **Composition:** this is taught to one department, aiming to enlarge the course taught in the previous stage.
- c) **Reading:** this course supplements the previous one by introducing some advanced reading skills and by studying and practising extended texts.

The two courses, which are different from those of the Intermediate stage, are:

- d) **Literature, “*Al'adab*”:** This course aims mainly to enable students to recognise the historical stages of Arabic literature and its styles and arts and to discover the Islamic and Arabic heritage. It seeks to promote students' ability to test, use and understand belle-letters through studying selected Islamic texts and Arabic poetry and prose (Ministry of Education 1974).
- e) **Rhetoric and literary criticism, “*Albalaghah ua annaqd al'adabi*”:** This course is taught to students of Islamic and Arabic Studies and aims to enable students to comprehend the rhetorical organisation of the Qur'an and the prophet's sayings and to appreciate the literary arts of Arabic. It also aims to provide students with some criticism trends and schools of the Arabic literature (Ministry of Education, 1974).

In Secondary School, there are separate textbooks for Grammar, Reading, Literature and Rhetoric. The problems indicated in relation to the intermediate school textbooks are the same for this level. However, the textbooks given to the Secondary school students are of a more classic design. The student textbooks are printed in two or three colours, but they are not illustrated with pictures or paintings at all. The Ministry might believe that as students get older, they do not benefit from such illustration.

A Critical View

In reviewing learning Arabic in Intermediate and Secondary Schools, it is apparent that the Saudi aims are very broad and general, to such an extent that they encompass almost all the aims of language learning cited in the references and documents that the researcher has examined. However, there are three exceptions to this:

First, although the importance of listening as a major skill in language learning is recognised internationally, it is not mentioned explicitly in either the Intermediate or Secondary Aims. In fact, listening comprehension can be inferred from certain provisions in the Intermediate Aims, while on the contrary, it is not indicated at all in the Secondary Aims. Moreover, in reviewing the content of the AL courses, listening activities are not required by any course. Indeed, it is considered in the literature as an essential aspect of the language curriculum. Among educationalists who have consisted the significance of listening are Madkoor (1986), Gorah (1986, p.63) and Al-Bader (1989), and it is considered an essential aspect of learning English in the National Curriculum in England and Wales (DFE, 1995).

Second, oral language in general, such as speaking in standard Arabic, making speeches, composing ideas orally, and participating in debates and discussion, was not given adequate weight in the curriculum, either at the aims level or in the material given to students (curriculum content). Needless to say, such language skills are allocated great importance in both the theoretical literature of the AL pedagogy such as Madkoor (1986), Abdulmajeed (1986), Al-Kholy (1988) and Al-Bader (1989) and many others, and also in other languages, as emphasised by Howe (1994), Johnson (1995), and the importance given to Oracy in the National Curriculum in the England and Wales.

Thirdly, according to Al-Jemplati and Al-Tawansi (1981) and Gorah (1986) organising thinking and reasoning is one of the general aims of learning Arabic language. Nevertheless, it is not expressly stated in the Intermediate or Secondary Aims.

Fourthly, enabling students to recite the Qur'an is given as an individual aim for learning Arabic in many other countries (Samak, 1979, p. 60), but it was not stipulated in the Saudi aims for learning Arabic. However, it can be argued that this goal can be regarded as part of the aims of Islamic Education, which in SA is given higher importance than any other Arab countries, i.e. in some countries Islamic Education is regarded as less important and given limited time which, in turn, requires this aim to be associated with the learning of the language.

3.3 Summary

In this chapter the general features of the Saudi educational system were clarified, to aid understanding of the situation of learning the AL in Intermediate and Secondary Schools, and identifying some related obstacles and problems. It was clear that as SA is considered as developing country a great deal of effort has had to be made in order to provide education in such a society, where more than 90 % of the population were illiterate just over forty years ago. In response to that, the last four decades or so witnessed a massive educational movement so that nowadays, the government claims that no child of school age is out of school. However, this claim cannot be examined in the light of the lack of statistical evidence. Ministerial statistics, generally, can be criticised for clarifying “ explicitly” the figures achieved, without giving even “ implicitly” an indication of what has not been achieved, or what should be achieved in the future. Undoubtedly, there has been a great deal of quantitative progression, but, however, with questionable level of qualitative development.

The main characteristics of the Saudi education system have remained the same for the last three decades: full centralisation in sponsoring and administrating education, three stages: Elementary, Intermediate, and Secondary with 6, 3 and 3 years for each stage respectively, and an academic year divided into two semesters, in each of which students have to take an exam for every subject, 10 to 15 subjects, per semester.

Within the current educational plan, Arabic language has a very prominent position, occupying 41 % of the time-table in first year than around 26 % of the remain five years of Elementary School, more than 18 % in Intermediate School and the first year of Secondary School, and about 28 % in the remaining two years of the Islamic and Arabic Studies Section in Secondary School ranging between 9 to 12 % in the other sections. Comparing this proportion with that of other Arab countries, mentioned in the previous chapter, it is found that this proportion stand almost in the middle. The share devoted to ALC reflects the importance given to this subject in the educational policy. However, except for changing the secondary school from two to four specialisms, five years ago, which affected the share of ALC, there have been no major changes in intermediate and secondary schools in the country for around twenty years. The objectives of learning Arabic remain the same, alongside the content, which concentrates on describing the language theoretically through memorising the grammar and rules, giving little, if any, effort to the practical skills of language, especially oracy -related proficiencies. Finally, this chapter clarified the current situation of the Saudi education system and mapping out the status of the ALC. Both the need for development and the willingness of those responsible to conduct it, indicated in Chapter One, were backed in this chapter. The concern of the next chapter, therefore, is to examine the literature in order to locate the Arabic language within the language acquisition theories and find a suitable method by which Arabic should be presented and taught.

Chapter Four

Language Acquisition and Learning

5.1 Language Principles and Terms

- 5.1.1. Language Components and Varieties
- 5.1.2. First and Second Language
- 5.1.3 Language Acquisition or Learning

5.2 First Language Acquisition Theories

- 5.2.1 The Behaviourists' Theory
- 5.2.2 The Nativists' Theory
- 5.2.3 The Interactionists' Theory

5.3 Language Learning Approaches

- 5.3.1 Grammar Translation Method
- 5.3.2 The Series/ Direct Method
- 5.3.3 The Audiolingual Method
- 5.3.4 Community Language Learning Method
- 5.3.5 The Silent Method
- 5.3.6 Error Analysis and Correction
- 5.3.7 Total Physical Response Method
- 5.3.8 The Natural Approach
- 5.3.9 The Communicative Approach/ Notional-Functional Syllabus

5.4 Factors Influencing Language Attainment

- 5.4.1 Attitude and Motivation
- 5.4.2 Language Aptitude
- 5.4.3 Learner Age or the Critical Period Hypothesis
- 5.4.4 Learning Styles and Strategies
- 5.4.5 Social Environment

5.5 Summary

Chapter Four

Language Acquisition and Learning

It is important to this study to review different views of how language is either acquired or learnt, since the adoption of a theory eventually leads to extended changes in the pedagogy adopted for the Arabic language. This chapter, therefore, first, clarifies some related terms to enable a clear understanding of concepts used. The second section outlines the main theories of language acquisition, then, the third section reviews the central approaches and methods of language learning. Some factors that affect language acquisition and learning will be outlined in the fourth section. The main issues will be summarised in the last section of the chapter.

4.1. Language Principles and Terms:

Many branches of knowledge have been concerned with language and some have elaborated theories to explain language competence and the mechanisms involved in learning and using language. In order to locate Arabic language in such literature, this section highlights three issues: language components and varieties, first or second language, then, language acquisition or learning.

4.1.1. Language Components and Varieties:

It is not surprising that there are many different answers to the simple question: what is language? The philosopher views language as instrument of thought; the sociologist recognises it as a form of behaviour; the psychologist, as a cloudy window through which he glimpses the working of the mind; the linguist believes it is a system of arbitrary signs, and so on (Mackey, 1965).

Not only that, but the term “language” has multiple meanings even in the field of linguistics itself. It can be understood as a pure subject, linguistic competence,

individual language and pedagogic matter. It is also differentiated and clarified depending on the given theoretical concept and interest through abstraction and delimitation of subjects. Since there is a wide range of definitions, relying on different viewpoints, in this study, and for the Arabic language, the definition of Bussmann (1996, p 253) will be adopted which considers language as:

a vehicle for the expression or exchanging of thoughts, concepts, knowledge and information as well as the fixing and transmission of experience and knowledge.

The number of language components or levels into which a language description is divided has varied anywhere from the two of Harris (phonology and morphology) to the fourteen of Brondal (Mackey, 1965p.36). It has been the tradition to recognise the major levels or components of language as:

- * Phonetics, concerned with the sounds of languages;
- * Morphology, concerned with the structure of words;
- * Syntax, concerned with the structure of phrases and sentences; and,
- * Semantics, concerned with the study of meaning.

These levels of description obviously have implications for the language curriculum and learning methods. As Mackey (1965, p.36) points out:

a method based on a detailed description of the pronunciation of a language will differ from one based mainly on its grammar

In the Arabic Pedagogy in SA, the concentration is on Syntax more than any other aspect. It seems to the researcher that this is a traditional problem, since a quick look at the AL literature reveals that a great deal of it is about Syntax. Indeed, conducting a comparison between the importance of the language components (their contribution in helping students with standard language) and their weight in the current curriculum is outside the scope of this study, but such issues must be taken into account in developing the ALC in SA.

A number of linguistic fields study the relations between language and the subject matter of related academic disciplines, such as sociolinguistics (sociology and language) and psycholinguistics (psychology and language). In principle, applied linguistics is any application of linguistic methods or results to solve problems related to language learning. Applied linguistics might benefit the learning of Arabic as a mother tongue although, in origin, it tends, to some extent, to be restricted to second-language instruction.

Regarding language varieties, four levels can be identified: *standard*, *dialect*, *colloquial* and *slang* language.

Standard language is the formal literary form of language. Linguists, however, consider the standard language to be simply one dialect of a language. For example, the dialect of French spoken in Paris became the standard language of France not because of any linguistic features of this dialect but because Paris was the political and cultural centre of the country (Comrie, 1996). However, for the AL, although 'standard' Arabic is considered as one dialect of Arabic, since the end of the sixth century, it has been recognised as standard also, for historical/cultural reasons, as the language of the Qur'an and the Islamic heritage.

A dialect is a variety of a language spoken by an identifiable subgroup of people.

Traditionally, linguists have applied the term *dialect* to geographically distinct language varieties (Comrie, 1996). In ordinary usage in the Arabic literature, the term dialect signifies a variety of a language that is distinct from what is considered the standard form of that language.

Colloquial language: belongs to or is proper to ordinary or familiar conversation, not formal or literary (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1996). With regard to Arabic language, the terms dialect and colloquial are commonly regarded as synonymous.

Slang usually refers to words, phrases, and uses that are regarded as very informal and are often restricted to special contexts or are peculiar to a specified profession, class, etc. (racing slang; schoolboy slang) (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1996).

As more specialised terms for certain social language varieties, Comrie (1996) distinguishes between: *Slang*, *argot*, and *jargon*.

Slang refers to informal vocabulary, especially short-lived coinages, that do not belong to a language's standard vocabulary.

Argot refers to a non-standard vocabulary used by secret groups, particularly criminal organisations, usually intended to render communications incomprehensible to outsiders.

A jargon comprises the specialised vocabulary of a particular trade or profession, especially when it is incomprehensible to outsiders, as with legal jargon.

In the level or varieties of language it should be recalled that the gap between standard and colloquial Arabic is remarkable. Uneducated speakers of some Arabic dialects might be incomprehensible to speakers of others.

4.1.2. First and Second Language:

In the field of language learning and teaching, much argument appears in the differentiation among groups of the terms, first or native language or mother tongue on the one hand, and second or foreign language on the other, and also the term: target language as well.

It is beyond the scope of this study to explore these differences, though a brief comparison between some quotations and definitions will be useful for locating the AL within these terms.

Lightbown and Spada (1996, pp 121, 125) have generalised the definitions, grouping them as follows:

First language, mother tongue, native language: The language first learned. Many children learn more than one

language from birth and may be said to have more than one mother tongue. The abbreviation L1 is often used.

Second language: Any language other than the first language learned. The abbreviation L2 is often used.

Target language: The language which is being learned, whether it is the first language or a second or third or fourth language.

However, several terminological distinctions can be drawn. The terms mother tongue and first language are used in linguistic and educational dictionaries, it seems to the researcher, in exactly the same sense. However, the researcher noted that, in the current literature, the term 'mother tongue' is used in the field of native language instruction among language minority groups, especially in Britain and the United States. Much research, using this term, supports the growing attitude that a multicultural curriculum reflecting children's cultural experiences is appropriate, and should be given priority. In many cases the usage of the mother tongue is restricted to communicating within a person's family, with no further or professional skills in this language being developed. Work supporting this idea includes that of Tansley and Craft (1984) in their report: "*Mother Tongue Teaching and Support: A Schools Council Enquiry*". It was undertaken as part of the Schools Council Mother Tongue Project; Houlton, and King (1984) in their work: "*Mother Tongue Teaching in Britain and the United States: Some Current Developments*", and King and Houlton (1984) who reported: "*Implications of Britain's Mother Tongue Project*". Also among the new work is Adams (1997): "*Teaching the Mother Tongue in a Multilingual Europe*". Consequently, in this sense, it is possible for some one to have as his or her mother tongue Welsh or Bangladeshi, for example, and also English as a first language.

A person's 'mother tongue' or 'first language' (L1) is distinguished completely from any further languages that may be learnt as foreign, second or third languages. The term 'foreign language' is particularly used to refer to any language that is not a native

language in a country, and 'second language' is also commonly used in this way. However, some linguists distinguish between 'foreign' and 'second' language use. According to Crystal (1997) a foreign language (FL) in this restricted sense, is a language taught that has no status as a routine medium of communication in that country, for example, English in Japan. A second language (SL) is a non-native language that is widely used for purposes of communication, usually as a medium of education or business, for instance, English in Nigeria. The latter term is also used with reference to immigrants and indigenous groups whose L1 is a minority language: in the USA, for example, English is a second language for millions of immigrants from a wide range of language backgrounds.

Bussmann (1996, p. 168) has a slightly different, more political view. He explains:

A foreign language is any language that is not officially recognised in a given country or state. In this view, for example, the Spanish language in the United States would be considered a 'foreign language' even though it is spoken by approximately 19 million people. In contrast, a second language is an officially sanctioned language spoken by an identifiable population in a given country or state, such as French in Canada.

Crystal (1997) notes that in the United States in recent years, the term 'foreign language' has been rejected by many teachers for political and pragmatic reasons.

Among suggested replacements is 'world language', a term that emphasises internationalism and inclusion rather than the distance and strangeness implied by the term 'foreign language'.

In relation to the AL the question –which has been already raised by some researchers – is standard Arabic a first or second language for Arabs ?

Surprisingly, in 1977, the well known Arabic linguist, Tammam Hassan's (Bouchouk, 1987) answer is:

Standard Arabic is our second language. This was its status in the pre-Islamic period, and it has remained in Islam till

this day. We should apply, for its teaching and its curriculum, the methods which are suitable to a second language.

Admittedly, the gap between standard and dialect is remarkable, as already indicated. However, in the researcher's view, Hassan's statement is a little extreme, because, first, the written form is 'generally' standard, even among dialect speakers. Secondly, it is well-known among Arab linguists that standard Arabic is understandable to all Arabs i.e. even they cannot use it in daily communication, they fully understand it, either in oral or written form. Nevertheless, because the dialect form, as mentioned, varies greatly from the standard form, the dialect language should be considered as the mother tongue, considering the standard Arabic as the first language, but not the second. Therefore, in this study, AL will be considered as the first language although, in pedagogy terms, the methods and strategies of learning either first or second language should be utilised and profited from. More clarification will be added in the following section.

4.1.3. Language Acquisition or Learning:

Generally, there are two processes for performing language: acquisition, which is natural, unconscious, informal; and learning, which is unnatural, conscious, complicated and corrective.

Krashen and Terrell (1983, p 18) distinguish between these terms by saying that simply acquiring a language is '*picking it up*' whereas language learning is '*knowing the rules*'. They believe that adults are more likely to learn, while children acquire their first language, and most probably, second language as well.

Some other researchers have associated these terms with the target language, suggesting that the first language or mother tongue is "acquired" while a second or foreign language is "learned" (Terrell, 1977 and Al Shama, 1981). Such views might be supported by researchers who have used 'acquisition' in speaking of first language,

include Villers and Villers (1978) and Ingram (1989) and many others. However, a large number of researchers have used the term with second language, such as Meisel et al. (1981), Lightbown (1985), Ellis (1986), Larsent-Freeman (1991), Ellis (1997) and many others. Also, the term 'learning' has been widely used in the literature in the context of both first and second languages.

Bussmann (1996) commented that language acquisition is an umbrella term for the natural acquisition of one's first language and the natural acquisition of a second language in an informal learning environment, as a result of living in the target language society or being exposed to certain language contexts.

It was observed by the researcher that when the term 'acquisition' is used in second language literature, in many cases, the researchers have tended to deal with acquiring language in such natural settings or tried to adopt some approach that follows the way a child naturally acquires language. On the other hand, language learning refers to planned activities with rules and explanation. Thus, it seems generally that these two terms, then, reflect the 'approach to learning language', regardless of the age of the learner and the language that is learned. This implies that approaches, methods and strategies used in the second and foreign languages literature can be applied to learning standard Arabic language as a first language in particular and also for learning first language in general.

Therefore, theories of language acquisition will be reviewed in the next section; then, in the following one, some approaches and methods of learning language will be reviewed.

4.2. First Language Acquisition Theories

The ability to learn language is one of the most fascinating aspects of human development. It is one amazing feat, which has attracted the attention of linguists and psychologists for generations. Many theories have been offered as explanations of how

language is learned. Unlike those of ancient and medieval times, modern theories of language, as Mackey (1965, p3) clarifies,

"..., are more concerned with how language works than with why it exists. They therefore tend to base their principles on the observation of language and languages"

In fact, language teaching and learning processes are influenced by ideas on the particular language being taught, and by ideas on how the language is acquired and learned, so efforts to develop Arabic language teaching and learning should be informed by the main ideas and theories in this field. In this section, three central theories will be summarised in turn: the behaviourist, the nativist and the interactionist.

4.2.1. The Behaviourists' Theory:

The word behaviourist was invented by Watson at the beginning of the twentieth century as a result of his protest against introspective methods examining the content of the mind. Behaviourists believe that language learning is simply a matter of imitation and habit formation. The basic idea is that learning is a kind of link between stimulus (S) and response (R). Children imitate the sounds and patterns, which they hear around them and receive positive reinforcement for doing so. Thus encouraged by their environment, they continue to imitate and practise these sounds and patterns until they form habits of using correct language. According to this view, the quality and quantity of the language which the child hears, should have an effect on the child's success in language learning (Lightbown et al 1996).

The behaviourist view of how language is learned accounts to some extent for children's early language learning. However, as Brown (1994) notes, there are doubts as to how well this view accounts for the development of some more complex aspects of learning language, in the light of many language errors and special-child forms being made by early age children. Imitation and practice alone cannot explain such errors, since the forms created by the child were never produced by adults. Children appear to

pick out patterns and then generalise them to new contexts. They try to create new forms or new uses of words until they finally figure out how the forms are used by adults. More complex grammatical structures of the language, however, require a different sort of explanation which the behaviourist view is incapable of offering. Nevertheless according to Sheikh (1993), the behaviourists' contribution is very valuable as a key element in the structural approach to language teaching in audio-lingual methods and to class room teaching, especially using positive reinforcement such as rewards and incentives. In teaching Arabic this theory might be useful to encourage concentrating on the quality and quantity of standard language that should be offered to students, especially in the early stage of their lives.

4.2.2. The Nativists' Theory:

On the other side of the theoretical spectrum, the native approach or, as it is called sometimes, the cognitive approach, is represented by the works of Chomsky and Jean Berk (Brown, 1994), and then by Eric Lenneberg's (1967) work and many other theorists and linguists. They disagree with behaviourists on the basis that perception and thinking cannot be restricted to an increase in individual sensations or associations. They concentrate on the function of the brain and argue that language acquisition relies on internal mental thinking and cognitive structures. Chomsky, as the most important theorist of this view, viewed language acquisition as very similar to the development of walking. In this case the environment and the availability of people who speak to children make a basic contribution.

According to Chomsky, children's minds are not blank slates to be filled merely by imitating language they hear in the environment. Instead, he claims that children are born with a special ability to discover for themselves the underlying rules of a language system. Chomsky originally referred to this special ability as being based on a *language acquisition device* (LAD), often described as an imaginary 'black box' which

exists somewhere in the brain. This 'black box', which is thought to contain all and only the principles which are universal to all human languages, prevents the child from going off on many wrong trails in trying to discover the rules of the language. For the LAD to work, the child needs access only to samples of the natural language. These language samples serve as a trigger to activate the device. Once it is activated, the child is able to discover the structure of the language to be learned by matching the innate knowledge of basic grammatical relationships to the structures of the particular language in the environment. In later writings, as Lightbown and Spada (1996) suggest, Chomsky and his followers no longer use the term LAD, but refer to the child's innate endowment of *Universal Grammar* (UG). UG is considered to consist of a set of principles which are common to all languages. If children are pre-equipped with UG, then what they have to learn is the ways in which their own language makes use of these principles and the variations on those principles which may exist in the particular language they are learning.

Much evidence can be found to support this view of language acquisition. Among these are (Lightbown et al, 1996):

1. Virtually all children successfully learn their native language at a time in life when they would not be expected to learn anything else so complicated.
2. Children successfully master the basic structure of their native language or dialect in a variety of conditions. They achieve different levels of vocabulary, creativity, social grace, and so on, but virtually all achieve mastery of the *structure* of the language spoken around them.
3. The language children are exposed to does not contain examples of all the information which they eventually know.
4. Animals - even primates receiving intensive training from humans - cannot learn to manipulate a symbol system as complicated as the natural language of a three- or four-year-old human child.

5. Children seem to accomplish the complex task of language acquisition without having someone consistently point out to them *which* of the sentences they hear and produce are 'correct' and which are 'ungrammatical'.

However, despite the nativists' argument against the behaviourists, they both consider acquisition as an external process with observable input and output. Both also recognise the child to be the receiver and the adult as the sender. They deal with language through surface structure, but not deep structure, or as a part of a huge human system.

4.2.3. The Interactionists' Theory:

This theory, which is sometimes called the "Functional Approach", focuses on the role of the linguistic environment in interaction with the child's innate capacities in determining language. Lightbown and Spada (1996 p. 14) explain that interactionists view language development as a result of the complex interplay between the uniquely human characteristics of the child and the environment in which the child develops.

They continue:

Unlike the nativist, the interactionists claim that language which is modified to suit the capability of the learner is a crucial element in the language acquisition process.

In favour of this position, according to Brown (1994), Bloom's research, along with that of Jean Piaget, Dan Slobin, and others, paved the way for a new wave of child language study, centering on the cognitive prerequisites of linguistic behaviour. Piaget described overall development as the result of children's interaction with their environment, with a complementary interaction between their developing perceptual cognitive capacities and their linguistic experience. What children learn about language is determined by what they already know about the world.

Since language is used for communication, it is only fitting that one study the communicative functions of language: what do children know and learn about talking with others? about connected pieces of discourse (relations between sentences) ? the

interaction between hearer and speaker? conversational cues? This newest wave is revolutionising research on first language acquisition. The very heart of language -its communicative function- is being tackled in all its variability.

To support this view, many researchers have studied the speech directed to children, as we are all familiar with the way adults typically modify their speech towards little children. The evidence suggests that children whose parents do not consistently provide such modified interaction will still learn language, but these children may have access to the modified speech when they are in the company of older siblings or other adults (Lightbown et al, 1996).

So far, three different theories of language acquisition have been summarised. Three important issues emerge there. First, as Douglas Brown, (1994, p.30) has commented:

Perhaps we will never realize a complete, consistent, unified theory of first language acquisition, but even in its infancy, child language research has manifested some enormous strides toward that ultimate goal.

Second, there is the issue of how to reconcile the explanations of the three theories.

Lightbown and Spada (1996, p 16) suggested that:

...each may help to explain a different aspect of children's language development. Behaviourist explanations may explain routine aspects, while nativists' explanations seem most plausible in explaining the acquisition of complex grammar. Interactionist explanations are necessary for understanding how children relate form and meaning in language, how they interact in conversation, and how they use language appropriately.

The third issue is: what are the implications of the acquisition theories for the learning of Arabic language in particular? Obviously, the learning of Arabic has to rely on a good foundation of acquired language, as formal rules are grafted on to elements which emerge from the domain of the unconscious. On the other hand the theories and explanations of language acquisition guide us to methods and strategies of supplying Arab children with correct language from the first days of their lives. Moreover,

explaining the process of acquiring the Arabic language leads to the adoption of the method in which it can be learnt. Many language learning approaches were constructed on the basis of the language acquisition theories as will become obvious in the following section.

4.3. Language Learning Approaches

Although the theories and approaches of language learning are well documented, it would be of great help to review them here to grasp a better understanding of how Arabic can be learned. It is also crucial for those who are involved in either teaching Arabic or developing its curriculum in SA, to be aware of possible approaches which can be invested in the procedure of Arabic learning.

It is believed that people have two distinct ways of developing their language. The first is via language acquisition, that is, by using language for real communication which can be called the natural way. It is a subconscious process and it is not necessary to be aware of acquiring language; people are only aware they are communicating. The second way is to develop competence in a language learning process. In fact, language learning is knowing about language or it can be 'formal knowledge of language'.

Learning, in this context, refers to explicit knowledge and rules; being aware of them, being able to talk about them and being capable to practice them. As it has been said, language learning is the conscious process of studying, intellectually understanding and using language. This form, i.e. language learning, being largely a psychological problem, benefits, like other psychological problems, from knowledge and research of the process of learning.

However, the simple question, "How is language learned?" will produce a number of different and often conflicting theories, approaches and methods. Some of them explain the procedures and others describe them and give full guidelines of how to implement a successful method of learning.

More than thirty years ago Mackey (1965) divided theories of language learning into two main categories: cognitive theories and associative theories. Cognitive theories are concerned with knowledge, and claim that we learn by insight, interpretation and by solving our problems; associative theories are concerned with responses, and maintain that we learn by trial and error, learning being viewed as a chain of responses.

The more recent orientation, according to Al Shama (1981, p vi),:

is not purely behaviourist nor purely cognitive. It only tips the balance slightly at the early stage of learning to the conditioning processes, rather than to the cognitive.

The contemporary orientation differs from the purely behaviourist and purely cognitivist. It views the two processes as self-regulatory mechanisms influenced by internal affective factors and external environmental/social factors. So, it can be said that language learning approaches have gone through various stages, beginning with some which can be described as traditional approaches, such as the Grammar Translation Approach and the Series/Direct Method, then some developed approaches like the Audio-lingual method and the silent method, which paved the way for some new styles of theories and research that have resulted in modern approaches such as the Natural Approach and Notional-Functional Syllabuses.

Nevertheless, detailed accounts of the approaches to language learning lie outside the scope of this study. So, short summaries of the main approaches and methods will be provided in order to highlight the current orientations of the literature in this field, seeking ways in which such literature might benefit the learning of Arabic.

Before these methods and approaches are discussed, these two terms, approach and method, themselves need to be clarified through the work of the American applied linguist Edward Anthony (1963 as quoted in Richards et al 1986, p.15), who identified three levels which he termed *approach*, *method*, and *technique*. He believes:

The arrangement is hierarchical. The organizational key is that techniques carry out a method which is consistent with an approach...

His definition of these terms is as follows:

... An approach is a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning. An approach is axiomatic. It describes the nature of the subject matter to be taught....

Method is an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach. An approach is axiomatic, a method is procedural. Within one approach, there can be many methods....

... A technique is implementational - that which actually takes place in a classroom....

This conceptualisation will be used in this study, although there is much disagreement among researchers in the use of these terms to each approach or method named and reviewed here.

4.3.1. Grammar Translation Method:

The Grammar Translation Method was the offspring of German scholarship, the object of which, according to one of its critics, was *"to know everything about something rather than the thing itself"* (Rouse, as in Richards et al, 1986). This method is a language teaching tradition that has been practised in mother tongue or first language learning world-wide for centuries. This method, which has been called the Classical Method, focuses on grammatical rules, memorisation of vocabulary and of various declensions and conjugations, translation of texts, and doing written exercises. As other languages began to be taught in educational institutions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Classical Method was adopted as the chief means for teaching foreign languages. Little thought was given at the time to teaching oral use of languages; after

all, languages were not being taught primarily to develop the ability of oral/aural communication but to give students a reading proficiency in a foreign language.

In the nineteenth century the Classical Method came to be known as the Grammar Translation Method. There was little to distinguish Grammar Translation from what had gone on in foreign language classrooms for centuries, beyond a focus on grammatical rules as the basis for translating from the second to the native language. But the Grammar Translation Method remarkably withstood attempts at the turn of the twentieth century to "reform" language teaching methodology, and to this day it remains a standard methodology for language teaching in educational institutions. The major characteristics of Grammar Translation as mentioned by Richards and Rodgers (1986) and Prator and Celce-Murcia (as in Brown, 1994) can be summarised as follows:

1. Reading and writing are the major focus; little or no attention is paid to speaking and listening.
2. Little or no attention is given to pronunciation.
3. There is little active use of the target language in the classes.
4. Much vocabulary is taught based on the reading texts in the form of lists of isolated words.
5. Grammar provides the rules for putting words together, and instruction often focuses on the form and inflection of words.
6. Reading of difficult classical texts is begun early.
7. Little attention is paid to the content of texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis.
8. Often, the only drills are exercises in disconnected sentences from the target language.

Richards and Rodgers (1986) believe that this method does virtually nothing to enhance a student's communicative ability in the language. It is just a tedious experience of

memorising endless lists of unusable grammar rules and vocabulary and attempting to produce perfect translations of stilted or literary prose. They (1986, p5) continue:

(Although) The Grammar Translation Method is still widely practised, it has no advocates. It is a method for which there is no theory. There is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it or that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory.

However, Brown (1994) suggested that Grammar Translation is so popular because it requires few specialised skills on the part of teachers. Tests of grammar rules and of translations are easy to construct and can be objectively scored. It is, also, sometimes successful in giving students knowledge about a language enabling them to interpret some language phenomena.

In respect of Arabic, this method has been criticised by Arab scholars and educators for centuries (Ahmad, 1983). However, since the scientific Arab revolution in the middle of eighth century, many Arab scholars have relied on this method to teach Arabic in the mosque circles and then in the systematic schools and universities. Unfortunately, even today, in the Arab States and in SA as an example, the Grammar Method is still the sole formal method of learning Arabic.

4.3.2. The Series/ Direct Method:

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed several factors which contributed to questioning and rejection of the Grammar Method. The Frenchman C. Gouin is perhaps the best known of the mid-nineteenth century reformers who attempted to build a methodology around observation of children's language learning, emphasising oral proficiency. Gouin described a painful set of experiences that finally led to his insights about language teaching. He memorised the German roots and irregular verbs, translated Goethe and Schiller, and even memorised 30,000 words in a German dictionary -all in the isolation of his room. Only once did he try to "make conversation" as a method, but this caused people to laugh at him and he was too embarrassed to

continue that method. At the end of the year, Gouin, having reduced the classical method to absurdity, was forced to return home, a failure. But there is a happy ending. Upon returning home Gouin discovered that his 3-year-old nephew had, during that year, gone through that wonderful stage of child language! So Gouin spent a great deal of time observing his nephew and other children and came to the following conclusions: language learning is primarily a matter of transforming perceptions into conceptions; children use language to represent their conceptions; language is a means of thinking, of representing the world to oneself (Brown, 1994).

So, Gouin set about devising a teaching method that would follow from these insights.

He created the Series Method, which Brown (1994, p. 43) describes as:

A method that taught learners directly (without translation) and conceptually (without grammatical rules and explanations) a "series" of connected sentences that are easy to perceive.

According to this method, language would be taught directly through a series of sentences which have an unconventionally large number of grammatical properties, vocabulary items, word orders, and complexity. To some extent Gouin was successful with this method because the language, through a series of sentences, was so easily understood, stored, recalled, and related to reality.

A generation later, largely through the efforts of Charles Berlitz, applied linguists finally established the credibility of such approaches in what became known as the Direct Method.

The basic premise of Berlitz's method was that second language learning should be more like first language learning: extensive active oral interaction, spontaneous use of the language, no translation between first and second languages, and little or no analysis of grammatical rules. Richards and Rodgers (1986, p. 9-10) summarise the principles of the Direct Method:

1. Classroom instruction was conducted exclusively in the target language;

2. Only everyday vocabulary and sentences were taught;
3. Oral communication skills were built up in a carefully graded progression organised around question and answer exchanges between teachers and students in small, intensive classes;
4. Grammar was taught inductively;
5. New teaching points were introduced orally;
6. Concrete vocabulary was taught through demonstration, objects, and pictures; abstract vocabulary was taught by association of ideas;
7. Both speech and listening comprehension were taught;
8. Correct pronunciation and grammar were emphasised.

Many strategies can be derived from this method for teaching the Arabic language.

According to this method, in the Arabic learning processes, teachers have to use only standard Arabic. The usage of dialects or any colloquial language must be prohibited inside Arabic language classes.

The Direct Method enjoyed considerable popularity towards the end of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. According to Richards and Rodgers (1986), it was most widely accepted in private language schools where students were highly motivated and where native-speaking teachers could be employed. The Direct Method did not take well in public education where the constraints of budget, classroom size, time, and teacher background made such a method difficult to use. Moreover, the Direct Method was criticised for its weak theoretical foundations. Success was attributed not to the methodology, so much as the general skill and personality of the teacher.

4.3.3. The Audiolingual Method:

In the first half of this century, the Direct Method did not take hold in the United States in the same way that it did in Europe. While one could easily find native-speaking teachers of modern foreign languages in Europe, such was not the case in the United

States. Moreover, U.S. educational institutions had become firmly convinced that a reading approach to foreign languages was more useful than an oral approach, given the perceived linguistic isolation of the United States at the time. According to Brown (1994), the highly influential Coleman Report of 1929 had persuaded foreign language teachers that it was impractical to teach oral skills, and that reading should become the focus. Thus schools returned in the 1930s and 1940s to Grammar Translation, "*the handmaiden of reading*".

Then World War II broke out and suddenly the United States was thrust into a world-wide conflict, heightening the need for Americans to become orally proficient in the languages of both their allies and their enemies. The time was ripe for a language teaching revolution. The U.S. military provided the impetus with funding for special, intensive language courses that focused on the aural/oral skills; these courses came to be known as the Army Specialised Training Program (ASTP), or, more colloquially, the "Army Method." Characteristic of these courses was a great deal of oral activity-pronunciation and pattern drills and conversation practice-with virtually none of the grammar and translation found in traditional classes. Ironically, numerous foundation stones of the discarded Direct Method were borrowed and injected into this new approach. Soon, the success of the Army Method and the revived national interest in foreign languages spurred educational institutions to adopt the new methodology known in the 1950s as the Audiolingual Method (Krashen, 1983, and Bouchouk, 1987).

The Audiolingual Method (ALM) was firmly grounded in linguistic and psychological theory. Structural linguists of the 1940s and 1950s were engaged in what they claimed was a "scientific descriptive analysis" of various languages'. At the same time, behavioural psychologists advocated conditioning and habit-formation models of learning which were practices of audiolingual methodology.

From the work of Richards and Rodgers (1986) and Brown (1994) the characteristics of the ALM can be summed up in the following:

1. There is little or no grammatical explanation: Grammar is taught by inductive analogy rather than deductive explanation;
2. There is dependence on mimicry, memorisation of set phrases;
3. Great importance is attached to pronunciation;
4. New material is presented in dialogue form;
5. Structures are sequenced by means of contrastive analysis and taught one at a time;
6. The classes are small usually around 10 persons, offering opportunity to engage in communication experience;
7. Vocabulary is strictly limited and learned in context;
8. There is much use of tapes, language laboratories, and visual aids;
9. Great attention is paid to speaking the target language;
10. Successful responses are immediately reinforced;
11. There is a great effort to get students to produce error-free utterances.

The ALM enjoyed many years of popularity, and even to this day, adaptations of the ALM are found in contemporary methodologies. The ALM was firmly rooted in respectable theoretical perspectives at the time. However, its popularity waned because, as Brown (1994, p.71) explains:

We discovered that language was not really acquired through a process of habit formation and overlearning, that errors were not necessarily to be avoided at all costs, and that structural linguistics did not tell us everything about language that we needed to know.

Ultimately, for the Arabic language education, we learned many things from the ALM as it was a valiant attempt to reap the fruits of language teaching methodologies that had preceded it. Teaching Arabic can benefit from this method, reducing the efforts and time given currently to the learning of theoretical grammar in favour of practising the standard form of language and getting students to produce error-free language instead of

memorising then reciting 'ready-made' sentences. Arabic pedagogy, also, should learn from the importance given to language laboratories and audio-visual aids.

4.3.4. Community Language Learning Method:

In his "Counselling-Learning" model of education, Charles Curran (1972) was inspired by Carl Rogers' view of education in which students and teacher join together to facilitate learning in a context of valuing and prizing each individual in the group. In such a surrounding, each person lowers the defences that prevent open interpersonal communication. The anxiety caused by the educational context is lessened by means of the supportive community. The teacher's presence is not perceived as a threat, nor is it the teacher's purpose to impose limits and boundaries, but rather, as a "counsellor," to centre his or her attention on the clients (the students) and their needs.

Curran's model of education was extended to language learning contexts in the form of Community Language Learning (CLL) (Brown, 1994). While particular adaptations of CLL are numerous, the basic methodology is explicit. The group of clients (learners), having first established in their native language an interpersonal-relationship and trust, are seated in a circle with the counsellor (teacher) on the outside of the circle. The clients start the conversation, then repeat sentences which are corrected by the counsellor. The counsellor may take a more directive role and provide some explanation of certain linguistic rules or items. More and more direct communication can take place with the counsellor providing less and less direct translation and information, until the learner achieves fluency in the spoken language. The learner has at that point become independent (Richards and Rodgers, 1986).

Generally speaking, CLL is an attempt to put Carl Rogers' philosophy into action and to overcome some of the threatening affective factors in language learning. However, the success of CLL, as Brown (1994) suggested, depends largely on the expertise of the counsellor.

For learning the Arabic language, CLL offers certain insights to teachers as they are reminded to lower learners' anxiety, and building a warm relationship with the students to make Arabic enjoyable to them. This method also points toward autonomous learning in which students develop their own language and improve their abilities of speaking and using standard language.

4.3.5. The Silent Method:

The Silent Way is the name of a method of language teaching devised by Caleb Gattegno, based more on cognitive than affective argument. While its founder was said to be interested in a "humanistic" approach (Brown, 1994) to education, much of the Silent Way was characterised by a problem-solving approach to learning.

Richards and Rodgers (1986, p. 99) summarise the learning hypotheses underlining the Silent Way:

1. Learning is facilitated if the learner discovers or creates rather than remembers and repeats what is to be learned;
2. Learning is facilitated by accompanying (mediating) physical objects;
3. Learning is facilitated by problem solving involving the material to be learned.

The Silent Way capitalises on discovery -learning procedures. Gattegno (1972) believed that learners should develop independence, autonomy and responsibility. At the same time, learners in a classroom must co-operate with each other in the process of solving language problems. The teacher -a stimulator but not a hand-holder- is silent much of the time, hence the name of the method. Teachers must resist their instinct to spell everything out in black and white -to come to the aid of students at the slightest downfall- and must "get out of the way" while students work out solutions.

Nevertheless, Richards and Rodgers (1986, p. 111) criticise this method stating:

Despite the philosophical and sometimes almost metaphysical quality of much of Gattegno's writing, the actual practices of the Silent Way are much less revolutionary than might be expected.

The Silent Way was too harsh a method, and the teacher too distant, to encourage a communicative atmosphere. There are a number of aspects of language that can indeed be "told" to students to their benefit; they need not, as in CLL as well, struggle for hours or days with a concept that could be easily clarified by the teacher's direct guidance (Brown, 1994).

For learning the Arabic in SA, we could benefit from injecting healthy doses of discovery learning into our classroom activities and from providing less teacher talk than is currently the situation, to let students discuss with each other, practising standard language. The method could also lead to the adoption of some useful techniques such as problem-solving which can be used in teaching grammar inductively.

4.3.6. Error Analysis and Correction:

The errors made by the child acquiring his mother tongue and by the foreign language learner can be regarded, through correcting them, as actual evidence of the learning of the system. Recently, Error Analysis and Correction has been given great attention in the literature of language learning theories. Indeed, it is more of a learning technique than a method or an approach.

Error analysis can give a picture of the type of difficulty learners are experiencing. However, the most useful implication for a theory of error correction is that cognitive feedback must be optimal in order to be effective. Too much negative cognitive feedback, a barrage of interruptions, corrections, and overt attention to malformations, often leads learners to shut off their attempts at communication. They perceive that so much is wrong with their production that there is little hope to get anything right. On the other hand, too much positive cognitive feedback -willingness of the teacher- hearer to let errors go uncorrected, to indicate understanding when understanding may not have occurred, serves to reinforce the errors of the speaker-learner. The result is the persistence, and perhaps the eventual fossilisation, of such errors. So, the task of the

teacher is to discern the optimal tension between positive and negative cognitive feedback.

The matter of *how* to correct errors gets exceedingly complex. It seems quite clear that students in the classroom generally want and expect errors to be corrected (Norrish, 1983). However, some methods recommend no direct treatment of error at all (Krashen and Terrell 1983). In "natural," untutored environments, according to Douglas Brown (1994), non-native speakers generally get corrected by native speakers on only a small percentage of errors that they make; native speakers will attend basically only to global errors and then usually not in the form of interruptions but at transition points in conversations.

Balancing these various perspectives, it can safely be concluded that a sensitive and perceptive language teacher should make the language classroom a happy optimum between some of the over-politeness of the real world and the expectations that learners bring with them to the classroom.

The Error Analysis and correction technique – or, as it seems to the researcher, ‘movement’ – has received great interest in the Arabic language literature, especially during the eighties, as a response to the Western research during the previous two decades, i.e. the sixties and seventies. Such research has not been given to any other technique or innovation of language learning. Undoubtedly, this technique has some advantages which can and should be invested in developing the ALC in SA, such as identifying the areas with which students have greater difficulties, and also helping with evaluating the curriculum content and teaching methods. In other words, this method could be used to evaluate existing programmes and also, suggest areas which should be concentrated on in designing a new programme or syllabus. Another implication of Error Analysis and Correction inside the classroom, which can be of great importance, is that analysing errors through repeating comparable tasks, with a time interval in between, gives an idea about how individual students are progressing through the

programme given in a certain period. Nevertheless, Error Analysis, as indicated previously, is more likely a technique than a method of teaching Arabic or constructing its curriculum. Obviously, it will help, but it should not or, perhaps, cannot be used alone.

4.3.7. Total Physical Response Method:

The Total Physical Response is a language teaching method built around the co-ordination of speech and action, teaching language through physical activity. The founder of TPR, James Asher (1977), noted that children, in learning their first language, appear to do a great deal of listening before they speak, and that their listening is accompanied by physical responses (reaching, grabbing, moving, looking, and so forth). He also gave some attention to right-brain learning. According to Asher, motor activity is a right-brain function that should precede left-brain language processing. Asher was also convinced that language classes were often the locus of too much anxiety and wished to devise a method that was as stress-free as possible, where learners would not feel overly self-conscious and defensive. The TPR classroom, then, is one in which students do a great deal of listening and acting. The teacher is very directive in orchestrating a performance: commands are an easy way to get learners to move about and to loosen up: 'open the window', 'close the door', 'stand up', 'sit down', 'pick up the book', 'give it to John', and so on. (Richards et al, 1986)

Like other methods discussed here, according to Brown (1994), TPR, as a method, had its limitations. It was especially effective in the beginning levels of language proficiency, but then lost its distinctiveness as learners advanced in their competence. Today, TPR is used more as a technique, which is a more useful way to view it. Many successful communicative, interactive classrooms utilise TPR activities to provide both auditory input and physical activity. For the learning of Arabic, as it seems to the researcher, little benefit can be learnt from this method. Indeed, it helps learners with

new vocabulary, especially at the beginner level, but in Arabic classes, students already know and understand that level of language and they, generally, need advanced vocabulary and language styles and structure, which might better be achieved by other methods than this one.

4.3.8. *The Natural Approach:*

There are several methods which are based on traditional principles of natural language acquisition. Perhaps the most valuable work in the Natural Approach was manifested and developed by Krashen and his colleague, Tracy Terrell (Krashen and Terrell 1983). They felt that learners would benefit from delaying production until speech "emerges," that learners should be as relaxed as possible in the classroom, and that a great deal of communication and "acquisition" should take place, as opposed to analysis. In fact, the Natural Approach advocated the use of TPR activities at the beginning level of language learning, when "comprehensible input" is essential for triggering the acquisition of language.

The Natural Approach was aimed at the goal of basic interpersonal communication skills, that is, everyday language situations -conversations, shopping, listening to the radio, and the like. The initial task of the teacher was to provide comprehensible input, that is, spoken language that is understandable to the learner, or just a little beyond the learner's level. Learners did not need to say anything during this "silent period" until they felt ready to do so. The teacher was the source of the learners' input and the creator of an interesting and stimulating variety of classroom activities-commands, games, skits, and small-group work (Krashen and Terrell 1983).

As Brown (1994), notes, the most controversial aspect of the Natural Approach was its "silent period" and its reliance on the notion of "comprehensible input". One could argue, with Gibbons (1985), that the delay of oral production can be pushed too far and

that at an early stage it is important for the teacher to step in and encourage students to talk. And determining just what we mean by "comprehensible" is exceedingly difficult. Nevertheless, the Natural Approach reminds us that in teaching a second language sometimes we insist that students speak much too soon, thereby raising anxiety and lessening the possibility of further risk-taking as the learner tries to progress. And so, once again the teacher's responsibility is to choose the best of what others have experimented with, and adapt those insights to his own situation.

This method resembles the previous one as both are a little extreme, and more appropriate for teaching a completely new language, which is not the case in learning standard Arabic for Arab students. Nevertheless, some techniques can be derived from this method, such as that of not pushing students to speak standard Arabic if they are not ready to do so and also giving students easy topics for composing their ideas, letting them engage with language styles and structures rather than constituting the meaning.

4.3.9. The Communicative Approach/ Notional-Functional Syllabus:

The origins of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) are to be found in the changes in the British language teaching tradition dating from the late 1960s. This was partly a response to the sorts of criticisms the prominent American linguist Noam Chomsky had levelled at structural linguistic theory in his now classic book, *Syntactic Structures* (1957). Chomsky had demonstrated that the current standard structural theories of language were incapable of accounting for the fundamental characteristic of language, the creativity and uniqueness of individual sentences. British applied linguists emphasised another fundamental dimension of language that was inadequately addressed in current approaches to language teaching at that time, the functional and communicative potential of language. They saw the need to focus in language teaching on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of structures. (Richards and Rodgers, 1986).

Beginning with the work of the Council of Europe and later followed by numerous interpretations of "notional" syllabuses by Wilkins (1976) and some others, notional-functional syllabuses began to grow in popularity in the United Kingdom in the 1970s. The distinguishing characteristic of the notional-functional syllabus is its attention to functions as the organising elements of a foreign language curriculum. Grammar is attended to only in that it explains the various forms used to accomplish certain functions.

Wilkins's contribution was an analysis of the communicative meanings that a language learner needs to understand and express. Rather than describe the core of language through traditional concepts of grammar and vocabulary, Wilkins attempted to demonstrate the systems of meanings that lay behind the communicative uses of language. He described two types of meanings:

1. notional categories (concepts such as time, sequence, quantity, location, frequency), and,
2. categories of communicative function (requests, denials, offers, complaints).

Wilkins later revised and expanded his 1972 document into a book called *Notional syllabuses* (Wilkins 1976), which had a significant impact on the development of Communicative Language Teaching.

Notional-functional approaches to language, as Richards and Rodgers (1986) and Brown (1994) note, have become popular underpinnings for the development of communicative textbooks and materials in foreign language courses.

The weakness of the notional syllabus is its tendency to highlight a grammatical feature to the exclusion of practical application in real situations. Brown (1994, p.248) evaluates the approach thus:

It is not a panacea or "last word" for language teachers. Nor is it merely "structural lamb served up as notional-functional mutton".

He believes that we have not arrived at a final solution but we have begun an avenue that we should continue with. Language learning is, as he continues,

... something so complex that it will probably never be reduced to a simple formula or a neatly packaged syllabus.

With regard to its suitability for teaching the AL, we should bear in mind Brown's (1994, p. 248) further statement that,

What notional syllabuses do give us is, first of all, an organization of language content by functional categories. Second, they provide a means of developing structural categories within a general consideration of the functions of language.

The most important contribution of this method, therefore, is its suitability to be utilised in selecting the content of the Arabic language curriculum as it provides teachers with the most useable, functional language. It is crucial for teaching the AL to depart from teaching students a sort of language which may have no relevance outside the class room and instead, to link the language taught with the actual life of the student. According to this method, also, the language provided to learners should be closely linked to their local geographical and social environment, which increases the functionality of the syllabus.

It is the researcher's belief that this method is the most beneficial method for teaching the AL in SA and it should be adopted in developing its curriculum. However, four important points should be made here.

First, although the various teaching methods have been introduced here as alternatives to each other, in fact they are not. Of course, in some cases, it would not be possible to adopt completely two or three methods at the same time, but it is possible, on the other hand, to use many 'techniques' from different method in one language lesson, or to adopt a method and enrich it with many techniques from other methods. For the Arabic language, the Communicative Approach should be adopted, but it can benefit from other

techniques from other methods, some of which have already been indicated. The sole base of selecting the teaching method is the extent to which it is beneficial for learning the Arabic language in a given context.

Second, it was noted by Richards and Rodgers (1986) that the different teaching approaches and methods – including those reviewed so far – lack detailed description of how to be implemented. They are presented as general suggestions without giving ‘protocols’ of how teachers can apply them in the classroom. Indeed, this suggests a need for further analysis and investigation of the teaching methods for developing the learning of the Arabic language in SA.

Thirdly, despite the great importance of the teaching methods being adopted for developing the learning the Arabic language, teaching method represents only one component of the curriculum which interacts with the other components and should be developed within a systematic process. Indeed, curriculum components or dimensions affect each other, and developing one of them may have little, or even no, contribution in developing the Arabic language and improving the students, performance. The next chapter will examine which dimensions should be developed in order to develop Arabic language education.

Fourthly, in the field of teaching language, there are many factors which strongly affect the adoption or implementation of a teaching method. A detailed account of such factors would not be possible in the current study, but in the light of the importance of considering them, the next section will clarify the most effective or serious ones.

4.4. Factors influencing Language Attainment

The different theories of language acquisition and learning are not all mutually exclusive. There is a certain measure of agreement among them on the factors which affect the process. Among those factors which should be considered in the Arabic language pedagogy field are: (1) attitude and motivation, (2) language aptitude, (3)

Learner Age or the Critical Period Hypothesis (4) Learning Styles and Strategies, and (5) Social environment, which will all be exposed to further investigation in the following subsection.

4.4.1. Attitude and Motivation:

Many believe that learners have certain characteristics which lead to more or less successful language learning. Such beliefs are usually based on anecdotal evidence, that is, on individual people we have known. For example, rate of development varies widely among first language learners. Some children can string together five-, six-, and seven-word sentences at the same time that other children are just beginning to label items in their immediate environment.

In fact, attitudes develop early in childhood and are the result of parents' and peers' attitudes with interacting factors in the human experience. These attitudes, afterwards, form one's perception of him or herself, of others, and of the culture in which one is living.

Gardner and Lambert's (1972 as in Brown 1994) extensive studies were systematic attempts to examine the effect of attitudes on language learning. After studying the interrelationships of a number of different types of attitudes, they defined motivation as a construct made up of certain attitudes.

There has been a great deal of research on the role of attitudes and motivation in second language learning. The overall findings show that positive attitudes and motivation are related to success in second language learning (Gardner 1985).

However, motivation is clearly a highly complex phenomenon. Motivation can result from learning as well as cause it. As Lightbown and Spada (1996) remarked:

Unfortunately, the research cannot indicate precisely how motivation affects learning. That is, we do not know whether it is the motivation that produces successful learning or successful learning that enhances motivation. Are learners more highly

motivated because they are successful, or are they successful because they are highly motivated? (Skehan 1989).

Furthermore, motivation is dynamic in nature; it is not something that a learner has or does not have but rather something that varies from one moment to the next depending on the learning context or task.

For developing the Arabic language education, a great attention must be paid to this factor, especially with the claim of some researchers of the negative attitude and lack of motivations toward learning the AL, as indicated in Chapter One.

4.4.2. Language Aptitude

People, generally speaking, differ in the extent to which they possess a natural ability for learning language. This ability, known as language aptitude, is believed to be in part related to general intelligence, but also to be in part distinct. The work by John Carroll (as in Ellis, 1997) led to the identification of a number of components of language aptitude. These are:

Phonemic coding ability, i.e. the ability to identify the sounds of a foreign language so that they can be remembered later. This ability is also seen as related to the ability to handle sound-symbol relationships (for example, to identify the sound which 'th' stands for).

Grammatical sensitivity, i.e. the ability to recognise the grammatical functions of words in sentences (for example, the subject and object of a sentence).

Inductive language learning ability, i.e. the ability to identify patterns of correspondence and relations between form and meaning (for example, to recognise that in English 'to' can denote direction and 'at' location).

Rote learning ability, i.e. the ability to form and remember associations between stimuli. This is believed to be important in vocabulary learning.

Research involving language aptitude has focused on whether and to what extent language aptitude is related to success in language learning. According to Ellis (1997)

there is strong evidence that it is. Learners who score highly on language aptitude tests typically learn more rapidly and achieve higher levels of language proficiency than learners who obtain low scores.

However, Lightbown and Spada (1996) cast doubt on these findings. They believe one of the most serious problems is that it is not clear what the abilities are that constitute aptitude. Furthermore, the abilities which are associated with academic courses may not be as closely linked to the success some people have in picking up a language.

For learning the AL, in the light of the uncertainty of how to increase the language aptitude, one of the most importance issue related to this factor is finding a way of ensuring an adequate level of language performance among learners. This may recall the vital need to adopt the principle of individual learning, to address the different language aptitudes of the students.

4.4.3. Learner Age or the Critical Period Hypothesis:

The relationship between a learner's age and success in second language acquisition is the subject of much debate. It has been widely observed that children from immigrant families eventually speak the language of their new community with native-like fluency. Their parents rarely achieve such high levels of mastery of the new language. The biologist Eric Lenneberg (in Lightbown et al, 1996) observed that this ability to develop normal behaviours and knowledge in a variety of environments does not continue indefinitely and that children who have never learned language (because of deafness or extreme isolation) cannot return to normal if these deprivations go on for too long. He argued that the language acquisition device, like other biological functions, works successfully only when it is stimulated at the right time -a time which is referred to as the 'critical period'.

The *critical period hypothesis (CPH)*, therefore, states that there is a period in human development when the brain is predisposed for success in language learning. During

this period language acquisition is easy and complete and beyond it is difficult and typically incomplete. Developmental changes in the brain, it is argued, change the nature of language acquisition.

The hypothesis was grounded in research which showed that adult second language learners, as Lightbown and Spada (1996) suggest, may become very capable of communicating successfully in the language, but there will always be differences of accent, word choice, or grammatical features which set them apart from native speakers or from speakers who began learning the language while they were very young.

Furthermore, Ellis (1997, p.67,68) reported that it was claimed that people who lost their linguistic capabilities, for example as a result of an accident, were able to regain them totally when they were about the age of twelve, but were unable to do so afterwards. There is considerable evidence to support the claim that language learners who begin learning as adults are unable to achieve native-speaker competence in either grammar or pronunciation. However, there does not appear to be a sudden cut-off age, beyond which full competence is impossible. Rather, the capacity to achieve full competence seems to decline gradually, becoming complete by about the age of sixteen. In the case of pronunciation, the crucial age appears to be much earlier, possibly as early as six. To some extent, older learners depend on more general learning abilities, the same ones they might use to learn other kinds of skills or information. It is argued that these general learning abilities are not as successful for language learning as the more specific, innate capacities which are available to the young child.

The critical period hypothesis has been challenged in recent years from several different points of view. Ellis (1997) criticised the CPH from two angles. First, there is some evidence that not all learners are subject to critical periods. There are adults who do extremely well in second language acquisition. Julie, an English woman, for example, did not start learning Arabic until she was twenty-one years old but was found to

perform like a native speaker on a variety of tests after she had lived in Cairo for twenty-six years.

Second, the differences of success of most adult learners may lie in differences in social conditions, such as social distance. It is also possible that acquisition draws on different learning mechanisms, because most adult learners have had longer access to their previous other language.

Moreover, some studies of the second language development of older and younger learners who are learning in similar circumstances have shown that older learners, at least in the early stages of second language development, are more efficient than younger learners (Lightbown et al, 1996, p.11). Krashen and Terrell (1983) suggested that older acquirers may be superior in initial rate of acquisition because they are able to get more comprehensible input. There appear to be at least three ways this happens.

First, as Scarcella and Higa's research shows, older acquirers are better at "managing conversations", or controlling the input directed at them and making it comprehensible.

A second factor contributing to older acquirers' greater speed in the initial stages is their greater ability to "beat the silent period", to produce in the second language using structures that have not yet been acquired. This is done by using first language rules. A third reason is the fact that older acquirers have a greater knowledge of the world. This greater extra-linguistic knowledge helps make input comprehensible.

For learning the AL, the age factor may be important as to training students in earlier time in using the standard form. In this sense, we might recall the old Arabic tradition, mentioned in the Chapter Two that Arab in pre and early Islamic period used to send their children to the desert '*Bedouin*' in order to train children to acquire eloquent language from the natural environment. Moreover, it is easily observed that even some specialists in Arabic language commit many local dialect-mistakes, especially at the level of pronunciation, when they speak standard Arabic. All that indicates the

importance of devoting as much as possible of the study time and efforts to the learning of Arabic at a young age.

4.4.4. Learning Styles and Strategies

Learning style and strategies are believed to be general factors that influence the rate and level of language achievement. An area of research which has received a lot of attention in many areas of education is the issue of learning styles. This research suggests that different learners approach a task with a different set of skills and preferred strategies. Learning strategies are the particular techniques employed to gain language. They can be behavioural, for example, repeating new words, or they can be mental, such as using the linguistic or situational context to infer the meaning of a new word.

Some people cannot learn something until they have seen it. Such learners would fall into the group called 'visual' learners. Other people, who may be called 'aural' learners, seem to need only to hear something once or twice before they know it. Some learners feel compelled to memorize and will practise and practise until they have committed new information to memory, before they feel comfortable that they have a grasp of it. For still others, there is a need to add physical action to the learning process. It is not enough to see, hear, or practise for these learners. They need to live the new knowledge in ways that involve them more completely (Lightbown et al, 1996, p41). Different kinds of learning strategies have been identified. Referring to such strategies would help to evaluate their significance in the current field. Cognitive strategies are those that are involved in the analysis, synthesis, or transformation of learning materials. Metacognitive strategies are those involved in planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning. An example is 'selective attention', where the learner makes a conscious decision to attend to particular aspects of the input. Social/affective strategies

concern the ways in which learners choose to interact with other speakers. An example is questioning for clarification' (Ellis, 1997).

There have been various attempts to discover which strategies are most important for language acquisition. Leslie Dickinson (1992) has concentrated his work on learner autonomy as the most consequential strategy of language learning. He suggested that the best guess we can make at what differentiates "good" language learners from the rest is their active, independent involvement with the target language. The development of autonomy involves both methodological and psychological preparation.

Methodological preparation is a matter of learning techniques for independent learning. Psychological preparation is a matter of changing attitudes and building the learner's confidence in her ability to learn independently. He also suggested that teachers should discuss with their students what leads to success and failure in language learning and how they should react to the different factors known to influence success in learning. The rationale behind this was that greater awareness of the factors which affect learning may lessen their discouraging impact. It is also possible that some learners will be encouraged to realize that the problems they are facing are common to all language learners.

One way is to investigate how 'good language learners' try to learn. This involves identifying learners who have been successful in learning language and interviewing them to find out the strategies that worked for them. One of the main findings of such studies is that successful language learners pay attention to both form and meaning. Good language learners also show very active awareness of the learning process and their own personal learning styles and, above all, are flexible and appropriate in their use of learning strategies. Other studies have shown that successful learners use more strategies than unsuccessful learners. They have also shown that different strategies are related to different aspects of language learning. (Ellis, 1997). However, Ellis could

not provide a clear answer to the question: does strategy use result in learning or does learning increase learners' ability to employ more strategies?

Hence, the study of learning styles and strategies is of potential value to Arabic language learners and we can all benefit from a variety of learning experiences.

However, it can be said that certain ways or styles are more successful for one person than for another. Arabic language learners should be given the freedom to choose their preferred way of learning, which will help them to perform better than those who are forced to use a learning strategy which might not suit them.

4.4.5. Social Environment:

The community is perhaps the most important context for the learning and maintenance of a language. Children are surrounded by the language of the community into which they are born, and this soon takes the place of the home as the most important influence on their speech.

Since language is essentially a social phenomenon, the social influences on its acquisition are numerous and interrelated in complex ways. It is the play of these influences on the growing mind that results in the learning of the language; social influences are also responsible for the learning and maintenance of second languages. If the community is a large metropolis there will be more occasions for contact than if it is an isolated hamlet.

There are some theories that draw on the idea of social affectedness. Among them, according to Ellis (1997, p.38), is Howard Giles's *accommodation theory*. This seeks to explain how a learner's social group influences language acquisition. For Giles the key idea is that of social accommodation. He suggests that when people interact with each other they either try to make their speech similar to that of their addressee in order to emphasise social cohesion, or to make it different in order to emphasise their social individuality.

Accommodation theory suggests that social factors, mediated through the interactions that learners take part in, influence both how quickly they learn and the actual route that they follow. This latter claim is controversial, however, as it suggests that sequences of acquisition are not as fixed as many researchers have claimed.

In terms of learning the AL, the social contexts in which it is continually used have some effect on both the manner and skill with which it is performed. Benefiting from the work of Mackey (1965) the groups or contacts affect the learning of AL may be enumerated as follows:

1. those with whom we live (the home group);
2. those near whom we live (the community);
3. those with whom we work (the occupational group);
4. those with whom we learn (the school group);
5. those of the same national background (the ethnic group);
6. those with whom we pray (the Mosque and religious rite group);
7. those with whom we play (the playgroup);
8. such non-personal and passive contacts as radio, television and the cinema; and such contacts with the written language as are provided by reading matter.

Mentioning these groups or contacts in respect of learning the Arabic language indicates that schools might be able to control 'one' of these eight groups, and to some extent influence certain others. Schools may be unable to affect all these groups. However, the co-ordination and co-operation of the three foundations: schools, parents, and society will greatly increase the chances of accomplishment in learning the AL.

4.5. Summary:

This chapter has reviewed the related literature and theories of language acquisition and learning since learning Arabic, for its native pupils, should benefit from the various theories and approaches that have been identified.

Arabic language in this study is considered as a vehicle for the expression or exchanging of thoughts, concepts, knowledge and information as well as the fixing and transmission of experience and knowledge. The researcher distinguished between two groups of language: the first language or mother tongue, which means the language first learned and second language, which indicates any language other than the first language learned. The term, target language is given to the language which is being learned. whether it is the first language or a second one.

Because of the remarkable difference between standard and colloquial forms, Tammam Hassan (1977, as in Bouchouk, 1987) believes standard Arabic is, and should be treated as, a second language for the Arab. While not going this far, the researcher holds the view that 'standard Arabic' is the first language for Arab, but second language approaches, methods and strategies are worth examining for their possible application to the study of standard Arabic.

In the discussion of this chapter, a distinction has been drawn between acquisition and learning. In the researcher's view, the two terms reflect the approach or process of performing language, regardless of the age of the learner and the language that is learned. Therefore, a first language can be acquired or learnt; the same is true for a second or foreign language.

In respect of language acquisition, many views and theories have been offered as explanations of how language is acquired. Three central theories were summarised: the behaviourist, the nativist and the interactionist.

The behaviourists' contribution is very valuable as a key element in the structural approach to language teaching in audio-lingual methods and to class room teaching, especially using positive reinforcement such as rewards and incentives. The Nativists' view provides a very valuable contribution regarding aspects of meaning, abstractness, and the creativity of child language and how the system of child language works.

However, despite the nativists' argument against the behaviourists, they both consider

acquisition as an external process with observable input and output, recognising the child to be the receiver and the adult as the sender. This disadvantage paved the way for another theory called “interaction theory” which focuses on the role of the linguistic environment in interaction with the child’s innate capacities. Nevertheless, all these three theories may help to explain different aspects of children’s language development. Those theories can help in explaining the acquisition of Arabic language. Behaviourists explain routine aspects, Nativists clarify the acquisition of complex grammar, while Interactionists help our understanding of how children relate form and meaning in language, how they interact in conversation, and how they use language appropriately. They can provide us with a solid basis for supplying Arab children with correct language and lead to the adoption of new learning method. Although we may never achieve a complete unified theory of language acquisition, research has manifested some enormous strides toward that ultimate goal.

Acquiring language is the first way of performing language. The second way is to develop competence in a language learning process. Language Learning (LL), being largely a psychological problem, benefits from the knowledge and research of the process of learning. In fact, it can be said that language learning approaches witnessed various stages, beginning with some which can be described as traditional approaches, such as the Grammar Translation Approach and the Series/Direct Method, then some developed approaches like the Audiolingual Method, Community Language Learning Method, Total Physical Response Method, Silent Method, and the Natural Approach. These methods paved the way to some new theories and research that have resulted in modern approaches such as Notional-Functional Syllabuses, which is believed to be most suitable to be adopted for the learning of the Arabic language. However, despite the weaknesses in some aspects of the various other approaches and methods reviewed, many strategies and techniques can be learnt from them. For the Arabic learner there is a good deal of insight to be gained. Some methods remind us to lower learners' anxiety

and to point learners toward autonomous learning. From others, we learn the benefit of providing less teacher talk than we usually do, to let the students work things out on their own. Total Physical Response advises the co-ordination of speech and action, teaching language through physical activity.

Brief consideration was given to error analysis, as this technique can give a picture of the type of difficulty learners are experiencing. Moreover, analysing errors at intervals gives an idea about how individual students are progressing, which helps to evaluate existing programmes and, also, suggests areas of focus for new ones.

The different theories of language acquisition and learning have a large agreement on some factors that affect the process. These factors are: attitude and motivation, language aptitude, learner age or the Critical Period Hypothesis, learning styles and strategies, and social environment, which have received a lot of attention in many areas of education. The study of such factors is of potential value to language learners and we can benefit from them to develop the learning of Arabic and solve its problems.

Finally, this chapter shows the crucial need for considering language acquisition and learning approaches and methods in order to enhance the performance of the Saudi students with their standard Arabic, giving greater attention to teaching methods, which represent a major component of the curriculum. The need, therefore, now is to consider the other aspects of the curriculum which should be developed, and how the development process can be initiated, issues which will be treated in the next chapter.

Chapter Five

The Requirements for Developing the Curriculum: Concepts and Models

5.1 The Curriculum Development Perspective

- 5.1.1 The Meaning and Significance of 'Development'
- 5.1.2 The 'Curriculum' Concept

5.2 Curriculum Development Models

- 5.2.1 The Process Model
- 5.2.2 The Research Model
- 5.2.3 The Objectives Model

5.3 The Concept of 'Requirements'

- 5.3.1 The Predefinition Usage of Requirements
- 5.3.2 The North-Eastern Junior School Association' s Study (1960)
- 5.3.3 Daem's study(1987)
- 5.3.4 Seyfried's Study (1990)
- 5.3.5. The Concept Adopted of Requirements'

5.4 The Dimensions of the Requirements for Developing the

ALC:

- 5.4.1 Curriculum Objectives
- 5.4.2 Curriculum Content
- 5.4.3 Teaching Methods
- 5.4.4 Curriculum Evaluation

5.5. Summary

Chapter Five

The Requirements for Developing The Curriculum:

Concepts and Models

Selecting and accomplishing successful approaches for developing education is the most important mission of educators and researchers. Thus, in this chapter the concern is to find the most suitable methods for developing the ALC in Saudi Arabia. However, in the light of the abundance of theoretical literature in the field, selecting and presenting the most relevant aspects for the current study was rather difficult. So, the concentration will be on elucidating the key terms used in the study in order to place them on the educational map. In this chapter, therefore, the curriculum development definitions and models believed most suitable for developing the ALC will be discussed in the first and second sections respectively. In section three, the term: 'requirements' will be conceptualised and discussed in some depth, and, in the fourth section, dimensions of the requirements for developing the ALC in Saudi Arabia will be adumbrated.

5.1 The Curriculum Development Perspective

Change and development is a fundamental part of human existence. People grow and develop; they age and they die. Some people like to call themselves *conservative* while others like to feel they are *radical*. Both words have the effect of expressing change or the ability to have some position toward change. People never describe themselves as inactive or even stable. In this section, the two terms 'development' and 'curriculum' will be clarified respectively.

5.1.1 The Meaning and Significance of 'Development'

The dictionary defines 'development' as growing gradually, becoming greater or larger and gaining enhanced value or maturity (Oxford, 1996). In a broader sense it includes improvement, betterment, amelioration, progression, and enrichment. Unlike the use of the term "change", which involves a substitution in position that may go in either a favourable or an unfavourable direction, improvement must assure a desirable and wanted species of change implying purpose, structure and goals. Some educationists, according to Robinson et al. (1985), prefer to use the term, "planned change" to assure the targeting of improvement and to exclude unfavourable change. Hence, according to Doll (1978), precise evaluation procedures are needed to determine whether a given change is an improvement.

Development, therefore, may be thought of as a process of planning and organising change on a rational basis. However, that does not mean it is a single process or even an interval one. It is clearly, as Skeel and Hagen (1971 p. 99) point out :

a challenging, frustrating, and endless process because the needs of children in school today may not be the same needs tomorrow.

Although it is clear that development is a natural characteristic of the educational system, Oliver (1977), Doll (1978) Pratt (1980), Skilbeck (1985) and others considered some factors to be causes of – or indicators of the need for – educational change. These factors, which should be recognised, are related to success of graduated students, school factors, community factors, change in the society and the explosion of knowledge. Each of them may give some ideas as to why and how educational change is to be conducted. When such a development plan has been put into operation, these factors should be exposed to both preliminary review and planned evaluation, to ensure actual improvement and development.

Therefore, review and evaluation are needed in curriculum development, so, it would be helpful in carrying forward discussion to highlight the three terms from an educational viewpoint. According to Skilbeck (1985), these terms denote the following kinds of activities:

- A *review* is a reflection on practice, depending perhaps on an organised scrutiny, with an oral or a written report. Some 'School Reviews' are more comprehensive than that, diverting towards evaluation.
- An *evaluation* requires the use of criteria, of goals, values or standards of worth, to examine and judge then report whatever is observed in a particular school or programme.
- *Development*, then, means enabling, or undertaking, action to modify or change what is reviewed and evaluated to achieve certain goals or purposes.

5.1.2 The Curriculum Concept

To clarify the concept of 'curriculum', it might be appropriate to refer, first, to the dictionary meanings of 'curriculum' which incorporate:

- a. the subjects that are studied or prescribed for study in a school;
- b. any programme of activities (Oxford, 1996).

Nevertheless, within this century, curriculum has been defined as an educational term in very different ways. Researchers and educationists have argued continually about the breadth or scope of curriculum and then have become lost in arguments about the semantics of curriculum definitions. Not surprisingly then, the researcher looked into more than thirty sources which offer definitions, without being able to find agreement among them about a satisfactory definition. Many of these writings mention several definitions, criticising them and presenting the author's special one which, in some cases, is described as a "workable", "practical" or "explicit" definition, without being

privileged by the critiques of later authors. Skilbeck (1985, p. 21) both emphasises and justifies this fact, saying:

*a precise and restricted definition has not been agreed.
... Naturally, it is not possible in a short definition to
encapsulate everything that is to be referred to in an
extended discussion.*

Some researchers, such as Doll (1978), Wiles and Bondi (1979) and Gress and Purpel (1988) ascribe differences in definitions of curriculum to historical shifts in thinking in the field of curriculum. Derived from the Latin *currere*, to run the course, the traditional definition of curriculum is "course of study." Associated with conservative positions, this traditional definition focuses on the subject matter to be learned.

A break with that tradition came in the 1930s. A definition commonly used during the thirties and forties, according to Doll (1978, p 4) was:

*the curriculum of a school is all the experiences that
pupils have under the guidance of that school*

This definition has been modified to be "the *engagements* that pupils have under the *auspices* of that school." The term *engagements* is thought to be more accurate than *experiences* because observers can see pupils engaging in educational activities, whereas they cannot literally see them experiencing the activities. Also, the term *auspices* has been considered to be more accurate than either *guidance* or *direction* because there is a definite limit to the supervision or control that a school can exercise over the activities of the pupils who attend it (Doll, 1978).

Among the other definitions that have been presented is an extremely wide definition that was criticised by Tyler (1975, p.219), who, however, gave no attribution for it, which says that the curriculum is '*everything that transpires in the planning, teaching, and learning in an educational institution*'. However, some realistic definitions of the curriculum of a school have been given by various authors in different years. The following three may give insight into such different definitions:

An attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice (Stenhouse, 1975, p.4).

All the experiences that are offered to learners under the auspices or direction of the school. (Doll, 1978,P19).

A substantial number of learning experiences, the choice of which is made according to a view or views of what education should be and which are offered the learner by both people and material (Pope, 1983, p.14).

Obviously, the matter of definition, despite its crucial importance, is always problematic or even indecisive. Classifying and judging different definitions is too complicated and not the job of this study. However, reference should be made to Scheffler (1960) who employed two techniques to reconcile the differences between various definitions.

First, he remarked that

alternative accurate definitions are possible, and that it must therefore not be supposed that to each term there corresponds one and only one correct definition(p. 28).

Second, he suggested that different authors and educationalists, even though their definitions seem conflicting,

retain the principle that the curriculum is coextensive with the school's responsibility, their differing definitions may be vehicles for the expression of contrary educational programs. (p. 27).

Therefore, the differences, as it seems to the researcher, may be that definition of curriculum is a matter of individual perceptions and purposes, which may not be concordant with those of another. Hence, definitions may change at different times and for different persons.

Rather than offering an explicit definition, some researchers such as Gress and Purpel, (1988, p8,9), prefer other approaches to defining the term curriculum. They discuss images, or characterisations, of curriculum rather than definitions.

Thus, to sum up the argument on the meaning of 'Developing curriculum' it should be recognised that the term 'curriculum' is used in several different ways. In a limited sense, it is a course of study. At the other extreme, the curriculum is considered to be everything that transpires in the planning, teaching and learning in an educational institution. It seems to the researcher that the definition of Doll (1978), mentioned earlier, is the most suitable and it will be adopted in relation to the development of the Arabic language in the current study. The phrase 'developing the ALC', then, will refer to 'undertaking actions for developing and improving the experiences which are offered to learners of the Arabic language under the auspices or direction of the school'.

The level of development is frequently negotiable. So, a sub-question may emerge here: which level of development will be treated through the current study ? Although the level of curriculum that is being developed is not easily identifiable, Beaucham (1983, p.561) set out four levels of curriculum planning and development. They are in order of increasing complexity: textbook adoption and change; simple curriculum modification which includes certain aspects or problems; broader curriculum review which covers all curriculum aspects of certain subject; and the fourth level is complete curriculum analysis conducted through a broad project dealing with the entire educational system.

This study can be classified among the third level as it seeks to identify the requirements for developing the whole aspects of the ALC. In the following section the task is to identify the appropriate model for developing the curriculum at this level.

5.2 Curriculum Development Models

The purpose of developing a curriculum, as Robinson et al (1985, p1) believe, is to

increase the total amount of desirable learning occurring during the time periods when the student is under the supervision of the school.

It has been believed that curriculum development is practised as a craft and a skilled occupation. For some researchers the process of curriculum change or improvement has been referred to as “*educational engineering*” (Doll, 1978). So, a model or models are needed to illustrate and describe procedures for undertaking the tasks of curriculum development.

Clearly, in order to select the most appropriate model to be adopted in the current study, the main features of the Saudi education system, mentioned already in Chapter 3, must be borne in mind, mainly the following

- a. Saudi Arabia is a developing country and yet it is evident that there is a low level of training among teachers;
- b. a conservative social view is reflected in education; and,
- c. the system is highly centralised.

However, a problem occurs with the development of a suitable model for certain circumstances, especially given the endless number of models and forms of models available, all of which certainly have their rationales and justifications. Thus, in the light of the difficulty of reviewing such literature in full, a review of three models: the process model, the research model and the objectives model will be made with the intention of identifying features appropriate for the present task

5.2.1 The Process Model

The process model was first described in Britain as recently as 1975, by its famous innovator, Lawrence Stenhouse (Stenhouse 1975). The first thing to be noted about the process model is that it seems to be a reaction to the objectives model. The objectives model, which had been widely used for many years, will be reviewed below in section 5.2.3. The rationale of the process model was mainly to offer alternative advantages and to solve problems arising with the objectives model, on the basis that

skills are probably susceptible to treatment through the objectives model, which encounters its greatest problems in areas of knowledge that (Stenhouse 1975, p. 85).

So, relying on the nature of the “culture” Stenhouse designates what he called “Public traditions” to select *areas of knowledge*, the base for the curriculum. He believes:

it is possible to select content for a curriculum unit without reference to student behaviours or indeed to ends of any kind other than that of representing the form of knowledge in the curriculum. This is because a form of knowledge has structure, and it involves procedures, concepts and criteria (p.51).

A curriculum, according to this model, can be set through three steps:

- a. Define the content or “*Form of knowledge*” intended to be taught;
- b. Define the classroom process in terms of what the teacher is to do at the level of principles and what the content is;
- c. Plan teaching procedures and activities.

Stenhouse gave great importance to the teaching and learning process, highlighting the role of the teacher in this model. He admits:

The major weakness of the process model of curriculum design will be now become apparent. It rests upon the quality of the teacher. This is also its greatest strength (p.96).

This model was subject to various criticisms, such that of Pope (1983) and also Skilbeck (1985), who considers it as a form of the objectives model itself, arguing that “process” and “objectives” are not such obvious alternatives. Skilbeck remarks that the objectives model is itself a process model.

The process model is very dependent upon the quality of the teachers and the freedom left to them. Therefore, in terms of developing the ALC, and in the light of the low level of training among teachers, and the fully centralised educational system in Saudi Arabia, few ideas can be taken from this model.

5.2.2 The Research Model

Another possible model for developing the curriculum is that of the research strategy or model, or what is sometimes called the R, D and D - 'The research, development and diffusion'- model. This model posits an orderly translation of knowledge from research to development to diffusion and finally to adoption. This would be helpful to encourage the relationships among schools and enable them to benefit from each other, especially in less centralised contexts.

This model regards the 'teacher as researcher'. Stenhouse (1975), who emphasised research in curriculum and teaching involving the close study of schools and classrooms, as the basis of sound development, indicated the need for the growth of a research tradition in schools for its foundation. Research, according to this model, is every teacher's responsibility. Teachers should, in their classrooms, test hypotheses about teaching and learning that can be offered by national project teams. Therefore, full-time research workers and teachers need to collaborate towards this end.

However, this strategy needs careful consideration, if benefit is to be gained from it in the Saudi context, as any hypothesis about teaching to be examined must be set and identified first. Such hypotheses would have to be endorsed by the higher authority.

This model also requires a high degree of research methods training for teachers, a feature not present in the current Saudi situation. So, the researcher does not believe that it is the most suitable strategy for developing the ALC, at least in the current Saudi circumstances. Undoubtedly, for developing the ALC the need is for a more comprehensive model which can operate in accordance with the current features of the Saudi educational system.

5.2.3 The Objectives Model

No other models have been given as much attention and discussion in the related literature during the last fifty years as the objectives model. The most striking claim of

the objectives model or approach, according to Skilbeck (1985), is that a single model can be used across a great diversity of situations and a wide range of subject matter. Moreover, it seems to the researcher that, this model is not only able to be used in curriculum design and development, but can be recognised as a pattern of thinking and judging various ideas and projects. So, an advantage of this model is its perfect suitability for use in designing, evaluating and developing a curriculum as well.

The predominant planning form in this model is Tyler's famous rationale which identified four questions, which have been the focus of much attention in the field since their publication (Gress et al, 1988 p. 14). These four questions are:

What educational purposes shall the school seek to obtain?

What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?

How can these educational experiences be effectively organised?

How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? (Tyler, 1949p. 1).

The reasons in Tyler's rationale for each step are given, and the tasks to be undertaken at each step are enumerated.

However, according to Kelly (1988) and Riley (1997), Tyler produced his model, in the first stage, in linear form, which meant that it was subject to much criticism. Later researchers such as Wheeler (1967) then developed a cyclical form of this model.

In accordance with the objectives model, a curriculum consists of four elements: the identification and selection of educational objectives, the selection and the organisation of the learning experiences, the teaching methods, and the evaluation of the programme.

This model, in the last fifty years or so, has been given much attention in the related literature, and within or building upon or in accordance with Tyler's rationale there are

many forms, approaches and models offered for developing curriculum. It would not be possible to review them all, but a short presentation of four of them, which will be followed by some comments, may give insight into the range of the different viewpoints in this field.

Tyler's Model:

Tyler used his rationale to suggest what he called: "*Specific approaches to curriculum development*". Curriculum development, according to his view, is a practical enterprise, not a theoretical study. He (1975, p.220) continues:

It endeavours to design a system to achieve an educational end and is not primarily attempting to explain an existential phenomenon. The system must be designed to operate effectively in a society where a number of constraints are present, and with human beings who have purposes, preferences, and dynamic mechanisms in operation.

His approach consists of the following steps:

- a. Primary analysis: to examine and analyse significant conditions that influence the construction and operation of the curriculum
- b. Selecting and defining objectives
- c. Selecting and creating learning experiences
- d. Organising learning experiences
- e. Curriculum evaluation. (Tyler, 1975)

Taba's Model

One well-known writer, Hilda Taba, in her work : "*A Conceptual Framework For Curriculum Design*" (1962), elaborated the objectives model to give it a more detailed treatment than Tyler attempted. She elaborated his steps into the following

- a. Diagnosis of needs;

- b. Formulation of objectives;
- c. Selection of content;
- d. Organisation of content;
- e. Selection of learning experiences;
- f. Organisation of learning experiences;
- g. Determination of what to evaluate and of the ways and means of doing it.

Skilbeck's Model

Malcolm Skilbeck (1985, p. 231) outlined an approach in his book: *"School-Based Curriculum Development"* in order to serve

*as an outline of the kinds of action to be taken in
curriculum development, conceived as a process of
collaborative, structured decision making.*

The components of Skilbeck's model were:

- a. Analyse the situation;
- b. Define objectives;
- c. Design the teaching-learning programme;
- d. Interpret and implement the programme;
- e. Assess and evaluate.

Robinson and his Colleagues' Model:

Robinson et al. (1985) argued that to take more complex goals seriously, the need is for a technology of curriculum development whose procedures are visible, and can therefore be discussed and progressively improved. In order to create a technology of curriculum development, they argued, the global task must be divided into a set of subtasks that make sense to educators. They suggested the following as a useful set:

- a. develop major course goals;
- b. develop course objectives;
- c. develop descriptions of growth (growth strands) for course objectives;
- d. package course objectives into units;
- e. sequence instructional objectives within units;
- f. develop instructional strategies;
- g. develop assessment instruments;
- h. develop written curriculum materials.

Many other models and approaches are found among the objectives models. Some of those offered are those of Wheeler (1967), Weinstein and Fantini (1970), Nicholls and Nicholls (1978), Gagné and Briggs (1979), Posner and Rudnitsky (1986). Very similar models have also been suggested by some Arab writers, such as Hamdan (1985) and Ibraheem and Al-kelzah (1986). However, the need now is to consider their suitability to be used or benefited from to develop the ALC in Saudi Arabia. Four points, then, must be clarified.

First, although some educationists have claimed that “*the model has a compelling logic but little available empirical support*” (Parsons 1987, p. 11), others described their models as practical and useable. For example, Tyler (1975, p. 226) affirmed that his model “*has been employed effectively in a number of curriculum projects*”. It is the researcher’s belief that ‘precise’ following of a single model might not be appropriate, but that it might be possible to benefit from the main components of the model, paying attention to the situation of the curriculum being developed.

Second, different forms of objectives model are claimed to have been used in the school-based curriculum system, such as Skilbeck's (1985) model or to design a new course as was suggested by Posner and Rudnitsky's (1986) model. In the case of Saudi Arabia's centralised system and for developing the ALC, there is an existing subject matter curriculum which, even though it has some disadvantages, has some advantages too and which needs to be improved and developed, rather than to be replaced or transposed.

Thirdly, as Stenhouse (1975, p. 71) argues,

it is excellent that such adventurous and speculative theories should exist; but in a policy field it is important that they should not be too confidently advocated or adopted as a basis for large-scale action. We must beware of believing that in the objectives model - or in any other model or theory - we have a systematic solution to our curricular problems, much less an educational panacea.

Fourthly, in the four forms of the objectives model shown and in the other forms indicated, there was disagreement on the number of steps that were recommended, ranging from three to ten. Some forms of the objectives model are very complex and "possibly too complicated for translation into practice" (Riley, 1997, p. 17).

Nevertheless, all of them rely heavily on the four elements or curriculum dimensions suggested by Tyler.

Consequently, in accordance with the special characteristics of the educational system in Saudi Arabia and to offer a suitable strategy for developing the learning of the Arabic language, the four dimensions of Tyler's rationale will be adopted for developing the ALC. In the following section, the relevant literature will be examined with the aim of finding the suitable strategy for developing these four dimensions suggested by the objectives model.

5.3 The Concept of 'Requirements'

In the educational field there is an endless debate on both the terminology and methodology of almost every single issue. Definition in such a field is not an easy task; the way might easily be lost with many kinds, forms and purposes of definitions. In order to identify the concept of 'requirements' which will be adopted in the current study, this section will, first, identify the predefinition usage of the terms, followed by reviewing three studies that used this term to arrive, in the fifth subsection, with the concept which will be adopted in the current study.

5.3.1 The Predefinition Usage of 'Requirements'

To restrict the discussion, reference should be made to Scheffler (1960) who summed up the various categories of definition. He explained:

we began by segregating scientific definitions as recognizably special and technical in scope, and we labelled the rest general definitions (p. 14)...

Within the "general definition", he determined three sorts, labelling them according to the interest underlying each sort as follows.

The interest of stipulative definitions is communicatory, that is to say, they are offered in the hope of facilitating discourse; the interest of descriptive definitions is explanatory, that is, they purport to clarify the normal application of terms; the interest of programmatic definitions is moral, that is, they are intended to embody programs of action(p. 22).

The need, therefore, is to look for the appropriate definition of the term 'requirements', which can be adopted for the current study.

Although 'requirement' as an educational term has been widely used in the educational literature, some fourteen educational dictionaries were examined and only two of them have addressed this term and clarified its meaning. Page and Thomas, (1977) and Rowntree (1981) accepted three meanings for "requirements" as:

- a. Number and types of credits a student needs to obtain to qualify for a degree, particularly in a US college or university;
- b. Prerequisites for entering a course or programme or for taking a job;
- c. Work required in a particular course.

The researcher, nevertheless, sought to find out whether other meanings have been used in educational literature. It is believed that there is another meaning or even meanings of the term 'requirement' which has been used in various and published works for at least the last fifty years. This meaning has, however, not been clarified explicitly nor used widely in the relevant literature. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to trace all such studies, among them are the North-Eastern Junior School Association (1960), Deam (1987), and Seyfried (1990). These works will be reviewed now, to clarify the different usages of this term, and, most importantly, to draw a theoretical framework of the term and get some idea of the methods used to determine requirements. Such methods might be beneficial for developing the ALC in Saudi Arabia.

5.3.2 The North-Eastern Junior School Association's Study (1960):

This publication, which was first released in 1949 was titled: "*Basic Requirements of the Junior School*". This report, was

written by a committee of teachers in junior schools. It is distilled from an imposing series of minutes of many careful discussion(p. 5).

The committee who prepared this report described its aims as

to discuss and report on the needs of children in the upper stage of primary education and on the possibility of improving the organization of junior schools to meet the children's needs in our own area.(p. 11)

The committee held multiform meetings and seminars in order to assemble, review and then determine the requirements necessary for the Junior School to be reformed and developed. They explained:

This report of our discussions is intended to be a suggestion rather than an exhaustive survey of the possibility of reform in junior schools as they now exist. ... We hope, therefore, that teachers in junior schools will accept it as a statement of some of their needs and problems. We hope too that it will encourage them as a body to press for reforms long overdue,... (p. 11).

The requirements in this report were arranged as follows :

- a. Buildings, furnishings, equipment;
- b. The time-table;
- c. Syllabus making;
- d. The general content of the curriculum:
 1. Basic Work in English and Arithmetic includes Speech, Reading, Spelling and Creative Writing, and also Arithmetic;
 2. The Study of Man and his Work in the World;
 3. Literature :Prose and Poetry;
 4. Creative Work;
 5. Physical Education.

The requirements concept in this study, as it is clear from the language used in the above quoted paragraph, referred to a list or lists of conditions, considerations and recommended solutions that need to be met and achieved in order to improve education. As far as the researcher is aware, this was the first educational publication that used in its title the term “requirements” in this sense.

5.3.3 Daem's Study(1987)

The title of this study was "*Requirements for the Use of Courseware in Mother Tongue Education*". The use of microcomputers and other courseware for teaching native language was discussed in this study. The requirements considered helpful for instruction through the use of microcomputers were examined and presented in five dimensions. They are:

- a. student motivation;
- b. educational objectives;
- c. the computer and related software as instructional tools;
- d. the learning model underlying the instructional approach; and
- e. the integration of computer into the native language curriculum.

Although this study is concerned with teaching the mother tongue, its main shortcoming is that it was a limited-scale study, in which the researcher suggested requirements based on his observations and experience in teaching Dutch as a native language in Belgium.

5.3.4 Seyfried's Study (1990)

The aim of this study was, as expressed in the study title, to determine "*Requirements For The Successful Integration Of Disabled People Into Working Life*". Clearly, the field of this study is not related to the ALC nor to the educational application in general. Nevertheless, with the lack of such studies in the educational field, it is reviewed here so as to explore and exploit the use of the term and, also, the method or approach followed in this study. The requirements in this study relate to conditions and opportunities at the level of both the societal environment, and the institutional

situation. The analysis focused on requirements relating to the two leading actors, employers and disabled people.

The primary concern of the study was to question people of both groups about their practical experience. A further aim of the study was to take this analysis as a basis for strategic conclusions on ways of enabling more disabled people to be employed in the future. To this end, a background analysis consisting of an evaluation of appropriate literature and available documents was made. In addition, members of various institutions concerned with disabled people were interviewed. An empirical study focused on innovative measures taken by individual employers and exemplary case studies of successful and unsuccessful attempts to integrate individual disabled people into employment. On this basis, requirements were presented in the following dimensions:

- a. Societal environment;
- b. Training and rehabilitation;
- c. Placement, counselling and guidance;
- d. Employers;
- e. Disabled people.

5.3.5 The Concept Adopted of 'Requirements'

Within the three studies reviewed, the requirements were identified or 'suggested' by 'a researcher' or 'a group of researchers' in the hope of promoting the practice, i.e. were believed important or essential to be achieved. In the studies reviewed the 'requirements' identified were not a synonym of aims or particular objectives, nor an equivalent term to the syllabus. They included tasks and functions to be accomplished, solutions to be adopted, and conditions to be achieved. Those requirements were presented either to the involved people or to decision-makers in particular

circumstances with a 'moral' hope of carrying them through and meeting them. Such requirements lacked administrative force and might be considered as '**moral or advisory requirements**'. The meaning of 'requirements' as it was used in the three studies can be identified, consequently, as: **conditions, considerations and recommended solutions that need to be met and achieved**. Indeed, the use of the term in the current study falls into this usage. Since this definition is not the 'normal' meaning of the requirements, as already indicated, it is considered as a "*stipulative definition*" and will be adopted in the current study. The 'requirements' for developing the ALC, therefore, means : **conditions, considerations and recommended solutions that need to be met and achieved for obtaining development of the ALC**.

This usage of the term 'requirements', nevertheless, must be distinguished from another meaning, which also used in the educational literature, in which requirements have constitutional and legal force and, therefore, can be considered as '**formal requirements**'. The latter meaning is widely used in the innovations of the National Curriculum in England and Wales, in which the requirements are considered as 'formal' or 'lawful'. They were revealed and put in practice to be followed and achieved within different levels of responsibilities (see Appendix 6 for further details of the National Curriculum in England and Wales).

However, it is worth noting that the requirements within the first meaning, 'moral or advisory requirements', might be suggested, in some cases, as pre-formal requirements and, then, presented to the decision-makers who, according to their authority approve them and forward them as formal requirements. In the National Curriculum in England and Wales, many requirements had been recommendations before becoming 'formal requirements'. Dempster et al. (1994, pp. 26,27) noted with regard to the requirement of producing '*a development plan by each school*', that '*The document was produced by*

a team of researchers' then it was placed in the hands of school governors and teachers while it was, as they continued,

... not yet a formal requirement. The DES considers the document... as advisory, leaving schools free to employ the school development planning approach or not. However, as a result of local education authority policy, many United Kingdom schools are required to produce a school development plan.

The requirements, in accordance with this quotation, might be presented – and also utilised – as advisory; then, when the decision-makers approve them, they can be upgraded to be formal requirements.

Although the term 'requirements' has been used in the educational literature and methods of identifying them have been discussed, there has not yet been much investigation using them, especially in the academic domain. This fact, although in many respects representing a barrier in front of the researcher, was, on the other hand, a sign of encouragement to investigate such a possibility in the academic context, especially in relation to the researcher's own field, i.e. developing the ALC.

Clearly, 'identifying the requirements' is suitable for initiating curriculum development, clarifying what should be done in this respect. As the nature of the existing Saudi educational context is a top-down hierarchical system, identifying the requirements is believed appropriate to lay a platform of the tasks attached to their importance for developing the curriculum as perceived by a large number of those involved in the AL education.

Moreover, in many cases a starting point of development or choice of where to begin is unclear. Skeel and Hagen (1971, p. 35) pointed this out, saying :

One of the most fundamental, and perhaps most frustrating, concerns in curriculum development is to establish priorities.

So, the curriculum designer, according to Pratt (1980, p.10),

... must develop priorities to guide the selection of tasks to be performed.

The requirements strategy helps to establish priorities of what can be done with the aim of developing the Arabic language curriculum. The prioritisation should be in conformity with the views of those involved in the teaching of the Arabic language, including interested theoreticians and practitioners.

Still, it should be said that the researcher believes that the educational development should be a continuous process and that the curriculum must be modified and developed in respect of educational circumstances, which are always changing. The chief feature of the requirements strategy is not to produce an entirely new curriculum or programme, although it may do so, but to build on the existing curriculum through a comprehensive review. Thus, a new version of the requirements may keep the strengths and suggest new conditions and recommended solutions to be met and achieved in order to develop and improve the curriculum.

The requirements strategy does not rely on a particular curriculum model or design; it may use the most suitable model in each distinctive circumstance. In other words, it is not a substitute model; rather, it can be utilised under any curriculum model or design. For developing the ALC, this strategy will be applied using the appropriate curriculum model, the objectives model, suggested earlier, to guide the work of identifying the requirements, and, also, to help utilising and achieving them. The task, in this respect, is to clarify the four dimensions of the objectives model, which represent the Tyler rationale, within which the requirements will be set and prioritised. The following sections will help with this job.

5.4 The Dimensions of the Requirements for Developing the

ALC:

Based on the previous sections, the appropriate model for developing the ALC in Saudi Arabia was believed to be the objectives model. In accordance with this model, the requirements for developing the ALC may be thought of as a set of interrelated considerations about and recommended solutions for, the way the whole curriculum is to be developed. The model adopted, therefore, leads to determine the requirements for developing the curriculum through its four well-known dimensions: objectives, content, teaching methods and evaluation, which will be explained further in this section.

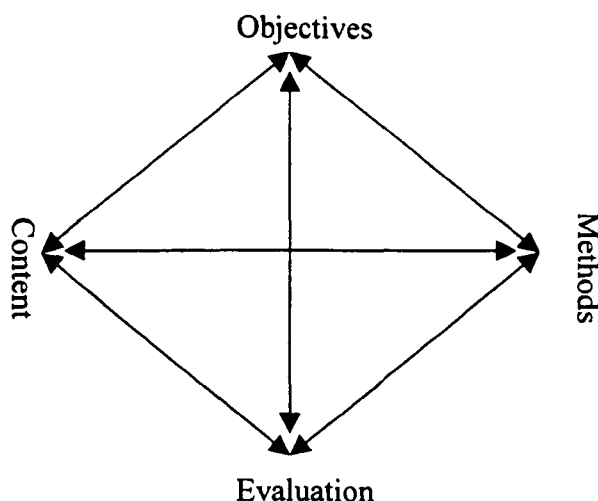
Initially, it might be helpful to indicate that the remarkable weakness in the Arabic language among Saudi students is, to a large extent, due to the current ALC. It was indicated that the four elements of the ALC are in need of development (see Chapter One and Chapter Six). The researcher believes that in developing the ALC, it would not be adequate to develop one element or another of it, in isolation. Therefore, in order to develop the curriculum comprehensively, the real need is for an extensive process which takes into account the four curriculum components.

Moreover, many educationists, such as Nicholls and Nicholls, (1978) and Robinson et al (1985), have emphasised that these four elements are strongly related to each other.

Hilda Taba (1962, p. 287) also highlighted that, adding:

A decision made about any one element out of relationship to others is bound to be faulty, because each element of curriculum acquires meaning and substance in reference to other elements and by its place in the pattern that encompasses all others.

This close relationship is illustrated by Hilda Taba (1962, p. 288) then modified by Nicholls and Nicholls (1972, p. 16) in the following diagram:



Such a concept of curriculum, according to many educationists, such as Nicholls and Nicholls (1978) and Robinson et al. (1985), implies that there is no one starting-point and that it is a never-ending process. However, there has to be a starting-point and a particular sequence of the stages in the process, just for purposes of discussion and arrangement. In the following pages these four elements will be clarified in turn: Educational Objectives, Content, Teaching Methods, and then Evaluation.

5.4.1 Curriculum Objectives

According to many researchers such as Stenhouse (1975), Pope (1983), Kelly (1988), and Lawton (1996), the idea of objectives was current in American writing on the curriculum from the work of Franklin Bobbitt in 1918. However, the most evident and straightforward account of the use of objectives in curriculum development remains that of Tyler during the 1940s.

Tyler started from the question: what educational purposes should the school seek to attain? and he equated a purpose with an objective or goal, as education itself is a means towards ends. The objectives of education were to be formulated as a result of a consideration of the learners themselves, contemporary life outside the school, the nature of subjects, the psychology of learning and a philosophy, or set of values. Tyler

considered the problem of stating objectives in a form to be helpful in selecting learning experiences and in guiding teaching. He argued that since the real purpose of education was to bring about significant changes in the students' patterns of behaviour, it became important to recognise that any statement of the objectives of the school should be a statement of changes to take place in students (Tyler, 1949).

It is clear that the most important issue confronting educators and educational theorists is the choice of ends for the educational process. For many writers, without clear and rational educational goals, it becomes impossible to decide which educational programmes achieve objectives of general import and which teach incidental facts and attitudes of dubious worth. However, according to Gress and Purpel (1988), there has been a vast amount of research comparing the effects of various educational methods and programmes on various outcome measures, but there has been very little empirical research designed to clarify the worth of these outcome measures themselves.

Moreover, there are a number of different interpretations of the word, objective, in an educational context. It needs, first, to be distinguished from two other terms: aims and goals, though all three are sometimes called, indiscriminately, the purposes or ends of the educational process. Although 'aims' are statements of educational intentions of a more general nature than objectives, the terms are sometimes used synonymously.

However the three terms are increasingly used to represent three levels of intention, from the most general aims to the more specific objective. This distinction was made originally by Taba (1962) and was clarified by Kelly (1988) and also by Lawton and Gordon (1993).

Much debate exists in the literature about forms of objective. Both support and criticism were found in regard to the '*behavioural form*', which is concerned with formulating objectives specifically at the beginning of a course in terms of measurable changes in student behaviour. Such an approach is criticised on the grounds that it is

too deterministic, the outcomes may be trivial and it is not applicable to the arts and humanities (Lawton and Gordon, 1993), and also, according to Kelly (1988, p. 121),

on the fact that it treats education and knowledge as instrumental and, as a corollary of doing so, often adopts a passive model of man...

In reaction to the behavioural form of objectives, it was suggested that there is a need for 'expressive objectives' as well, where the predicted terminal behaviour is not fixed in advance, in some aspects of the curriculum (Lawton and Gordon 1993). Other researchers such as John Burke (1989) adopted 'competency-based' instead of behavioural objectives.

Kelly (1988, p. 246) also criticised behavioural objectives, believing that effective development of the curriculum

can only be exercised through the framing of broad principles of a kind that will promote rather than inhibit the processes of education and assist rather than retard the progress of curriculum development.

However, it seems to the researcher that the use of 'objectives' in their natural and broader sense for developing the curriculum may still be allowable and even desirable.

In this sense it is necessary, as Lawton (1996, p. 19) put it

to distinguish between Tyler's ideas and the more extreme versions put forward by such writers as Mager (1962) and Popham (1969).

Indeed, Tyler had never adopted such an extreme forms and even criticised some aspects of his own manner of forming objectives behaviourally.

Beside the concentration in the behavioural form of the objectives, other researchers distinguish between short-term and long-term objectives. Weeler (1967), for example, determined three levels: Ultimate, Mediate and Proximate, reflecting a spectrum from the objective of the whole course, to the specific classroom objective. Bloom and his

colleagues, in their famous objectives taxonomy, divided objectives on yet another basis, into three domains: the cognitive, the affective and the psychomotor.

Clearly, objectives have been the subject of many formats, classifications and taxonomies, especially in the sixties and seventies, as the above discussion has indicated. However, following the objectives movement is outside the scope of this study, since what is of concern here is identifying principles and criteria for developing, generally, the objectives of the ALC.

5.4.2 Curriculum Content

The learning of Arabic by the student must have concrete materials to work on, and must be informed by principles and concepts of the Arabic language, which are called the areas of experience, the subject matter and the curriculum content. Content might be described as the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to be learned. These three aspects of experience, according to Johnson (1967, pp. 575-6) can be called disciplines. He points out:

Man's systematic efforts to interpret his experience are represented by those organized bodies of knowledge, skills and attitudes known as disciplines.

Although the curriculum in the majority of schools is organised on a subject basis, people may hold different views about the value of particular subject-matter. Some believe that it has intrinsic value and should be learned for its own sake; others may believe that it should be taught for use or, in other words, that its value depends on the use that is made of it, while others may regard it merely as a vehicle for the development of intellectual abilities, skills, values and attitudes (Nicholls, 1978). Nevertheless, as all that is available and teachable in the culture cannot be included in a given curriculum, selection is essential and tends to be a somewhat haphazard procedure as well. It is suggested that the selection is made on the basis of certain criteria, some of

which might be considered more important than others. Nicholls and Nicholls (1978) and Al-Tamimy (1988) suggested that before content is included in a course it should satisfy explicit criteria to ensure the validity, significance, learnability and interest to students of the content.

Johnson (1967), however, suggested that there are many possible criteria, but they are more applicable to instructional organisation than to curriculum selection.

Moreover, an important consideration about content, as Nicholls and Nicholls (1978) believe, is its close relationship with method. It is often difficult to say exactly where one begins and the other ends. The methods used often have as much influence on what the pupils learn as does the content. So, the desired learning may not take place because of lack of real relationship between objectives, content and methods.

In order to accomplish a comprehensive development of the ALC in Saudi Arabia, the requirements for developing Arabic curriculum content and the learning skills should be identified and prioritised.

5.4.3 Teaching Methods

The method aspect of the learning opportunity involves all the purposeful relationships between pupils, teacher and materials aimed at producing, stimulating, or facilitating learning in students. These activities deal with what process (materials, strategies, tasks, incentives, and the like) can be employed and how to encourage learning.

It was stated earlier that it is difficult to separate content from methods and to say where one ends and the other begins. Content and methods come together with the pupils and the teacher in a learning opportunity, which might be described as a planned and controlled relationship between pupils, teacher, materials, equipment and the environment in which it is hoped that desired learning will take place. Hence, although methods are probably the most obvious part of the curriculum, they should not be

judged in isolation; their worth lies in the extent to which they facilitate the achievement of the objectives.

Some teachers may claim to believe in and support a certain method, for example, activity methods, or progressive methods. Nicholls and Nicholls (1978, p. 57), however, criticised the common belief that one particular method is the '*best*' or '*right*' one. They believe that "the method" here is "*being considered in isolation and is regarded as having value in itself and not in relation to a set of desired objectives*". They suggest that a great deal of experiment and study needs to be carried out in this particular field, to determine which methods are best suited to particular subjects, topics or even objectives.

Moreover, with some evidence, Posner and Ruditsky (1986) indicated that a crucial determinant of learning outcomes is the kind of tasks in which students actually engage, and the kind of thought processes these tasks require, rather than the tasks teachers assign or the material teachers present. Therefore, the intended learning must be communicated clearly to students and teachers must be held accountable for the desired outcomes.

'The teaching methods and resources' is recognised to be an important dimension of the requirements for developing the ALC. However, it can be argued that teaching method is more likely to be a matter of the "teacher's personality and ability" and the focus should be on "teachers' skills and training". Such arguments can be supported by the fact that in England and Wales, as Moon (1996, p. 9) admits, "*The National Curriculum lays down no requirements about the methods teachers should use*". Still, even though the National Curriculum has not identified them yet, due to whatever circumstance of the UK, that does not mean there are no requirements for developing teaching methods or they should be ignored in the development process. So the third dimension of the

requirements in the current study is devoted to identify what should be done to develop teaching methods and resources in the field of the AL in SA.

5.4.4 Curriculum Evaluation

The term "evaluation" is used in several different ways in current educational publications, ranging from the general process of judging the worth of an educational programme, including judgements about the quality of its content and of all information needed by decision makers in education, to the other extreme in which it is restricted to the use of an objective testing programme; what is often described as assessment of student attainment (Lawton et al., 1993).

In the current study, the term is employed to include developing the process, the methods and strategies in evaluation of student attainment and also comparing the ideas and assumptions involved in curriculum development with the realities to which they refer.

There are many principles recommended that should be recognised in any evaluation programme, either to evaluate a specific learning outcome or to evaluate a whole curriculum development process or even whole educational programmes or systems. The most important principles mentioned by Oliver (1977), Doll (1978) and Newton and Tarrant (1992) emphasise that evaluation should be a continuous, comprehensive, diversified, goal-related integral part of the learning process, and co-operative.

It is a well-known fact that schools are often concerned only with limited aspects of certain knowledge and skills, mainly in the form of recall of facts and some principles. Those aspects of the curriculum that receive the focus of attention in internal and external examinations, also receive the focus of attention in teaching and learning. Other objectives such as the development of a variety of ways of thinking and mental skills, attitudes, values, as well as a whole range of social, emotional and physical skills,

usually receive little attention. However, Nicholls and Nicholls (1978, p. 70) emphasise that education is concerned with a whole range of objectives, all of which should be approached in the evaluation process, including those which are considered long-term.

They argue:

It is acknowledged that it is extremely difficult to measure progress towards some objectives but this is not a reason for not trying. The argument about the long-term nature of objectives might best be answered by a comparison with gardening. If a gardener plants something, no matter how slow-growing he knows it to be, he would surely become worried if he could see no signs of growth at all. So it is with many objectives.

Many aspects of either the students' evaluation or curriculum quality evaluation should be improved. The fourth dimension of the requirements for developing the ALC, as will be presented in the research questionnaire (see Chapter Seven and Chapter Nine), is dealing with these issues in order to provide a comprehensive development process.

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that it is widely believed that practical and successful curriculum development must include the other education components in some way or another. Successful curriculum improvement does not occur automatically by developing the curriculum itself separately. In most situations, accomplishing it requires the expenditure of much time and effort by individual persons, organisations of people and a wider environment that is rich in helpful and stimulating influences for overall improvement.

5.5 Summary

In this chapter, key aspects of the terminology and methodology of curriculum change and development have been reviewed. It is apparent that the literature has offered valuable and useful principles to guide the work of curriculum development. The literature of educational planning, as it is always prescriptive, reflects various conceptions and opinions of different background and historical periods related to

certain issues and, sometimes, for a certain country. To identify the most applicable terms and to solicit an appropriate approach for developing the ALC in Saudi Arabia. the first section was concerned with the nature and identification of curriculum development. The adopted definition of this concept was **'undertaking actions for developing and improving the experiences of the Arabic language which are offered to learners under the auspices or direction of the school'**.

On reviewing curriculum development models in the second section, the original form of Tyler's rationale was adopted, considering that curriculum should be developed through its four integrated elements: objectives, content, teaching methods and evaluation. In the third section some modification of the term: 'requirements' has been adopted recognising the term as: **conditions, considerations and recommended solutions that need to be met and achieved in order to develop the ALC**. Within the objectives model 'identifying the requirements' was believed to be an appropriate strategy for developing the ALC in SA. This strategy should include the following:

- a. Identifying the need for curriculum development and determining the most problematic areas;
- b. Collecting and assembling various requirements which may develop the ALC and rectify its problems;
- c. Identifying and prioritising these development requirements which act as an action plan or platform.

These three phases will facilitate the implementation process which includes

- d. Implementing the requirements according to their importance;
- e. Continuously evaluating the curriculum development process internally and externally.

The rationale underlying the use of this strategy relies on the necessity of establishing priorities to guide the processes of curriculum development. Identifying and prioritising

the development requirements will guide decision-makers and involved people to do what they can, according to ability and circumstances. Another point which justifies the adoption of the requirements strategy in the current study is the belief that it is the most suitable for developing the learning of the Arabic language in Saudi Arabia in the current situation. Two reasons may support this assumption.

First, the Saudi educational system is fully centralised, which suggests, also, that even though some development can occur through teachers' own efforts, the major desirable development must come through official avenues and in a top-down direction.

Second, the Saudi society is, to a large extent, conservative, which suggests that a rapid change is not desirable and would not be accepted. Through the requirements approach, development can be put in practice gradually and progressively.

Moreover, identifying the requirements gives the decision makers and people involved an agenda for what to do, not according to one view of a developer or a group of a few concerned people, but in accordance with the views of a large number of people involved in the actual field of the ALC.

It should be emphasised, however, that curriculum development according to this strategy, which might be called 'the requirements-based strategy', does not mean working within the curriculum elements independently. It may be thought of as a set of interrelated ideas or proposals which includes four dimensions in respect of which requirements for developing the ALC in SA need to be established. They are:

1. Curriculum objectives and foundations;
2. Curriculum content and learning skills;
3. Teaching methods and resources;
4. Curriculum evaluation.

This chapter has given theoretical clarification of the terms and concepts involved in this study. In the next chapter the empirical studies most relevant to developing the

ALC will be reviewed through the four dimensions set earlier, and then, in the following chapter, chapter seven, the methodology used to determine the requirements will be explained giving more details as to 'how' to identify 'development requirements'.

Chapter Six

Review of Empirical Studies Related to Developing the Arabic Language Curriculum

6.1. *Studies Related to Curriculum Objectives*

6.2. *Studies Related to the Curriculum Content*

6.3. *Studies Related to Teaching Methods*

6.4. *Studies Related to Evaluation*

6.5. *Conclusion*

Chapter Six:

Review of Empirical Studies Related to Developing the Arabic Language Curriculum

It is the intention in this chapter to survey empirical studies conducted in the field of developing the ALC. Mixed theoretical and empirical studies have already been presented to clarify the general picture of both the concepts and methods of learning language (Chapter Four) and methods and strategies for curriculum development (Chapter Five). These chapters, alongside the preceding chapters, pointed to the need for developing the ALC in Saudi Arabia. The need now is to examine the available empirical studies related to this field work, as a foundation for the efforts of the current study.

The focus, therefore, will be on empirical studies related to developing the ALC in intermediate and secondary schools in Saudi Arabia. However, there have been relatively few such studies in Saudi Arabia. This was complained of by Madkoor (1986) and the situation continues. So, some studies from other Arab countries will be reviewed whose findings may be applicable to Saudi Arabia. Moreover, with the aim of clarifying the current picture, the focus will be on the later studies, mainly those conducted in the last fifteen years or so. Older studies will be excluded unless they have a special contribution to make.

The studies included in this chapter are those with a pedagogical basis. Pure linguistic studies will be excluded, as the chief concern of the current study is with developing the education curriculum in particular. This chapter is organised according to the four dimensions of the study, identified in the previous chapter, and will present,

6.1. studies related to curriculum foundation and objectives;

- 6.2. studies related to curriculum content and learning skills;
- 6.3. studies related to teaching methods and resources; and,
- 6.4. studies related to evaluation.

In order to avoid repetition, each study will be reviewed once in the section of the chapter to which it is most relevant, though some studies have dealt with more than one dimension.

6.1. Studies Related to Curriculum Objectives

The importance, or perhaps the necessity, of using and developing curriculum objectives clarified in the last chapter, has not been fully reflected in previous studies of the Arabic language. In theoretical studies, many authors and researchers, such as Al-Jemplati and Al-Tawansi (1981), Al-Hashemy (1983), Abdulmajeed (1986), and Al-Hogail (1991) and many others, suggested detailed lists of the aims and objectives of learning the Arabic language which reflected their personal opinions rather than being refined and studied by other practitioners and experts. There are some official government documents which state the aims and some broad objectives but, with the exception of one which will be reviewed later, it is still doubtful whether they were based on research. In this section, the most relevant studies related to the aims and objectives of Arabic language learning will be reviewed.

The first study reviewed here is that of The Arab Bureau of Education (1984), a semi-government organisation, whose chief aim was to "*co-ordinate and support the efforts among Gulf States in Education*" (p. 5). Its document entitled "*United Version for the Aims of Educational Subjects in the General Schools in the Gulf States*", was produced after a large study which included a conference on educational aims. The broad aims of each stage within general education were stated, in addition to detailed aims and objectives for each academic subject.

In regard to learning the Arabic language, the curriculum foundations and tasks were illustrated, bearing in mind the general functions of all active languages and the special role of Arabic within Arab and Islamic culture and tradition. In relation to each function, the document suggested some broad aims, the total number of aims for the various functions being 25. The document classified what were called, the goals of each educational stage, 29 for elementary school, 32 for intermediate school and 32 for secondary school. In each stage, three goals were taken as examples and sub-defined or translated into cognitive, affective and performance objectives.

This document presented a good understanding of the levels of aims, goals and objectives, providing a strong base for identifying the aims and objectives of the ALC in all Gulf States. However, in Saudi Arabia such documents have not been adopted or even recognised. The only official documents on the Arabic language aims are the 'Education Policy' (1970), 'Intermediate School Curriculum' (1974), and 'Secondary School Curriculum' (1974), which were referred to in Chapter Three.

In 1988, Salamah conducted a study in Jordan entitled *'The effect of providing behavioural objectives to second year preparatory female students on their acquisition of language notions and their retention and keeping of these notions'*.

Salamah's study was an experimental design, conducted with a sample of 116 students divided into two groups. A list of 50 behavioural objectives for learning an Arabic grammar unit was prepared by the researcher for this study. Both control and experimental groups had a pre-test, then the experimental group was informed of the behavioural objectives to be achieved. This experiment was applied by the researcher herself, who taught one grammar lesson to the two groups.

To determine the effect of the experiment on the acquisition of language, the researcher used a standard test of 50 items based on the objectives developed for the study. The

results showed that the experimental group performed significantly better on acquiring the taught language concepts than the control group.

After three weeks the test was reapplied to investigate whether the concepts were retained.. Again, the experimental group performed significantly better than the other group. Salamah, therefore, recommended the preparation and use of behavioural aims in Arabic language teaching (Salamah, 1988).

However, applying this experiment for only one lesson restricted the generalisation of its findings. It can easily be said that students were attracted by the experiment itself, regardless of its content, and so they performed better. Another disadvantage of the experiment is that students were taught by the researcher herself. She could not guarantee that her teaching was not biased towards the experimental group.

In Saudi Arabia, Othman (1993) conducted a study to determine the aims for learning Arabic and the obstacles in achieving them at elementary school level. He drew up a list of 21 aims of learning Arabic, based on the literature, and prioritised them on the basis of interviews of 60 teachers and 20 headteachers in the Eastern Educational District of Saudi Arabia.

Othman also identified the main obstacles for achieving these aims which were arranged into eight categories including textbooks, out-of-classroom activities, school management, student guidance and educational supervision, the pupils, and obstacles related to personal circumstances of the teacher.

From these categories, some obstacles were found to be most serious, among them being: the over-ambitious curriculum, concentrating on the quantity of material covered rather than on the quality of learning; the lack of a link between the written curriculum and the use of language in daily life; the lack of teacher training; and privileged background of some children, which induces lack of motivation and a poor attitude towards education.

The researcher highlighted the importance of informing teachers and parents of the aims of teaching Arabic. He also recommended improving the level of learning through a comprehensive concentration on the educational environment. His third recommendation was to offer teachers in-service training.

Although this study was related to elementary school, because of its importance it is reviewed here. Three observations may be made. First, the lack of confidence among researchers in the official aims identified by the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia led Othman to review literature to suggest a list of aims for the learning of the Arabic language. This involved reviewing official documents related to all educational stages but, as noted earlier, the only official document concerned with the objectives of Arabic language was produced in 1970 and has never been updated since.

Second, the research did not refer to, or make use of the aims of learning Arabic suggested by The Arab Bureau of Education for The Gulf States, reviewed earlier. It may be that the researcher believed that there should be special aims for Saudi Arabia or that the findings of The Arab Bureau of Education for The Gulf States were not sufficiently publicised for the researcher to know about them.

Thirdly, the researcher identified many obstacles and barriers related to different aspects of language education, which highlights the need for studies and efforts develop the ALC for all stages in Saudi Arabia.

Three empirical studies have been reviewed in this section. Those studies illustrated, first, the importance of identifying the aims and objectives for learning the ALC, and then, the need of providing teachers, students and parents with a detailed list of objectives, in addition to confirming, experimentally, the effectiveness of stating objectives in behavioural terms. Some other findings indicated both the poor quality of the curriculum and the lack of teacher training, necessitating review and development of the whole educational system rather than piecemeal changes. Those requirements,

alongside the other findings and aspects of the study will be tabulated in the summary of this chapter.

6.2. Studies Related to the Curriculum Content

Although huge importance is given to curriculum content in general, little information is available, in the literature, about the basis for selecting or arranging the existing curriculum, either in Saudi Arabia or in other Arab countries. The available empirical efforts made towards developing curriculum content will be presented in this section, to provide a more comprehensive description of the trends offered in selecting and developing the ALC, and to provide some empirical, rather than impressionistic, support for the conduct and direction of the current study.

It was found that there are two main trends in developing the ALC content which will be the basis of reviewing the related literature in this section. They are:

Language and errors analysis; and,

Suggested skills and proficiencies.

In relation to the first trend, reference was made in Chapter Two of this study to a belief that the concern about errors among young people in the second century of the Islam, the seventh century, was the stimulus for the foundation of the Arabic syntax and grammar. However, the first systematic analysis of language as a basis for selecting and developing curriculum content was that of Al-Sayed in 1972 (it was published in 1987) which will be reviewed later.

The second study was carried out by Hamdan in Jordan in 1976. This relatively old study aimed to look at the common errors in grammar at third year intermediate level. Two instruments were used: a standardised test prepared by the researcher was applied to 1,150 students, and end of year government test papers of 850 students were

analysed. The researcher identified several common errors in grammar, particularly subordination 'Al-Tauabea' (45.8%) and number 'Al-Adad' (52.9%). The students showed general weakness and they even made mistakes in grammar areas they had been taught in recent years. Performance did not differ according to gender or geographical region (Hamdan, 1976).

The fact that students made mistakes in the areas they had studied may reduce the validity of the errors analysis method. This was the reason for reviewing this study. Some comments to clarify this point will added after reviewing some similar studies.

Zandagay (1985) conducted a study aiming to identify the language forms which are most commonly used in the spoken language, the rationale being that through the recognition of spoken language, we can determine the most useable and functional forms of language. The second aim of the study was to suggest a method of using these language forms and styles in the Arabic curriculum which can be utilised for both native speakers and foreign students.

The researcher attempted to evaluate the differences between standard Arabic and that used in functional situations. The researcher used a cassette recorder to collect samples of speech from adult men and women in 20 common functional situations and highlighted language forms which he believed should be included in the education curriculum in all Arabic countries. He also suggested that studies be made to compare spoken and written language in order to set an appropriate level of language which would meet various students' needs.

Clearly, this method of selecting language curriculum content was based heavily on the relatively new method of learning language reviewed in chapter four of this study, the communication approach or functional syllabus. This suggests interest among researchers in applying new methods of second language learning to the learning of Arabic language as a mother tongue. However, few studies and no official efforts, to

the best of the researcher's knowledge, have been made to develop the learning of the Arabic language using this method, which seems to be suitable not only for selecting the content but also for whole curriculum plans.

Suggesting a plan for developing the curriculum for learning the Arabic grammar and composition for general school students, Al-Sayed (1985) presented a summary of his large-scale study, in "The Meeting of Pre-University ALC" held in Al-Imam University in Riyadh City in Saudi Arabia. Al-Sayed's main results and findings were published among the minutes of the meeting.

In 1987, Al-Sayed published an extended version of his 1985 study, sponsored by the Arab League for Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation, aiming to develop the curriculum for learning grammar and composition (writing styles) in the general education of the Arab homeland.

The two main parts of the study were: first, a large investigation of the existing grammar curriculum in Arab countries, based on questionnaires addressed to the Arab countries' Ministries of Education; and second an effort to identify the most important topics for inclusion in the Arabic grammar curriculum. The researcher tried to identify the common aspects of grammar using two methods:

- a. Analysing students' errors through examples of both students' writing and speech, in order to determine students' needs. The research sample for this purpose involved students in two Arab countries:
 - 1800 written and oral samples from eight preparatory schools in Egypt collected in 1970. Those data formed the main body of Al-Sayed's Ph.D. study submitted in 1972, which represents the oldest study of errors analysis of the Arabic language.

- 1800 written and oral samples collected in 1983 from fifth and sixth year elementary and preparatory schools and first and second year secondary schools in Syria.
- b. Analysing standard samples from the written work of classical writers and contemporary works in order to determine the functional use of the Arabic language; this was also part of the Al-Sayed's 1972 study.

Relying on determining students' needs and identifying the functional use of the Arabic language, Al-Sayed suggested some '*functional topics*' to be included in the Grammar course contents for the Arab countries which represented the most valuable findings of his study.

Al-Sayed made a long list of recommendations, of which the ones most relevant to the current study are:

- a. concentrating on the functional topics of the Arabic grammar that are most practical and relevant to the actual daily use of the language;
- b. formulating the desired objectives of learning grammar in behavioural forms;
- c. helping the students to acquire language skills rather than providing them with the "*theoretical knowledge of Arabic grammar*";
- d. linking the material of learning and texts being studied to the students' actual social and geographical environment.

Without doubt this work is one of the most authoritative studies of this field. However, related to the first part, some criticism was directed at the non-acceptability of some answers to the questionnaire distributed to analyse the existing situation, suggesting that either the questionnaires had not been understood by some Ministries, or that the method of preparing or analysing them was not valid. This point was indicated by Madkour and Ogalan (1987) and Al-Majed (1996) who, also, criticised the time-gap between the studies in Egypt and in Syria. They also doubted the suitability of

generalising the results to other Arab countries when the data were collected from only two countries.

Nevertheless, this study was and still is one of the most extraordinary studies for identifying the most useable language. While many studies, including the criticisers, confined themselves to analysing students' written language, this study also analysed both oral language and the standard Arabic language used by both classical and contemporary writers in different subjects and from various backgrounds. Thus, to develop the Arabic language content we should rely on such a study to assure the validity and functionality of the language content being inserted in the curriculum.

Al-Atiah (1987) investigated through small-scale research the common written errors in the dictation of the pupils in intermediate school. The test led to a discovery of 41 errors. The most common errors were those related to the writing of 'Al-Hamzah (Aa)', in different positions in words, of non-phonetic spellings, and letters which have similar pronunciation or are close in sound. Al-Atiah recommended allocating special textbooks for each level, having stronger relationships between the language skills, practising dictation at all intermediate school levels and concentrating on training teachers to use more effective teaching methods.

In the same year Al-Gaisy (1987) conducted a study which aimed to classify the common errors in the writing of intermediate school students. The research sample consisted of 270 male and female Jordanian students in the three intermediate school years. The results showed a general weakness and many errors in writing, which were classified into the following five categories:

- a. writing;
- b. grammar;
- c. standard and colloquial;
- d. punctuation; and,

e. morphology.

The results also showed a correlation between the stage of education and the number of errors. In other words, the students' capabilities increased as they moved up the school levels.

But Al-Gaisy emphasised the unsatisfactory level of the students. He attributed the students' problems to: the system of moving students up a level each year based on their abilities to memorise knowledge, not on their skills; the lack of interest amongst students in developing their writing skills, the lack of appropriate textbooks for dictation, and the large class sizes. The researcher also admitted that the difficulties of the Arabic writing system itself might be a contributory factor.

The studies of Al-Atiah and Al-Gaisy give some ideas of the problems which Arab students faced. The second study was more important as it used a larger sample and categorised students' errors. However, both studies relied on errors analysis only which, it may be argued, is not enough to generate a suitable curriculum content. We need to adopt the method of Al-Sayed, mentioned earlier, for the selection of the useable written language most needed by students.

"The acquisition of the Arabic language and its culture: difficulties, objectives, teaching approaches and evaluation criteria" was the title of Bouchouk's (1987) study which attempted to provide a stronger basis for the improvement of teaching the Arabic language and its culture in the Moroccan secondary school system.

Through a deep theoretical review, the researcher drew attention to the strong relation between the language level and the society, determining the socio-cultural characteristics of the different geolinguistic regions of Morocco, and particularly the areas of language interference among these regions. He also tried to define the levels of linguistic difficulties and their causes. A methodology of error analysis was suggested to be used in the teaching of Arabic.

The main empirical data for the study were obtained from 9th and 12th grade Moroccan students who performed a number of writing tasks in Arabic, which were analysed for errors. The study findings showed that the 12th graders performed better than 9th graders in general. However, the subjects showed a decline in the mastery of morpho-syntactic rules. This finding was interpreted by the researcher as evidence of a failure in the instructional programme in the second cycle of Moroccan high schools. Therefore, the researcher suggested a tri-dimensional taxonomy of linguistic and cultural objectives. The first dimension relates to productive skills, the second to receptive competencies, and the third to different levels of interest and learner attitudes. Bouchouk also suggested a grid for the evaluation of the acquisition of language competencies.

In addition to the deep review of the key linguist-pedagogic aspects of the Arabic language, two points of this study are of importance: first, the researcher suggested a new notion of utilising the content of language as a cultural vehicle, i.e. using the language curriculum not only for learning language itself but also for providing students with desired concepts and thoughts. Second, he suggested a taxonomy of the Arabic language objectives which takes into account improving the attitudes toward learning and using standard Arabic among students.

In Saudi Arabia, Madkor and Ogalan (1987) aimed to identify the most commonly used types of grammar and most frequent errors by students in the first year of intermediate school. Since functional grammar was quite a new orientation in the literature on Arabic language, the researchers examined this orientation in the grammar curriculum of first year intermediate school students. Their work was guided by five questions:

- a. What are the grammar types most commonly used in the students writing in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia?

What are the most common errors in the students writing?

- c. What are the functional topics of grammar that students should study?
- d. What are the differences between the actual topics studied and those that should be studied as functional topics?
- e. What are the foundations that should be relied on in constructing an Arabic grammar curriculum?

The researchers analysed 456 examples of students' work and found that many topics which were excluded from the grammar course in first year intermediate school, were used by students with a high percentage of errors, while others which were included in the course were little used. This suggested the necessity of reviewing the grammar content in the light of the functional orientation. Other recommendations of the study were:

- a. the importance of setting clear aims and detailed objectives for learning grammar;
- b. using the Qu'ran and other respected texts as examples for teaching grammar points;
- c. concentrating on practising standard Arabic rather than studying theoretical grammar; and,
- d. giving students the opportunity to select topics for writing themselves, thus increasing student interest.

The questions set by the researchers seemed to be very important and some aspects of the method suggested should lead to valuable findings. However, two serious disadvantages of this study are that, first, it was applied to only the first year intermediate school. To examine "functionality", the whole curriculum for the intermediate stage should be included. The second problem, which might be related to the first mistake, is that the researchers suggested a very long list of 'functional' topics, and suggested first year intermediate students should be taught 'all of them'. Of course, students cannot master so many topics in a single year.

Finally, on the subject of selecting and developing Arabic language content, we must review the study of Al-Majed (1996) entitled, *"An Analysis of Grammatical and Associated Errors Found in the Writing of Third Grade Saudi Male Students in Four High Schools In the City of Riyadh"*.

The researcher presented a theoretical review of Arabic grammar in the Saudi educational system and grammatical errors. He also examined empirically the prevalence of grammatical errors and their causes, and efforts to simplify Arabic grammatical rules.

The research sample consisted of 410 students whose writing constitutes the main data analysed in this study. To analyse and present his data, the researcher used three techniques: frequency of grammatical errors; the proportion of the students who committed grammatical errors; and, the frequency of types of errors for each grammatical component.

Al-Majed found that around 95% of the third year secondary school made errors in Arabic grammar. He commented:

This is undoubtedly a large proportion which confirms my viewpoint that teaching Arabic grammar faces a real crisis (214) ... although the students used in this study were in the final year at high school, their style was poor and many of their sentences were simple... and they have no sense of creativity (332).

Al-Majed also identified the grammatical components in which a higher percentage of errors were committed, and grouped the components into four categories accordingly.

The main strengths of Al-Majed's study are its being a new study, its involvement with the Saudi context, and the detailed analysis and classification of the different errors made by students. However, one deficiency of this study is that although, the researcher reviewed some studies in the field of analysing errors of the Arabic language which were conducted outside Saudi Arabia, he did not benefit from some more important similar studies. Two studies reviewed earlier: Madkor and Ogalan's (1987) study which

was conducted in the city of Riyadh, and Bouchouk's (1987) study which analysed the students' errors in another Arab country but at a similar stage to Al-Majed's sample. were not indicated anywhere in the study. The lack of available databases might explain inadequate reference to the Arabic literature.

Regarding error analysis in general it might be said that relying only on the errors made by students is not a valid method for selecting or developing the content of the Arabic language as a first language. This view can be supported with reference to the three grammatical components identified by Al-Majed as containing the highest percentage of errors. They are 'hurūf aljar' (prepositions), with 20.75% of the students' errors, 'maf'ul bih' (object) with 19.63%, and 'fi'il' (verb), with 13.90%. These three components are accorded such importance that they are taught three times to the students, in elementary, intermediate and secondary schools. This suggests that the defects or imperfections are not only in the content or the topics taught, but in the whole curriculum components.

Moreover, analysing students' errors is not enough to suggest the most important topics that should be included to develop the grammar content. Still, some topics were mastered by students -as they were taught in previous years- so that they did not commit mistakes in them. Such topics might be of a very crucial importance.

So far, the studies related to the first trend for developing the Arabic language curriculum content have been reviewed. The weaknesses of Saudi students, became clear through identifying common errors; students even made mistakes in grammar areas they had been taught in recent years. The studies reviewed sought to determine the most usable language that should be included in the curriculum. For developing the curriculum, the studies recommended reviewing the whole curriculum, avoiding overcrowding of material, placing the emphasis on the functional syllabus and concentrating

on skills rather than 'theoretical knowledge', and presenting the Arabic language in an integrated form, which includes various professional skills. It was clear that two types, or methods, of language analysis were used: analysis of students' errors which, it was argued, should not be used alone, and common language forms analysis which seems to be a well-suited method for selecting the most usable language and should be exploited for developing the content of the ALC. Both methods were derived from the methods and literature of 'second language education' (see Chapter Four), which suggests other 'second language' methods might be appropriate for developing the ALC.

The second trend in developing the content of the ALC concerns offering and suggesting skills to be included in the curriculum. Mojawar's (1974) study was one of the old large-scale studies that recognised the language skills needed in order to learn Arabic. As Mojawar interviewed 150 male and female teachers in addition to 25 experienced and responsible people to identify various skills of the Arabic language subjects (branches), which he classified as follows:

- a. skills of reading
- b. skills of dictation and handwriting
- c. skills of composition (creative writing)
- d. skills of learning anthems and song
- e. skills of grammar

Mojawar distributed these scale and proficiency levels to the three stages of general education and within each stage to its various grades.

This study was a remarkable one in the field of Arabic. However, it seems that dividing Arabic into five separate subjects, some of which are divided into three sub-branches, may reduce the practicality of this study as it is believed that language skills should be related strongly to the practical use of language and the needs of students, but not how they should be taught, which was the concentration of Mojawar's study which lends

itself more to identifying teaching methods than language skills. Another disadvantage of the study is that some of the skills suggested are expressed in over-general terms. Two of what he called grammar skills for first year secondary school can be taken as examples, “ (a) *complete understanding of ‘Al-Hal’ (circumstantial phrase) with its forms (b) practising arranged thinking* ”.

Abul-Azm and Shahatah (1985) suggested a programme for developing the writing and dictation curriculum for general education in the Arab world. The researchers set this study in four sections. In the first section, they reviewed the writing and dictation curriculum at that time. They then reviewed the literature of ‘writing skills’ in other languages, to clarify the different orientations and strategies. Drawing on the ideas of previous empirical studies, they suggested a curriculum content for writing skills in the Arab world which they arranged by educational stage. The researchers also referred to the study of Shahatah who collected the students’ errors and designed a therapeutic programme to overcome them. In addition to the main suggested programme for dictation, Abul-Azm and Shahatah drew attention to the importance of applying the findings and strategies of the studies of other languages for teaching writing skills to Arabic language.

The main fault with this study is that the researchers based it on two unpublished studies. No information was given about the sample or the methodology of these studies. Another point of which can be criticised is that there is no evidence that the suggested programme was reviewed or surveyed by experienced people or practitioners.

In 1985, Khater and his colleagues presented to the meeting of pre-university ALC in Riyadh in 1985, a study, titled ‘*Developing the reading curriculum in general education in the Arab world*’. This study consisted of four parts. First, a theoretical study concerned with reviewing various studies and orientations about reading education in

the world, the requirements for students' growth and the characteristics of the Arab society. The researchers, in accordance with the theoretical review, developed criteria to evaluate the existing reading curriculum in Arab countries which represented the second part of the study. In the third part, the situation of the reading curriculum in the Arab world was evaluated. The main findings in this respect were that:

- a. The new strategies of teaching reading had not been applied or used in all Arab countries.
- b. The reading curriculum concentrates on only two types of reading, oral and silent. Strategies such as skimming and scanning were neglected.
- c. The reading material used was not relevant to the lives and interests of the students.
- d. There was a huge variation in the level of reading between different countries and within different stages in the same country. There was no clear link between the level of growth or the students' abilities and the reading material being taught.

The fourth part was the most important contribution of this study. The researchers set a 'comprehensive plan for reading', which they believed could help to develop the reading curriculum. The plan identified the reading stages and for each stage, the aims and objectives were clarified. Many reading skills for each stage were also added. Moreover, some strategies for teaching reading were suggested. However, the researcher did not identify the research sample whose views were used as the basis for their suggestions.

The purpose of the study of Kana'an (1986) was to suggest a therapeutic programme to solve the problems in students' writing (dictation) in intermediate schools in Syria. The study relied on the proven fact that intermediate students were suffering many problems in their writing. The 'programmed learning' strategy was used to teach in detail the six most important topics. The therapeutic programme was applied in an experimental design with pre and post tests. Students who were taught through the programme made

fewer errors than the others. The researcher also applied an attitude test and found a positive attitude towards the experimental programme and the programmed learning methods.

Khamaisah (1988) conducted another experimental study with the aim of investigating the effect on students' writing of providing students in the third year of intermediate school with instructions (outlines) of the skills of written comprehension. 100 male and female students were selected randomly and divided into two groups for experimental pre and post test design. The two groups were taught by the researcher. The post-test consisted of three parts; writing contents, writing style and specific written skills believed to be necessary for comprehension.

The study showed that students who were given writing skills did better in writing than those who were taught normally. Girls performed better than boys. Khamaisah emphasised the importance of providing students with writing skills and guiding them through suitable plans for writing.

The study of Aboal-Haijaa (1989) was similar to the previous one as it investigated the effect of providing students with a list of reading comprehension skills on improving the students' language achievement in the second year of intermediate school. The sample consisted of 180 students divided equally into control and experimental groups, each one sub-divided into three groups; high achievement, fair achievement and low achievement. The researcher himself taught both groups but the experimental group were shown the skills of comprehension reading. Pre-test and post-test were used to measure the achievement of each group. This study showed that there were significant differences between the means of the experimental technique groups. Another interesting finding was that all the three achievement bands of the experimental group performed better than their counterparts. It can be concluded that students of all achievement levels can benefit from this technique.

The main requirements that emerged from the studies reviewed in second trend of developing the ALC content were using individualised learning strategies, applying the findings and strategies of other languages for teaching Arabic, incorporating the curriculum with advanced oral, writing and reading types, skills and strategies, linking learning material to the interests of the students, providing teachers with a teachers' book, and giving them opportunities to plan the appropriate syllabus.

Within the studies of developing the ALC content two types of research were used: survey and experimental design. While some broad areas were covered in the survey researches, the experimental research was restricted to small groups within a very few, or even one school. Because the experimental studies were conducted by individual researchers, mainly for academic degrees, there have been no large experiments in the field of Arabic curriculum content. This raises some doubt as to the validity and the generaliseability of the findings, keeping in mind that some experiments reviewed earlier were designed, prepared, applied and measured by individuals. Nevertheless, there has been no systematic study for developing the entire Arabic curriculum content. This suggests the vital need for conducting a study which looks into the requirements of developing the content, not as separate elements, but comprehensively. As indicated earlier, the requirements emerging from the studies reviewed in this section will be summarised in the conclusion of the chapter.

6.3. Studies Related to Teaching Methods

The accountability and improvement of curriculum has been, to some extent, contingent on teaching methods. Although the curriculum elements are closely related, teaching methods stand uniquely as the connecting link between the human and the material. In this section, the most relevant studies for developing the teaching methods of the ALC

will be reviewed with the aim of describing the contemporary situation and recognising ideas that might help in the present study.

In 1980 Ammar investigated the problems of teaching composition (creative writing) in intermediate schools in the Damascus District of Syria. In the theoretical part, the research reviewed the importance of composition, the obstacles to teaching this subject and how they can be overcome. In the empirical part, the views of teachers and students were surveyed through two versions of questionnaires which covered the following areas:

- a. composition curriculum
- b. the position of oral composition
- c. the relationship between composition and other Arabic language subjects
- d. the problems facing students in composition
- e. suggestions and solutions to influence the teaching and the learning of composition.

The researcher came up with some valuable recommendations, among them:

- the necessity of selecting the topics to be written about from the daily experiences of student which are of interest to them;
- giving oral composition greater importance;
- providing teachers with a teachers' book to clarify the objectives and suggest suitable topics. The researcher also emphasised that teachers should speak only standard Arabic in the classroom.

Although this study was conducted around two decades ago, it seems that its recommendations are still relevant today reflecting the absence of a comprehensive process for developing the curriculum, which has been needed for a long time.

There is no agreement on suitable techniques for teaching Arabic language grammar.

This issue has been the subject of many studies which produced different, and

sometimes conflicting views and findings. Al-Sultany (1981) conducted a study to investigate the effects of the 'deductive method' and the 'inductive method' on the learning of Arabic language (in fact, both of them are classroom techniques but they will be referred to as 'methods' for the sake of consistency with the original study). Two female teachers were selected who had similar qualification, experience and in-service training to use the two teaching methods. 144 female students were selected to be taught under similar circumstances. The experiment lasted for nine weeks and all the students took a standard achievement test. The results revealed no statistically significant differences between the two groups, though the mean score of the students taught using the deductive method was slightly higher.

In Iraq, Al-Dailami and Kamael (1983) investigated the effect of using two different methods for grammar teaching on students' achievement. For this purpose, four schools were selected randomly from all the intermediate schools in Baghdad. Two teachers with similar backgrounds were selected to teach two groups of students. 156 students were taught by the text method 'Annaṣ', which is the mainstream or traditional method. 130 students were taught by the blending (selected) method 'Attawḥīf', in which the researchers suggested using different strategies and tactics.

On a standardised achievement test, the students taught by the blending method showed higher averages than the others. Using *t* test, the differences were significant at the level of 0.01.

However, the last two experiments used only small numbers of students which may reduce the validity of their use. They can be taken as preliminary studies; to generalise such results, more extensive investigation is needed.

Hamadi (1986) compared two different methods of planning and teaching the ALC as a whole:

'The Traditional method': treating each element, i.e. reading, spelling, creative writing, literary texts and grammar as a separate subject or course.

'The Integrated method'. Teaching Arabic as an integrated subject with different skills, a method used in only three Arab countries, Jordan, Kuwait and Algeria.

Each method was applied to 31 male students in the first year of intermediate school.

All students were exposed to a standardised achievement test. The research findings showed that in overall achievement students, who were taught by the integrated method performed better than those taught by the traditional one. Looking at each skill separately, the difference was significant at the level of (0.001) for all skills except composition, which showed no significant differences.

Hamadi believed that this result was consistent with theory on the subject and recommended the use of this method, emphasising the importance of training teachers and student teachers to adopt the integrated method for teaching the Arabic language in all Arab countries.

Obviously, the issue of whether Arabic should be taught as an integrated subject or as several subjects is a controversial one. Although there is agreement among educationalists such as Mojawer (1983), Al-Hashemi (1983), Al-Rekabi (1986), Al-Hogail (1992) and Gourah (1996), who are from four Arab countries, of the necessity of maintaining Arabic language skills in a strong unity, all these mentioned writers still hold the view that this unity can be achieved even if the language is taught through different courses. So, it seems that there is a need for further experimental studies to find out the best method of achieving the unity of the Arabic language skills. It is not enough to rely on the findings of Hamadi's study, based on a sample of only 62 students in one school.

The main aim of the study of Taleb (1986) was to investigate the role of out-of-class activities in the learning of the Arabic language among intermediate school students in

the Damascus Education District of Syria. Taleb used two questionnaires, one for teachers and the other for students, asking their views of various activities and problems faced in applying them. Taleb suggested the following activities as helpful for practising Arabic and increasing students' achievement:

- a. free reading;
- b. school broadcasts;
- c. drama;
- d. school newsletter and scholastic journalism;
- e. literary correspondence;
- f. literary committee; and,
- g. Arabic language club.

He found that in some cases, the activities were unsatisfactory and failed to achieve their aims because of the lack of chances left to the student, the absence of a class library, the lack of free time for teachers, the lack of comprehensive plans for activities, and inadequate supervision of these activities. He suggested tackling such problems to achieve the aims of the out-of-class activities. The most important question here is to what extent out-of-class activities are important and can contribute to developing the ALC, compared with other aspects of the teaching. This question can be formulated using the language of the current study as, 'Is out-of-class activities one of the requirements for developing the ALC in Saudi Arabia?' and 'In which level of importance (or priority) does it exist?'

In Saudi Arabia, Madcoor (1986^b) conducted a study with the aim of comparing two methods of teaching composition (creative writing) in first year intermediate school. An experimental design was used, in which an experimental group, consisting of 30 students, were taught by what the researcher called the '*Self-Actualisation Method*',

while a control group, consisting of 30 students, were taught by the traditional method in which the teacher sets topics; students' written work is corrected and marked.

Madcoor's new method emphasised student choice through the following strategies:

- Giving students the freedom to select the topic/s that they want to write about;
- Taking students to the school library to read about their selected topic/s. Teachers should help students to find the material that they want which might include listening to the radio or watching TV programmes. Some discussion can be conducted about the topic/s. Students through this stage should write the first draft of their topic article;
- Oral composition. Some students should be selected to talk about their topics with some discussion and comments from other students;
- Final writing of the topic;
- Evaluating the writing through some criteria that had been already set and clarified with the students;
- Observation stage. Teachers should correct students' writing and discuss errors with them to avoid their making the same mistakes again.

The researcher formulated six criteria for analysing the writing skills of the two groups.

The experiment was applied with three topics and the findings showed that the experimental group students performed better on all the criteria. This result seems to be natural. The relatively interesting finding is that the experimental group showed an increasing development from one topic to another, which was highly significant, while the control group showed very little development in their writing from one topic to the next one. Madcoor, in accordance with his findings, encouraged giving students the freedom to select the topic to write about which would increase the 'self-actualisation' of the student. He also emphasised the importance of using the strategies suggested in the new method of teaching composition for students in Saudi Arabia. However, it seems that a three - week experiment, for the writing of three topics, is of itself still

inadequate for full generalisation, even if it is a worthwhile and encouraging indicator for more investigation.

Another educational innovation was suggested by Sabry (1988), whose study was conducted to design a '*learning activity package*' drawn from the Arabic language syllabus for third year intermediate level students and, also, to measure its effectiveness. A unit was developed to apply the self-learning strategy and then it was implemented through experimental design. The research sample consisted of 76 students, divided equally into an experimental group and a control group. A standardised test was applied both before and after the experiment which showed significant differences in favour of the experimental group who were taught using the 'learning activity pack'. Sabry justified his findings mainly through suggesting that knowing the objectives was a crucial motive for achieving them. He also emphasised the importance of self learning strategy, in addition to other factors such as the method of presenting experience to students in short units and various types of practice, and the use of immediate feedback. However, although the self-learning technique is widely supported and its effectiveness has been proved (Barrs et al, 1990), for this study, it can be said that the use of a series of continuous activities added attraction to the experiment for the students as a new and interactive experience and this may be why the experimental group performed better. Undoubtedly, such ideas need a long time to be implemented and assessed.

The difficulties and obstacles in teaching grammar to secondary school students and how they can be solved, as perceived by teachers and students, were determined by Al-Robaey (1989). After exploratory interviews and a review of literature, two questionnaires were formed; one for teachers with 60 items and the other for students with 50 items. Some of the main findings from the study were:

- a. Difficulties relating to the grammar textbook: there was a lack of practical exercises, the weekly hour devoted to the grammar course was not enough to cover all the topics, and the topics studied did not serve the students' needs;
- b. Obstacles related to teachers: teachers did not concentrate on the practical aural and written aspects, used colloquial language within the classroom and in some cases lacked proficiency;
- c. Obstacles related to students: students were generally weak and lacked motivation. Students in the science section of secondary school, especially, viewed grammar as a marginal course;
- d. Difficulties related to examination: the examination emphasised the memorising-reciting method and measured students' knowledge rather than their skills and abilities;

The main recommendations were the necessity of giving grammar courses more time, selecting the grammar topics through their recurrence in speech and functional situations and a concentration on the practical use of grammar rather than information and description of the language.

However, it was mentioned earlier that within different Arab countries, and other different periods of time the problems and obstacles remain the same. Not only that, but even some experiments have been repeated in only slightly different forms. Three relatively new studies will be reviewed; the first and third may give more evidence of the point just made.

The first study is that of Al-Jazrawy (1990) who compared two teaching methods; programmed learning and traditional methods and their effect on teaching grammatical topics to students in intermediate school in Jordan. An experimental design with pre-post standardised tests was conducted with a random sample consisting of 128 male and female students. Using *t* test, the research results indicated that the means of the experimental group who were taught through programmed learning were higher. The

experimental group could also study the three topics more quickly. They could save around 50% of the time specified for the experiment. So, Al-Jazrawy recommended the use of programmed learning for teaching grammar and other courses of Arabic language. There was no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.

Shabeeb (1990) conducted a study with the aim of identifying the effect of preparation assignments (requiring students to read about the topic that will be taught) and homework on the students' achievement in grammar in the third year of intermediate school in Jordan. The research sample consisted of 535 male and female students who were divided into three groups. The research findings showed that students who were given either preparation assignments or homework performed better than those who were not and there were no significant differences between boys and girls in the three groups.

However, it seems that this finding does not need to be proved as it is an easy formula and a logical fact rather than an experimental research result. So, other variables such as students' attitudes to grammar and their performance in other subjects should be included to increase the validity of such a study.

In 1994 Al-Ghazawy examined three methods for teaching grammar (inductive, deductive and text method) in order to compare their effect on students' achievement. The research sample consisted of 102 male students who were taught by the researcher himself for seven weeks. The researcher used a standardised test and found that the inductive method was the most effective and the difference amongst students was significant at the level of (0.01). However, there were no significant differences between the means of the students who were taught by the other two methods, deductive and text methods.

Still, as indicated earlier, such a contentious issue cannot be resolved by relying on a seven-week-study. The importance of the study is in its emphasis on the need for comprehensive study which, as it seems, has not been done yet.

To finalise our discussion, it is worth mentioning that almost all the studies reviewed were small-scale studies. None of the experimental studies were applied with a large number of schools or by a group of researchers, even though some of them dealt with some controversial issues. In fact this reflects the current situation of the Arab countries in which the governmental agents, because of some economic-social conditions and the focus on expanding education quantitatively rather than developing its quality, may not be able to sponsor large-scale studies, leaving the responsibility for developing the curriculum to the researchers themselves. Therefore, the researchers in the studies reviewed produced recommendations, which they believed to be requirements for developing the curriculum. Among them are:

- Profiting from the methods used in teaching language in other countries;
- Diversifying learning resources using standard language from newspaper and radio;
- Using instructional learning, drama and role-play for the teaching of Arabic;
- Encouraging students to use reading and writing as sources of enjoyment and allowing them to choose topics related to their hobbies;
- Teaching Arabic as integrated subject;
- Using out-of-class activities for teaching the Arabic language.

Those requirements were taken directly from an experiment or were drawn from the views of the respondents or the researchers themselves toward the issue being studied.

Such views might not be objective or broad enough to evaluate and prioritise the requirement/s under study, compared with other requirements. The need now is for a wider view that takes into account these different suggestions or recommendations and evaluates their importance and priority for developing the ALC in the Saudi context.

6.4. Studies Related to Evaluation

As mentioned in the last chapter, evaluation in the curriculum includes both 'students' evaluation' and evaluating the components of the curriculum itself. Therefore, the studies in this section will be reviewed in two groups: studies related to evaluation of students' achievement; and studies of evaluating curriculum elements.

Obviously, the largest number of studies is among the first group. Indeed, it can be said that the main focus of researchers has been on student achievement, as it is widely believed that there is a serious general problem of low achievement.

Among the student-related studies is that of Ibraheem (1985), which aimed to determine the shortcomings of oral reading in the performance of the students in elementary and secondary schools in Jordan. The researcher investigated errors and tried to compare the style and level of reading between elementary and secondary school. Gender disparity was also studied. The research sample consisted of 120 male and female students. For the purpose of this study, Ibraheem designed a test to measure the types of errors. The test was prepared in the light of the aim of determining oral reading performance. One point of importance is that error analysis in this study was used to evaluate students' achievement and abilities, not to construct the curriculum content, as was the aim of other studies reviewed earlier.

Ibraheem found a notably low level of student skills in oral reading. Many types of errors were identified, including the inability to distinguish between some letters and inaccuracy in phonology. The researcher suggested that these problems can be traced back to poor language skills and awareness.

However, she found that there were significant differences between the pupils in elementary and in secondary schools in all types of errors. The performance of intermediate students was better than those at elementary level. Girls made significantly fewer errors than boys.

Another study for evaluating the students' oral reading was conducted by Al-Fugair (1987). He evaluated the oral reading level of first year intermediate school students. His chief questions were 'Do students achieve oral reading desired goals?' and if not, 'What were the reasons for low achievement in oral reading?' The researcher looked theoretically at the aims and objectives of oral reading and then through empirical study evaluated students' reading speed, comprehension and accuracy.

Al-Fugair's findings supported the results of Ibraheem concerning the low level of oral reading. He also commented on the poor range of vocabulary, blaming the existing textbooks, the lack of qualified and experienced teachers, the lack of teaching aids and the lack of parental co-operation. The researcher suggested a revision of the school textbooks in use at that time, an increased use of teaching aids and encouragement of reading for pleasure, as well as applying new teaching strategies to improve the situation.

The acquisition and application of grammatical concepts by intermediate school students were evaluated by Morjy (1989), using a standardised achievement test. The sample consisted of 900 pupils drawn equally from males and females in the three years of intermediate school. Although standards were generally poor, third year students performed better than first and second years and second year students did better than first years. This result reflects the similarity of the 'grammar' contents in the three years or the repetition of the grammatical concepts and applications. Girls performed better than boys in all three years, which Morjy took to reflect the high importance given to girls' education which encouraged girls to study at home more than boys. Another reason is the characteristic of Arab society that gives boys more chances to go out of the home. Girls are more likely to stay at home, watching T.V and reading books, newspapers and stories, which improves their language abilities and develops their use of correct language.

In Saudi Arabia, the study of Isma'ail (1990) aimed to evaluate the skills acquired by students through their study in elementary school. Four dimensions were evaluated in this study:

- a. the achievement of students in acquiring new vocabulary and language styles;
- b. the reading speed with correct pronunciation;
- c. the appropriation of writing with fewer errors; and,
- d. the abilities to formulate oral and written language properly (the composition abilities).

A four-fold test was designed to measure the general language skills, composition, dictation and the correct use of Arabic grammar. A sample of 138 first year intermediate school students was drawn randomly from seven schools in Al-Madenah city. The test was applied in the beginning of the semester on students who had already passed their elementary school exam so as to ensure that the students had not been affected by the new experience of intermediate school. The research findings revealed an astonishing general weakness among students, especially seen in their poor ability to express their ideas either orally or in writing (the mean was 33.83 out of 60). The students' ability to spell words correctly was also very low (the mean was 38.55 out of 60), while the use of grammar and reading skill showed less weakness (39.59 and 43.78 out of 60 respectively).

Students' main difficulties were: putting the words in the correct order, recognising the meanings of words, pronouncing words correctly, reading certain language styles, the writing (spelling) of some words and the recognition and use of particular grammar points. The research blamed the testing system which allowed pupils to pass from one year to another by simply measuring the information they had memorised rather than their actual skills.

The main recommendations that were made by the researcher were:

- a. Giving Arabic language teachers full details of the objectives of learning the Arabic language and its various skills in behavioural forms;
- b. Reducing the load of teaching and other administrative duties of Arabic language teachers;
- c. Linking the Arabic language skills (which are given through different courses) with each other and teaching them as an integrated subject;
- d. Concentrating on practising language rather than teaching language.

The findings of this study confirmed the general belief among researchers about the weak level and poor ability of the students. However, the recommendations of the study mentioned earlier reflect the view of the researcher, rather than being clearly related to the findings of the study. This is the serious problem not only in this study, but in many others mentioned in this chapter. Perhaps, it is the problem of much educational research, that recommendations come from the researcher's view and understanding of the findings.

Another study involving Saudi students was that of Al-Ghanim (1995) who aimed to evaluate the achievement of students in the courses of Arabic language grammar at intermediate level in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The Arabic language grammar aims and textbooks were analysed to prepare a list of the syllabus which represented the basis of the measure used in this study. The research sample consisted of all third year students of five intermediate schools representing around 5% of the students in Riyadh. The main findings of the study indicated the low level of student achievement in grammar. The poorest level was in subjects and concepts students had been taught in the earlier years at intermediate level, which highlights the problem of focusing on memorisation and repetition, rather than understanding of concepts and skills training.

As a result of his findings, Al-Ghanim highlighted the importance of reviewing the grammar curriculum for intermediate schools and suggested constructing standardised achievement tests and conducting a whole evaluation project which would highlight the

strengths and weaknesses of the ALC. It was also recommended that teacher training be professionalised and improved.

The weakness of students' performance reviewed earlier in the first group related to evaluation may indicate the shortcoming of the curriculum in Saudi Arabia and perhaps other Arab countries. The second group of the studies, which will be reviewed next, were interested in going beyond evaluating students either to look for the reasons for the unsatisfactory situation of the students' achievements or to evaluate some particular components of the curriculum itself.

In 1986 Madcoor conducted a study with the expectation of determining the reasons for not achieving the aims of the ALC in Saudi Arabia as perceived by teachers and educational supervisors of this stage. A questionnaire was administered to a random sample of 60 teachers and 8 educational supervisors.

The causes of students' weakness were put in order of their seriousness by the researcher who asked the respondents to give their views toward them by answering 'Yes; or 'No'. The causes were presented in terms of causes for not achieving the curriculum aims in general; then the causes related to each subject: listening, composition, reading, literature, dictation and handwriting and grammar.

Among the main general causes were said to be:

- a. the lack of clarity of the aims of learning Arabic for the teachers themselves;
- b. the heavy teaching load of the Arabic teachers;
- c. the overload of material and knowledge to be studied in Arabic language lessons;
- d. the poor use of teaching aids;
- e. the unavailability of standardised evaluation measures; and,
- f. the absence of a teacher-guide as a companion to the students' book.

The researcher emphasised the importance of studying these and other causes of student weakness in order to provide suitable solutions for them (Madcoor 1986). Although studying the causes of the students' weakness is important in order to develop the ALC, the question of what are the most important solutions and how can they be prioritised is still unanswered.

Al-Zoza (1989) evaluated the grammar and morphology textbooks of secondary schools in Saudi Arabia. A theoretical study was provided by the researcher to illustrate the main ideas of grammar learning in the Arabic language. The researcher had identified an evident weakness among students which prompted this study. The researcher used the aims of the two subjects, as set by 'The Education Policy of General Education of Saudi Arabia', to develop 34 criteria for evaluation of the books. The contents of these three textbooks were analysed then by the researcher himself. The main findings were:

- a. the examples used to illustrate grammar points were selected without clear criteria and thought and were not related to students' interests;
- b. the grammar level seemed to be higher than the students' ability;
- c. there was no relation between the grammar and other language skills.

The researcher suggested an urgent review of textbooks used, paying attention to the students' ability, the nature of the subjects and the scientific criteria for constructing textbooks. Nevertheless, there is some reservation regarding the method used in this study whereby many aspects of three textbooks for three grades were evaluated by the same researcher, without making use of other experts' views.

The use of teaching aids for teaching Arabic at intermediate level was the main focus of Al-Damagh's (1995) study in Riyadh. The research sample consisted of all 24 Arabic language educational supervisors in Riyadh and a sample of 240 of its teachers. The

study investigated mainly (1) the view (or attitudes) of teachers towards teaching aids, (2) the availability of teaching aids, and (3) their use in schools. The main findings of the study were:

- a. the respondents expressed a strong belief in the importance of using teaching aids in the field of Arabic language teaching;
- b. the actual use of the aids was unsatisfactory;
- c. there were several obstacles to the use of teaching aids, such as lack of availability, lack of training in their use, excessive workload of teachers and the absence of special foundations and centres for educational technology.

Some differences in the views of teachers and educational supervisors regarding their experiences were noticed. Al-Damagh recommended periodically providing teaching aids, assigning someone responsible for teaching aids in each school, and encouraging commercial organisations to produce teaching aids and educational technology for the learning of Arabic.

Al-Nasar (1997) aimed to evaluate the out-of-class activities for Arabic language in secondary schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The four questions that were addressed in this study were:

What kind of activities related to Arabic language can be practised in secondary schools?; What is the importance of out-of-class activities as perceived by the research sample?; To what extent do students practise these activities in secondary schools? and, What are the problems facing those implementing out-of-class activities as perceived by the research sample?

Three categories of research sample were surveyed through three different questionnaires: students, head teachers, and out-of-class activities' supervisors.

The main findings of the study showed that the number of out-of-class activities the students practised was unsatisfactory and that the most serious problem facing the

implementation of out-of-class activities were the lack of interest by students and the busyness of those responsible for them

The key recommendations that were made were:

- a. verifying the activities according to the students' interest;
- b. extending the time allotted for out-of-class activities; and,
- c. assigning experienced teachers who have an interest in the activities to supervise them.

In Saudi Arabia also, Al-Moigal (1997) entitled his study 'the extent of teacher's achievement of the aims of teaching literature and literary texts to third year intermediate school students in Al-Kharj District'

Three research instruments were used in this study:

- a. an observation sheet, on which to record the styles, techniques and activities used by teachers in their teaching of literature and literary texts. The observations lasted for a whole semester;
- b. a written achievement test, to measure students' language abilities; and,
- c. an oral skill sheet to look at the oral skills of students.

All teachers of literature for third year intermediate schools in Al-Kharj Educational District were included in this study. They were 26 teachers who represented 40% of all Arabic teachers in the District. In addition to 164 students were involved in the written and oral skills tests.

The main findings of this study showed that the percentage of students' achievement was 32.96% which is less than the acceptable level (60%) suggested by the researcher. The teaching methods used by teachers were not appropriate as teachers failed to follow the ideal procedures identified by the researcher. The researcher noted that teachers concentrated on providing students with thoughts and knowledge and training them to

improve their oral reading, while skills such as comprehension, expression of ideas, expanding the range of vocabulary and literature appreciation were given less priority. There were significant differences between the achievements of Saudi Arabian teachers and those of non-Saudi teachers, the latter performing better in particular parts of the observation, which can be traced back to the lack of experience among the Saudi teachers (46% of them had 4 years or less).

In 1998, Al-Gahtany sought to evaluate the contents of Arabic grammar textbooks of the first year intermediate school level in Saudi Arabia. The three questions that were set to be answered in this study were: to what extent did the textbook contents meet the curriculum aims?; to what extent was the textbook identical with the nature of Arabic grammar (pure subject criteria) ?; and, to what extent were the contents suitable for the students in first year intermediate school?

As a theoretical framework, the researcher reviewed the related literature on Arabic language grammar and its characteristics, ALC elements, and teaching methods.

The 'content analysis' of the textbooks revealed that:

- a. The textbook contents did not meet any of the criteria matching the aims of teaching grammar;
- b. The textbook contents lacked most of the criteria suitable for learning;
- c. The textbook contents met most of the evaluation criteria;
- d. The textbook did not meet all the teaching aids criteria.

Although this method has been criticised earlier, it is noteworthy that the researcher recommended that the objectives of learning grammar in general and the objectives of each topic should be included in the textbook. He also emphasised the importance of using respected standard texts as examples, for illustrating Arabic grammar.

In 1999, Al-Hakami conducted his study with the aim of investigating the affective responses of Saudi secondary school students towards Islamic Religious Sciences, the Arabic Language and the English Language. He looked at the students' scores on the study variables: academic achievement, achievement motivation, attitude towards subjects, classroom environment and teaching aids in each of the three academic subjects. He also investigated the correlations between the study variables. Al-Hakami carried out a survey using a questionnaire among 1,224 students from eight schools in Taif, Saudi Arabia. He also interviewed twenty-four teachers and gave a further 113 questionnaires to other teachers. The main findings of Al-Hakami's study related to Arabic Language were that:

- a. Academic achievement scores for Arabic Language were predominantly low (68.1% means score of 1.97 out of 3);
- b. Half of the students had moderate student motivation and a large number of students had low achievement motivation;
- c. A great proportion of attitudes towards subject scores fell in the moderate category while about a third of respondents had a low attitude towards the Arabic language;
- d. Classroom environments in schools were predominantly given moderate ratings, while the use of teaching aids was perceived by students as being low in Arabic language lessons;
- e. The most interesting finding was that no significant correlation was found between academic achievement and any other variable, including attitude and motivation. This was against expectations, as it contrasted with the mainstream of the other literature.

The last finding led Al-Hakami, as it was unusual, to further investigation, and he came to conclude that there were deficiencies in teachers' assessment of students

achievement. He, therefore, suggested reducing the teachers' contribution in the final assessment from 65% to 20%.

The first findings of Al-Hakami's study confirm the other studies' findings, that show the unsatisfactory academic achievement, attitudes and motivation of students towards the Arabic language and suggest the need for a total review of the ALC, rather than developing any component of the curriculum separately. However, regarding the last result, Al-Hakami indicated that he sought to justify his findings of the lack of correlation between academic achievement and motivation rather than opening up an investigation to the whole examining system and finding the roots of the problem.

Further investigation is still needed of the complete picture of the assessment system, including at Ministry examination level, especially in view of the concerns about the Ministry examination system expressed by the Ministry itself, illustrated by their recent review of the elementary system and their promises to review the other levels.

Moreover, it can be said that in the absence of national criteria such as *the 'Attainment Targets'* of the National Curriculum of England and Wales to guide teachers, such unreliability or deficiencies can easily occur, so that for teachers to be responsible for even 20% of students overall grades, would call into question the reliability of those grades. To assure the reliability of student assessment, it is suggested that national criteria be established and made available to teachers to facilitate evaluating students' achievement, rather than reducing the teacher unreliability.

It is clear that the second group of the studies related to evaluation went beyond student assessment, to review the Arabic language curriculum or aspect of it in general. The main findings of the studies reviewed concentrated primarily on the causes of students' weakness, which included lack of clarity of the aims for teachers themselves; students' lack of interest and motivation; and the lack of standardised evaluation measures. The requirements for developing the curriculum related to evaluation comprised carrying out regular diagnostic assessment to guide the curriculum development process; increasing

the weight given to comprehension; establishing national criteria to facilitate evaluation of students' achievement; using a variety of assessment instruments; and establishing a questions bank for AL.

6.5. Summary

In this chapter a number of studies related to developing the ALC have been reviewed. Many requirements for developing the curriculum have emerged which need to be further investigated in the current study. This summary, therefore, will, first, tabulate the studies reviewed, concentrating on their contribution to the current study, i.e. the requirements emerging from each study. The table, by highlighting some other aspects, will also enable interested readers to conduct some comparison among studies. Some short comments will be made after the table.

N o.	Dimen sion	Author & Country	Ye ar	Langua ge skill	Method and Sample	The Main Findings	The Requirements Identified
1	Objectiv es	Arab Bureau, gulf States	84	General	Meetings and consultations	Identifying the aims and objectives for learning the ALC. Detailed aims and objectives for each academic course.	Providing teachers, students and parents with detailed list of objectives. Stating objectives in behavioural terms.
2	Objectiv es	Salamah, Jordan	88	Grammar	Experiment, Two groups. 116 students.	The experimental group (provided with objectives) performed better on language concepts.	Providing students with behavioural objectives
3	Objectiv es	Othman SA,	93	General	Questionnaire, 60 teachers and 20 head-teachers	Poor quality of material studied; the lack of link between the curriculum and the language used in daily life; the lack of teacher training; and lack of motivation and a poor attitude towards Arabic language	Informing teachers and parents of the aims of teaching Arabic. Reviewing and developing the whole ALC. Selecting texts from the daily life of the students.
4	Content Language Analysis (LA)	Hamdan, Jordan	76	Grammar	Analysing Students writings, 1150 and 850	Identifying the common errors in grammar, the students showed general weakness; and they made mistakes in grammar areas they had been taught in recent years.	Reviewing the whole curriculum. Avoiding over-crowding of material.
5	Content LA	Zandagay	85	Speaking	Analysing speech in 20 functions	Determine the most usable language. Identifying the language forms that should be included in the curriculum,	Placing the emphasis on the functional syllabus. Selecting texts from the daily life of the students.
6	Content LA	Al-Sayed; Egypt and Syria	87	Grammar and compositi on	Language analysis. 3600 students. classical works	Suggesting 'functional topics' to be included in the Grammar course contents for the Arab countries.	Concentrating on the functional topics and most relevant to the actual daily use. Concentrating on skills rather than the "theoretical knowledge".
7	Content LA	Al-Atiah, Jordan	87	Writing	Writing analysis, one school students.	Identifying 41 types of writing errors.	Presenting the Arabic language in integrated form
8	Content LA	Al-Gaisy, Jordan	87	Grammar	Student writings analysis, 270 students	The unsatisfactory level of the students. The system allows students to move up level without adequate skills. Poor interest among students to develop their writing skills.	Including professional writing skills. Measuring skills rather than knowledge.
9	Content LA	Bouchou k, Morocco	87	Grammar and language styles	Language Analysis. grade 9 th and 12 th Moroccan students	A decline in the mastery of morpho-syntactic rules. A failure in the instructional programme, and suggesting a tri-dimensional taxonomy of linguistic and cultural objectives.	Giving teachers opportunities to plan the appropriate syllabus. Selecting texts that develop peoples' sense of their heritage.
10	Content LA	Madkoor and Ogalan, SA	87	Grammar	Analysing writings. 456 students.	The weaknesses of the Saudi students, many topics excluded from the grammar course in first year intermediate school were used by students with a high percentage of errors, while other topics included in the course were little used.	Setting clear aims and objectives for Arabic. Using the Qur'an and other respected texts for teaching Arabic. Concentrating on practising standard Arabic rather than studying theoretical grammar.
11	Content LA	Al-Majed, SA.	96	Grammar	Analysing students Writings. 410 tudents	Around 95% of the Saudi third year secondary school made errors in using Arabic, students' writing was poor; identifying the grammatical components with a higher percentage of errors and remarking that they were taught to students in the three education stages.	Conducting a whole process for developing the curriculum. Concentrating on the functional syllabus. Setting a national criteria for evaluation students.
12	Content Skills & Proficie ncies (SP)	Mojawar, Kuwait and Egypt	74	General	Interviews. 150 teachers, 25 experienced.	Identify various skills of the Arabic language for reading, dictation and handwriting, composition (creative writing), anthems and song. and grammar	Including advanced writing skills and strategies. Including advanced reading skills and strategies.

13	Content SP	Abul-azm and Shahatah	85	Writing	Writing analysis, (no information about sample)	Suggesting curriculum content for writing skills in the Arab world which they arranged by educational stages	Applying the findings and strategies of other languages for teaching Arabic writing skills.
14	Content SP	Khater et al	85	Reading	Content analysis of the whole reading text books of the Arab world.	The new strategies of teaching reading had not been applied or used in all Arab countries. Strategies such as skimming and scanning were neglected, the reading material used was not relevant to the lives and interests of the students.	Including reading types and strategies such as skimming and scanning. Linking reading material used to the lives and interests of the students.
15	Content SP	Kanaan, Syria	86	Writing	Experiment, One intermediate school's students	Students who were taught through the programmed learning made fewer errors than the others. Found a positive attitude towards the programmed learning	Using individualised learning strategies such as programmed learning.
16	Content SP	Khamais ah	88	Writing	Experiment. 100 student.	Students who were given writing skills did better in writing than those who were taught normally	Giving teachers opportunities to plan the appropriate syllabus. Providing students with different writing skills.
17	Content SP	Aboal-Haijaa	89	Reading	Experiment. 180 student.	Students in the experimental group - who were given reading skills- did better in reading than those who were taught normally	Giving teachers opportunities to plan the appropriate syllabus. Providing students with different reading skills.
18	Methods	Ammar, Syria.	80	Writing	Survey. Teachers and intermediate students	Confirming the strong relationship between composition and other Arabic language subjects. Identifying the main problems facing students in composition.	Selecting the writing topics from the daily experiences of students. Giving oral composition greater importance. Providing teachers with a teachers' book.
16	Methods	Al-Sultany	81	Grammar	Experiment. 144 students	No statistically significant differences were found between those taught by deductive method and those taught by inductive method.	Profiting from the methods used in teaching the first language in other countries.
20	Methods	Addailam i and Kamael, Iraq	83	Grammar	Experiment. 286 students	The students taught by the blending (selected) method 'Attawlief' showed higher averages than those taught by the text method 'Annas', which is the mainstream or traditional method.	Profiting from the methods used in teaching the first language in other countries. Diversifying learning resources using standard language from newspaper and radio.
21	Methods	Hamadi, Jordan	86	General	Experiment. 62 students	Students taught by the integrated method (teaching Arabic as one course) performed, significantly, better than those taught by traditional one (dividing Arabic in several courses).	Teaching Arabic as integrated subject.
22	Method	Taleb, Syria	86	General	Questionnaire. Intermediate teachers and students of Damascus	Suggesting some activities for practising Arabic such as free reading; school broadcasts; drama; and literary committee. Out-of- class activities failed to achieve their aims of teaching Arabic.	Using out-of-class activities for teaching the Arabic language. Using drama and role-play to practise language use.
23	Methods	Madcoor "2", SA.	86	Compositi on	Experiment. 60 intermediate students	Students taught by self-actualisation method showed a significant increasing development, while those taught by traditional method showed very little writing development.	Allowing students to choose topics for writing which are related to their favourite pursuits and hobbies.
24	Methods	Sabry, Syria	88	Grammar	Experiment. 76 intermediate students	Significant differences were found in favour of the experimental group who were taught using the 'learning activity pack'	Adopting the principle of individual learning for Arabic language.
25	Methods	Al-Robaey, Syria	89	Grammar	Ques. Intermediate teachers and students.	Identifying difficulties related to the grammar textbook, teachers, students, and examination system.	Selecting the topics through their functional situations and a concentration on the practical use of grammar rather than description of the language.
26	Methods	Al-Jazrawy, Jordan	90	Grammar	Experiment. 128 intermediate students	The experimental group (taught through programmed learning) had higher means. They could also study more quickly saving around 50% of the time .	Adopting the principle of individual learning for Arabic language. Using instructional learning for the teaching of the Arabic.
27	Methods	Shabeeb, Jordan	90	Grammar	Experiment. 535 intermediate students	Students who were given either preparation assignments or homework performed better than those who were not.	Encouraging students to use reading and writing as sources of enjoyment and information.

28	Methods	Al-ghazawy	94	Grammar	Experiment. 102 intermediate students	The inductive method was significantly more effective than the other methods: deductive and text methods.	Profiting from the strategies and techniques used in teaching the first language in other countries.
29	Evaluation	Ibraheem, Jordan	85	Reading	Language analysis 120 intermediate students	A notably low level of student skills in oral reading. Many types of errors were identified, including the inability to distinguish between some letters and inaccuracy in phonology.	Concentrating on measuring skills rather than knowledge. Giving sufficient weight to assessing students' oral skills.
30	Evaluation	Al-Fugair	87	Reading	Language analysis of first year intermediate students	Low level of oral reading among students including poor range of vocabulary because of the existing textbooks, the lack of qualified teachers and teaching aids.	Giving sufficient weight to assessing students' oral skills. Carrying out regular diagnostic assessment of the curriculum.
31	Students Evaluation	Morjy	89	Grammar	Language analysis of 900 intermediate students	Students' Standard skills were generally poor. There was a similarity of the 'grammar' contents in the three years or the repetition of the grammatical concepts and applications.	Concentrating on measuring skills rather than knowledge.
32	Students Evaluation	Isma'il, SA	90	General	Language analysis of 138 intermediate students.	An astonishing general weakness among students, especially in their ability to express their ideas either orally or in writing, their ability to spell words correctly and to use grammar.	Establishing national criteria to facilitate evaluating students' achievement. Concentrating on measuring skills rather than knowledge.
33	Students Evaluation	Al-Ghanem, SA	95	Grammar	All third year students in 5 Intermediate schools.	Low level of student achievement in grammar. The poorest level was in subjects and concepts taught in the earlier years. Teaching Arabic focuses on memorisation and repetition.	Providing a total review for developing the curriculum. Measuring skills rather than knowledge. Conducting a comprehensive exam at the end of the intermediate level.
34	Evaluation	Madcoor, SA	86	General	Questionnaire 60 teachers and 8 Education Supervisors.	The causes of students weakness included lack of clarity of the aims for teachers themselves; the overload of material to be covered ; the poor use of teaching aids, the absence of a teacher-guide; and the lack of standardised evaluation measures.	Providing teachers, students and parents with the AL objectives. Avoiding over-crowding of material to be studied. Supplying teachers with Teacher Guide. Establishing a questions bank for AL.
35	Evaluation	Al-Zoaza, SA	89	Grammar	Content analysis of the textbook.	The examples used were selected without clear criteria and were not related to students' interests; the grammar level seemed to be higher than the students' ability; there was no relation between the grammar and other language skills.	Inserting Syntax and Morphology in their natural contexts. Teaching Arabic as integrated subject. Selecting texts that reflect students live and interest.
36	Evaluation	Al-Damagh, SA	95	General	Questionnaire. 24 ES and 240 teachers.	A strong belief in the importance of teaching aids in AL; the actual use of the aids was unsatisfactory because of the lack of availability, and lack of training in their use.	Providing teachers with sufficient teaching aids. Conducting a total review for developing the ALC.
37	Evaluation	Al-Nasar, SA	97	General	Quest. Head-teachers, supervisors, and students	The number of out-of-class activities the students practised was unsatisfactory. Students lacked interest and those responsible for the activities were too busy.	Profiting from out-of-class activities for the teaching of Arabic.
38	Evaluation	Al-Moigal' SA	97	Literature	Observation (26 teachers). Oral and written test (164 students)	The students' achievement was less than the acceptable level. Skills such as comprehension, expression of ideas, expanding the range of vocabulary and literature appreciation were given less priority by teachers.	Providing a total review for developing the curriculum. presenting AL as integrated subject. Increasing the weight given to comprehension.
39	Evaluation	Al-Gahtany, SA	98	Grammar	Content analysis of the textbook	The first year intermediate textbook contents did not meet the criteria matching the aims of teaching grammar, and lacked most of the criteria of suitability for learning.	Carrying out regular diagnostic assessment guide curriculum development process.
40	Evaluation	Al-Hakami, SA	99	General	Questionnaire, 1,224 students 113 teachers And 24 interviews	Students' achievement level was low and their motivation and attitudes were also moderate or low. No significant correlation was found between academic achievement and any other variable, including attitude and motivation.	Establishing national criteria to facilitate evaluating students' achievement. Conducting a whole review for developing the ALC. Using a variety of assessment instruments.

Although many conclusions can be drawn from this table, only five general comments will be made here, mainly to identify the position of the current study and to make a link with other chapters.

First, the claims of the weakness of students in the field of Arabic language in Saudi Arabia and the shortcomings of the curriculum, indicated in Chapter One, have been confirmed here. However, a comprehensive study for evaluating the ALC has not been done yet. Therefore, we should employ the overall findings of the studies reviewed as an indicator of the vital need for developing the ALC in Saudi Arabia.

Second, with few exceptions, the studies investigated narrow topics with small samples. Undoubtedly these studies contribute in offering recommendations which might help in developing the curriculum; nevertheless, it seems that to develop the ALC in the Saudi context, the need is for a study which covers different components of the curriculum and gives a general picture of what should be done for developing the whole ALC.

Thirdly, to a large extent, the studies reviewed dealt with the Arabic curriculum as five, or sometimes six, separate subjects, which has been the trend for at least fifty years.

Older methods used in different historical ages (see Chapter Two) have not been tried or investigated. The modern methods and approaches to language education and curriculum, reviewed in Chapter Four, were also not reflected. This reflects, as it seems to the researcher, the 'typicality' of the Arabic language education and, in turn, curriculum literature. The need, then, is for a new look at the curriculum in a wider arena to clarify what should be done to develop the curriculum, not by a 'delete and add' method, but through an inclusive development process.

Fourthly, among the studies reviewed we can distinguish three trends:

- a. Experiments, in which the researchers examine some ideas or innovations.

Regularly these experiments were found effective, which suggests that the

researchers suggested some successful ideas because they studied their experiments and their circumstances. In other words, it means that individual researchers and practitioners have the sense to judge ideas for development. Therefore, we can, and must take their opinions into account in formulating ideas for change and development.

- b. Suggestions; in which researchers presented some aims, skills, proficiencies and teaching methods or techniques. These are not suitable to be taken as development requirements. They still need to be examined from a wider perspective to locate them in the development map, prioritising them in comparison with other suggestions.
- c. Problems and obstacles, in which researchers identified what they believed to be barriers preventing achieving the aims of the ALC. For these problems, suitable solutions are needed to be offered by a group -or perhaps groups- of specialists and practitioners.

It seems that all the studies reviewed, in all three trends, contribute in developing the ALC, forming the base of the current study. The chief aim of the current study, then, is to produce four lists of the requirements in according with the four dimensions identified in the previous chapter and were the base of arranging the studies reviewed in this chapter.

This summary finalises the first part of the study, the theoretical part, paving the way to the next part, the empirical part. At this point, it would be helpful to remind the reader of the main ground covered so far, to facilitate understanding the rest of the study. The study consists of an introductory chapter, followed by the two main parts, and finishing with a conclusion in the last chapter.

In the first/introductory chapter the main concern was to clarify the issue under investigation. The significance of conducting the study in the present topic, i.e. developing the ALC was emphasised. The importance of AL education has been demonstrated, and a large amount of effort has, clearly, been paid to it, but the outcomes in both the quality of the curriculum and students' achievement has been completely unsatisfactory. This was the research problem, which Chapter One invited reader to concentrate on, setting two main aims to tackle it, giving some more clarification in this respect.

The first aim, which was to understand the root of the problem, the situation today and how to tackle it, required a theoretical/documentary investigation, and was achieved in the first/current part of the study, incorporating five chapters; from the 2nd to the 6th chapter.

Chapter Two identified, first, the main characteristics of the Arabic language, clarifying through a developmental study how the Arabic language was learnt and taught in various historical periods. This chapter traced some roots of the current problems of the AL curriculum and also examined the possibility of benefiting from some of the appropriate methods used in certain periods. Chapter Three was concerned mainly with the current situation of the ALC within the context of the Saudi educational system. Within this chapter some further evidence of the existence of the problem was drawn. To find the most appropriate solutions for the problem, Chapter Four and Chapter Five respectively reviewed the main methods of acquiring and learning language, and then the literature of curriculum development, viewing the AL in the light of such literature. Within these four chapters of the documentary survey it emerged that:

- The problem has historical roots but it is believed that it can be rectified;

- The problem has a number of aspects which might be viewed as sub-problems and should be tackled. Those problems include teachers' preparation and training, the social and linguistic environments, curriculum;
- Due to time and resource constraints, it is necessary to narrow the focus of the study, and according to the researcher's interest and experience, the most serious solvable problem is that of the Arabic language curriculum, which needs to be developed and improved;
- For developing the curriculum, it was found that all curriculum components must be taken together in a comprehensive programme/process. This process should include curriculum objectives, content, teaching methods and evaluation, which were identified as the four dimensions of the current study;
- In accordance with the current situation of the Saudi educational system and the nature of the investigation, identifying the requirements for developing the curriculum was believed the most suitable basic strategy and will be adopted in the current study.

Therefore, as the nature of investigation led to a concern to identify the requirements for developing the four curriculum components; the objectives, the content, the teaching methods and the evaluation, the current chapter – the sixth – was devoted to reviewing the most recent, relevant empirical studies, illustrating their contributions in developing the Arabic language curriculum in Saudi Arabia.

This chapter paves the way to the second part of the study, which is intended to achieve the second aim of the study: to identify, evaluate and prioritise, empirically, the requirements for developing the ALC in Saudi Arabia as perceived by practitioners and specialists involved with the AL. Three chapters will contribute to achieving this aim. The research methodology will be explained in Chapter Seven, giving details of the plans followed in the two phases of the empirical study: the qualitative phase using interviews, and the quantitative phase using questionnaires. The eighth and ninth

chapters will present and discuss the interview results, and the main data findings respectively.

The conclusion of the study will be provided in Chapter Ten, incorporating a summary of the two parts of the study and an overall discussion, in addition to, discussing the limitations of the study. The recommendations and suggestions will finalise the study and will be presented as the last section of the tenth chapter.

Finally, in the introduction of the next part, the particular questions of the empirical study will be identified; these will form the basis of the arrangement of the chapters concerned.

PART TWO

The Empirical Study

Introduction

Research, which is based on logical argument from empirical data rather than from abstract theory alone, has often helped in developing educational applications and curricula in particular. The main concern of this part, therefore, is to get into the field in order to achieve the second aim of the study, mentioned in Chapter One which is **‘to identify, evaluate and prioritise, empirically, the requirements for developing the ALC in SA as perceived by practitioners and specialists involved with the AL.**

The review of the related literature in the previous, theoretical part, contributed to an understanding of the ways in which this aim can be achieved. Therefore, seven research questions have been set to facilitate achieving this aim. They are:

1. What are the methods used in conducting the current study in order to identify the requirements for developing the Arabic language curriculum in Intermediate and Secondary Schools in SA?
2. What is the current situation of the Arabic language Curriculum and how can it be improved in the views of Educational Supervisors (ES), University Lecturers (UL), and the Ministerial personnel.
3. What are the objectives-related requirements, in order of their importance, for developing the Arabic Language Curriculum in Intermediate and Secondary School in Saudi Arabia?
4. What are the content-related requirements, in order of their importance, for developing the Arabic Language Curriculum in Intermediate and Secondary Schools in Saudi Arabia?

5. What are the Teaching methods and resources-related requirements, in order of their importance, for developing the Arabic Language Curriculum in Intermediate and Secondary Schools in Saudi Arabia?
6. What are the Evaluation-related requirements, in order of their importance, for developing the Arabic Language Curriculum in Intermediate and Secondary Schools in Saudi Arabia?
7. To what extent is there common ground between the views of practitioners and specialists on the importance and the order of the requirements for developing the ALC?

The three chapters in this part seek to answer these questions. The first and second chapters will be devoted to the answering the first two questions, while the third chapter will provide answers to the remaining questions.

Chapter Seven

METHODOLOGY

7.1. Selecting the Research Methodology

7.2. Phase One: Qualitative Data

7.2.1. Constructing the Appropriate Interview

7.2.2. Interview Sample

7.2.3. Conducting the Interviews

7.2.4. Analysing the Interviews

7.3. Phase Two: Quantitative Data

7.3.1. Constructing the Questionnaire

7.3.2. Standardising the Questionnaire

7.3.3. Questionnaire Sample

7.3.4. Administering the Questionnaire

7.3.5. Analysing the Questionnaires

7.4. Summary

Chapter Seven

Methodology

This chapter describes the research strategies and argues their appropriateness for a study which aims to identify and prioritise the requirements for developing the Arabic language curriculum in Saudi Intermediate and Secondary Schools. First, the research methods chosen for this study are presented and justified. In the second and third sections, methodological literature is reviewed to define and support the specific two techniques by which data were obtained and reported. The final section summarises the methods and outlines the content of the following chapters.

7.1 Selecting the Research Methodology

Research methodology concerns choosing the most appropriate techniques to collect the data needed to achieve the research aims. Indeed, the nature of the data to be collected determines the research method or methods that should be followed in scientific research. In the present case, the need was first, to gain a greater understanding of the wide area of the Arabic language curriculum, and then to determine valid and accurate requirements for developing the curriculum through surveying a relatively large number of people involved in the field of Arabic language pedagogy. The survey approach is suggested to be the best, if not the only, method which, according to Cohen and Manion (1994, p. 83)

gathers data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions, or identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared, or determining the relationships that exist between specific events.

In survey educational research, the first issue to be decided is which approach should be adopted for data collection: qualitative or quantitative, especially bearing in mind that, as Lewin (1990, p. 46) put it, “*Each has its own advantages and disadvantages*”

In distinguishing between qualitative and quantitative data, Verma and Mallik (1999) commented:

These labels do not represent discrete categories or clusters, but are merely endpoints of a continuum (p. 43). ... there was an even greater overlap between the research tools used (p. 111). Where the object of a questionnaire survey is to produce quantitative data, interviews are normally used to obtain qualitative data (p. 122)

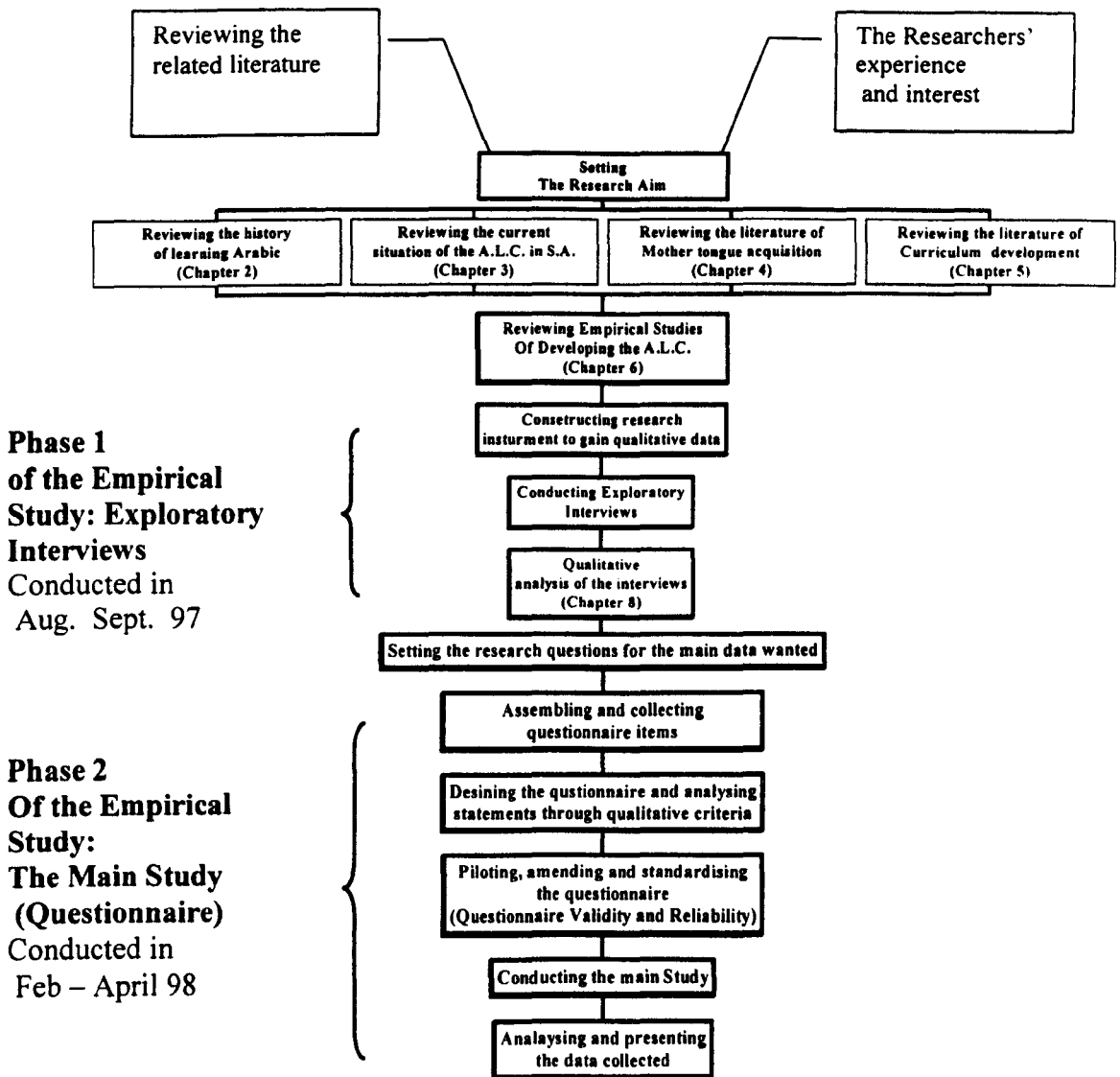
The purpose of the survey in this study, therefore, is twofold:

First, to gain qualitative data from participants in different sample categories, regarding their experience of and opinions on how the Arabic curriculum should be developed, the researcher decided to use interviews. This would facilitate the gaining of a sensitive detailed understanding of the current situation of the Arabic language curriculum and incorporate a wider variety of suggestions of how it can be improved. Interviews make it possible to gain a broader picture by asking further probing questions, should an initial response lack detail.

Secondly, to collect quantitative data to evaluate the suggested recommendations, thoughts and advice for developing the Arabic language curriculum. For this purpose, a questionnaire was used, as it would enable views to be obtained from different categories of personnel, as to the importance of the requirements which had already been gathered and listed.

The research strategy employed to address the aim of the study included, but was not confined to, these two empirical techniques, interview and questionnaire. The following diagram gives a general picture of the overall design of the study.:

Figure 7.1.1
Flow Diagram of the Research Strategies



From this diagram it is clear that the first part of the study was a theoretical study which was covered through the five chapters of the previous part. Verma and Mallick (1999, p. 143) advise that

An early part of the study will be the literature search, since this forms a vital part of the identification and formulation of the research problem.

As far as it was known, this study was the first of its kind, necessitating examination of many dimensions of the field. Moreover the situation is ongoing. As Baker and Carty (1994, p. 225) suggest

... the more advanced the research, the most exhaustive the literature search will need to be.

Although some theoretical material was written up later, much of the theoretical work was done before beginning to collect empirical data, and affected all the decisions related to the empirical study, in line with the advice of Bell (1993).

In the second part of the study, the empirical study, as indicated previously, two techniques for data collection were selected, semi-structured interviews for qualitative data, and questionnaires for quantitative data. These two techniques will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

7.2 Phase One: Qualitative Data:

At the start of the study, the researcher had only outline about the actual situation of the Arabic language curriculum. He was aware, through reviewing the related literature, that attainment in Arabic language is reported as unsatisfactory and the evidence points to the Arabic language curriculum as being largely responsible. However, detailed current information was lacking, regarding students' achievement, the current situation of the curriculum and its problems, the views and opinions of the specialists and practitioners of how the curriculum problems can be tackled and rectified, and what are the most important areas of the curriculum to be dealt with. Additionally, the researcher believed that the information he had collected from the literature was not a sufficient basis to construct a questionnaire. Fresh ideas from current practitioners and specialists were needed which would add validity to the questionnaire.

It was believed, therefore, that, for both purposes, understanding of the on-going situation, and having information to construct a valid questionnaire, qualitative data were indispensable. Vulliamy (1990) recommended that

Qualitative research is holistic, in the sense that it attempts to provide a contextual understanding of the complex interrelationships of causes and consequences (p. 11) ... qualitative research can also play a useful role in identifying the most appropriate questions to address in larger-scale quantitative research studies (p. 25).

At this phase of the research there was complete agreement with Bell (1993, p. 6) that

Researchers adopting a qualitative perspective are more concerned to understand individuals' perceptions of the world. They seek insight rather than statistical analysis.

In accordance with the advantage of the qualitative research mentioned earlier by Vulliamy and Bell, the researcher realised that conducting an exploratory study is one of the most important strategies used in this stage of the research. The question emerges, then, which research instrument/s should be thought of and adopted for this exploratory qualitative study?

'Observation' might be thought useful as a research instrument. However, since its main value is '*when data are being collected on non-verbal behaviour*' (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p. 110), it was not the best technique to be adopted. Content Analysis was excluded bearing in mind Cohen and Manion's (1994, p. 55) advice that it can be used when '*the content of communication serves as a basis of inference*'. The case study was also believed unsuitable as the aim is to get broader views from different categories of people with different interests and backgrounds about the issues being studied. The need was specifically for an instrument which would help the researcher to explore and examine his field and be more aware of the research problem, and pave the way for the main study.

Oppenheim (1996, p 51) suggests the interview is the most suitable instrument at this stage, saying:

The earliest stages of the pilot work are likely to be exploratory, and will be primarily concerned with the conceptualisation of the research problem. They might involve lengthy, unstructured interviews; talks with key informants; or the accumulation of essays written around the subject of the inquiry.

On the subject of “The Exploratory Interview”, he argues:

“Probably no other skill is as important to the survey research worker as the ability to conduct good interviews” (p. 65) .

Such interviews were intended to be of an exploratory nature, consistent with Bell's (1993, p. 94) view of the nature of preliminary interviews.

At this stage you are looking for clues as to which areas should be explored and which left out.

Thus, the researcher conducted exploratory interviews in order to achieve the following aims:

1. to examine the actual current situation of learning Arabic, through interviewing people with special interest in this area, in order to gain insight into the status of learning Arabic and the most important related issues;
2. to verify the existence and seriousness of problems related to learning Arabic language in Saudi Arabia today;
3. to determine the most important perceived causes of such problems;
4. to gain insight into what could be done to solve the problems of learning Arabic language and identify the most important requirements for developing the A.L. curriculum in intermediate and secondary schools in S.A.

In the following sub-sections more details will be given about the construction, sampling, conducting and analysis of the interviews.

7.2.1 Constructing the Appropriate Interview:

Interviews can take various forms and, so, a decision must be made as to which is suitable. Wragg (1994) and Gall et al (1996) identify three different types:

Structured interviews involve a fixed set of questions which the researcher asks in a fixed order. These are based on a carefully worded interview schedule and frequently require short answers or the ticking of a category by the investigator. They are often like a written questionnaire in form, and indeed it is common for a sub-sample of people who have been given a questionnaire to be interviewed, partly to amplify and partly to check the written answers. However, it gives little space for new insights. People are not free to give the answers or information which they think important. The researcher may miss a whole area of concern just because s/he did not think to ask questions about it.

Unstructured interviews are the opposite. Here the interviewer has a number of topics to cover but the precise questions and their order grow from the exchange with the respondent. Open-ended answers allow people to say as little or as much as they like. Unstructured interviews, or what are called '*depth interviews*' require considerable skill and training in the necessary techniques. Consequently, they are not to be undertaken lightly or by anyone not well-informed about their procedures or hazards. Moreover, this form of interview is highly subjective and time consuming.

Semi-structured interviews involve asking a series of structured questions, but in this case much more latitude is permitted. Often there is an initial question followed by probing more deeply using open-form questions to obtain additional information. A semi-structured form tends to be the one most favoured by educational researchers as it allows respondents to express themselves at some length, but offers enough shape to prevent aimless details.

Semi-structured interviews, as Bell (1993, p. 93) cites,

come somewhere between the completely structured and the completely unstructured point on the continuum.... Certain questions are asked, but the respondents are given freedom to talk about the topic and give their views in their own time

In view of the type of data the researcher wished to elicit and the time he had available, the appropriate technique seemed to be one of short, semi-structured interviews as he felt that structured interviews would restrict the amount of data he would be able to elicit from the interviewees and using an unstructured interview approach would prove difficult and time-consuming. This technique would allow the investigation in detail of the feelings, views, expectations, suggestions, recommendations and present troubles of the interviewees in relation to the aims of this phase.

Before actually commencing the interviews, five open-ended questions related to the general aims of this phase were prepared. Within each question the interview form was prepared with the phrase: *"Could you tell me more about some points you have mentioned?"* (the main points of the interviewee's speech which should be clarified) (see Appendix 2). The researcher chose to start with a general question which was: "Could you tell me your view of learning Arabic language today?" to reduce the nervousness the respondents might feel about the interview situation and then follow up with the question 'Could you tell me more about...?' or 'Why do you think that?'.

The second question in the interview was about the role of the media in SA, whether or not it is constructive in relation to learning the AL, and whether 'educational media' existed. The third question was, 'What do you think are the main problems, if any, in learning AL today? The fourth question was 'If there are problems in learning AL how can we rectify them? Or if learning AL is generally satisfactory, how can we make it even better?', while the last question was about the current requirements for developing the learning of Arabic as perceived by interviewees.

It is clear that the first and second questions were based on the first aim (i.e. to get insight into the actual situation of learning the Arabic language today), and would elicit

information to achieve the second research aim (i.e. to verify the existence and the seriousness of problems related to Arabic language curriculum in S.A.)

Interview question 3 was based on the third aim (i.e. to determine the most important perceived causes of the problem) while the focus of question 4 was on what can be done to solve the problems or improve the language learning, which was one of the most crucial aims of this phase of the research. The last question in the interview also served the fourth aim in a more specific context as it was intended to elicit information and recommendations that can be suggested as requirements for developing the Arabic language curriculum in S.A.

Undoubtedly, the interviews to collect qualitative data were the predominant target of this phase, but a one page questionnaire was prepared and given to respondents with the hope of having their opinion on some statements that had been already collected from Saudi newspapers in the previous eight months or so. Its chief aim was to help the researcher to understand the ongoing situation, rather than come up with generaliseable findings. So, as this short questionnaire was considered supplementary and of exploratory origin, it was not exposed to standardisation criteria. Almost all efforts and concern were devoted to the interviews in all levels, i.e. construction, conduct, and analysis.

At this stage of preparing the interview, the question of how to standardise the interview emerged, i.e. how to ensure its validity and reliability.

It should be noted that the researcher in this phase sought, as Bell put it, *insight rather than statistical analysis*. Thus the interviews were regarded as 'exploratory' and the evidence collected from the interviews were to be confirmed and backed up by the data taken from the questionnaires.

Nevertheless validity and reliability are always problematic and even more so in qualitative research. Gall and his colleagues (1996, p. 572) raise the question

How does a researcher arrive at valid, reliable knowledge if each individual being studied constructs his or her own reality?

Moreover, Wragg (1994, p. 278) stated that

These concepts apply to interviews as much as to any other data-gathering device.

Gall and his colleagues (1996, p. 290) more explicitly stated that

Questionnaire and interview must meet the same standards of validity and reliability...

Regarding the validity or the question of “*whether an indicator actually captures the meaning of the construct in which we are interested*” (Neuman, 1994, p. 127), Cohen and Manion (1994, pp. 282-3) advise that

Perhaps the most practical way of achieving greater validity is to minimize the amount of bias as much as possible. The sources of bias are the characteristics of the interviewer, the characteristics of the respondent, and the substantive content of the questions.

Therefore, with the guidance of Cohen and Manion (1994), the researcher carefully formulated the questions so that the meaning was clear and unambiguous; he was always aware of his own personal influence, attitudes and opinions toward the interview questions. He was also aware of the possible problems that might happen during the interviews, such as a tendency to see the respondent in his own image; a tendency to seek answers that support his preconceived notions; misperceptions of what the respondent is saying; and misunderstanding by the respondent of what is asked. In addition, the fact that the interview questions were based on both the findings of previous studies (see Chapter Six) and newspaper articles (Chapter Eight, p. 289), was, as argued, by Wragg (1994) held to increase the validity as well.

Regarding reliability which is concerned with the question, “*would an interviewer obtain a similar picture using the procedures on different occasions?*” (Wragg, 1994, p.

278) it was believed this could be achieved in the light of being aware of the issues previously mentioned. Additionally, the interviewee would be told of the purpose of the interview and why it was conducted and an attempt made to balance friendliness and objectivity.

7.2.2 Interview Sample

The researcher carefully selected the sample to be interviewed. His choice of sample was guided by the need to interview samples of three categories: educational supervisors, Arabic language university lecturers, and the Ministry of Education personnel, mainly those of the Arabic Language Unit, who have the main responsibility for planning the Arabic language curriculum. The need was for a proportional sample of these three categories, to get different views toward the issues under investigation. The Ministry personnel are the planners, Educational supervisors are practitioners, not only with a group of students in a certain school during their former teaching, but as overseers of the learning of the Arabic language, who work with teachers in various schools. Therefore, they may see and understand the actual situation and detect various problems that might occur in the educational field. The University lecturers were selected as they have deeper experience and expertise in the Arabic language and also, as they are observers of the educational outcomes of secondary education in the quality of applicants for university places. Those people intended to be interviewed were considered to have expertise in their field and believed to provide helpful information of the issues investigated.

In the time available, the researcher could conduct no more than 25 interviews, and from within the three samples, the research needed a wide variety of positions, ages, qualifications, and experience. Therefore, 'purposive sampling' was believed to satisfy the research purposes. In purposive sampling, as Cohen and Manion (1994, p. 89) explain:

researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality. In this way, they build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs.

Although the researcher is aware of the nonprobability of such a sample, he used this type bearing in mind Neuman's (1994, p. 198) assurance that it is

an acceptable kind of sampling for special situations. It uses the judgment of an expert in selecting cases, or selects cases with a specific purpose in mind. ... It is used in exploratory research or in field research

The overall number of people interviewed was 24, as will be illustrated in the next chapter.

7.2.3 Conducting the Interviews

Having determined the form of the interview and the period within which it would be conducted, the researcher began to make a timetable of interviews. The researcher approached each prospective interviewee separately to arrange a mutually agreeable interview time and date.

The researcher left his home in Buriadah city, and lived temporarily in the city of Riyadh where the research was conducted, to make himself available at a time suitable for the interviewee. Each prospective interviewee was contacted by telephone or by visiting him in his office to introduce the researcher himself and to request an opportunity for an interview lasting between 20-30 minutes at a convenient time.

As some of the work places of the interviewees were several miles from the researcher's accommodation, it was important to arrange interview schedules carefully, so as not to waste time or money, visiting an area twice.

At the beginning of each interview each interviewee was told of the purposes of the interview with some brief but relevant background of the interview. Each one was given explicit assurances that all information provided would be treated confidentially

and used for research purposes only, and that anonymity would be maintained in the final findings of the study.

Regarding recording the interviews, the advantages of tape-recording are that it

has the benefit of providing a much fuller and more accurate record of what was said (Vulliamy 1990, p. 104).

The researcher came to appreciate the point of view of Verma and Mallick (1999, p. 127) that,

a tape recording is likely to be the favoured option, since it not only provides a record of the interviewee's actual words but the inflections of his or her voice which can be an additional and valuable source of information. It also means that the researchers will be able to give all their attention to the interview process and concentrate on the interviewee's expressions and body language when responding to questions

Nevertheless, that does not mean tape-recording is beyond criticism. Turner (1997) indicated three main disadvantages of recording; the long time needed in eventual analysis, the fact that some people are not at ease or they feel restless when a tape recorder is used and the limits imposed on the choice of venue for the interviews. It was expected that if respondents were asked to reveal sensitive or confidential information, using tape-recording might distract them or prevent them from giving valid information.

An alternative approach to tape-recording is that of note-taking. Bell (1993, p. 96) advises interviewers to learn to devise shorthand systems of their own. She continues

as long as notes can be written up immediately, or very soon after the interview ends, it is possible to produce a reasonable record of what was said in the key areas.

On balance, the researcher was of the view of many researchers such as Gall et al. (1996) Vulliamy (1990), Bell (1993) Verma and Mallick(1999), that using a tape-recorder would save time and avoid stopping the interviewees in order to complete some notes. It also can be useful to check the wording of any statement the researcher

might wish to quote and to check that notes are accurate. It enables the researcher to listen several times in order to make full understanding and to identify all the ideas given. Tape-recording can also be useful to analyse the interview content and ensure the reliability of the analysis by asking someone else to analyse the forms.

Therefore, the researcher equipped himself with a tape-recorder and he asked each interviewee if he could tape-record the interview, assuring each person complete anonymity. Unfortunately, although the issues being researched are not particularly sensitive ones, all interviewees, except two, preferred not to be recorded. As the researcher knows the situation in S.A. and its social-political circumstances, he understood and appreciated their views. In fact, in some cases, not tape-recording the interviews was conducive to the validity of the answers, as one interviewee made it clear, a few minutes after giving permission for the interview to be recorded, saying explicitly

'If you wish to collect frank and valid data you have to switch the machine off'!!

When the researcher asked someone else if he could tape record the interview, he was asked to show the respondent the interview questions first, then he said politely,

I think there is no need to tape-record the interview

As the researcher was not allowed to tape-record the interviews, he used the alternative approach, note-taking. Benefiting from the advice of Bell (1993) and Gall and his colleagues (1996), the researcher developed his own shorthand system and wrote up immediately as much as he could of the interviews. Sometimes it was necessary to stop the interviewee, asking him to allow his idea to be written down. At the end of the interview, the researcher read back all the notes for the interviewee's approval. Soon after the interview, the researcher reviewed each interview memorandum, recording in full what had been said, while it was still fresh in his mind.

Regarding the two interviews tape-recorded, the researcher transcribed them in full after a few days.

In carrying out interviews, a very flexible approach was adopted. The researcher varied the order of the questions according to the exchange with the interviewees.

Respondents were not asked embarrassing questions or forced to answer every question.

There was no fixed sequence of questions and no suggestion of the responses. The researcher's strategy was to follow the interest of the interviewee himself in order to collect as many ideas and responses as possible, because at this stage, the researcher wanted to obtain a broad, general picture of the current situation of learning Arabic, rather than concentrate deeply on particular or single issues. Open ended questions allowed interviewees the opportunity to put forward their own thoughts and ideas, in some cases going off the point completely stating, in details, their own, and sometimes personal, daily problems. Although sometimes the researcher tried unobtrusively to draw their attention back to the main issues, this information was valuable in another way, partly to gain broader understanding of the situation and problems which, while beyond the scope of the current study may be needed in the future, and partly to create empathy with the interviewees.

Regarding the locations and times of the interviews, the majority were conducted during the beginning of the first semester and before the start of the academic year, i.e. in the four weeks prior to the return of the students. There were not many students, either in the university or in the schools. Interviews could be held in interviewees' offices, with few interruptions.

Twenty four interviews were conducted. Another five prospective interviewees declined to be interviewed or cancelled an appointment because they were busy. All the interviews were conducted in August and September 1997. More details of the sample will be included in Chapter Eight: Interviews Analysis.

7.2.4 Analysing the Interviews

Qualitative data are usually analysed by arranging them in the form of text written in words and phrases with few or even no, numbers. According to Neuman (1994, p. 405), it is often less standardised and inductive and aims to create new concepts and theory.

He comments

Qualitative analysis is less abstract than statistical analysis and closer to raw data. Qualitative analysis does not draw on a large, well-established body of formal knowledge from mathematics and statistics. The data are in the form of words, which are relatively imprecise, diffuse, and context-based, and can have more than one meaning.

In this phase of the study the purpose was to arrive at a general picture of the current situation and how it can be tackled. So, after the interviews were completed, the researcher decided to go through the transcripts of each interviewee and highlight the answers relevant to each question asked. Sometimes the researcher found comments relevant to one question were answered as part of another, so the researcher rearranged the interviewees' ideas by question. Having done this, the researcher drew up a matrix of comments made by each category of the sample against questions asked and the main ideas that emerged. Within and between the three categories of the interviewees the researcher highlighted agreements, similarities and differences among these ideas and viewpoints.

One strategy followed was to quote explicitly some sentences of the interviewees as to present their views more clearly. The researcher, also, highlighted the source of the idea, i.e. either educational supervisor or university lecturer or Ministry personnel, trying to interpret any differences of view among them. Finally, although numbers were not important for this phase the researcher mentioned, sometimes, the number of respondents who voiced a particular idea, to give a general indication of the issues of interest to the respondents. The findings of this phase confirmed the need for identifying, evaluating and prioritising the requirements for developing the Arabic

language curriculum. They also provided the researcher with valuable data which represented a solid basis for the construction of the questionnaire, the instrument of the second, i.e. quantitative, phase of research. In the next section, the second phase of the study devoted to the collection of the quantitative data will be examined in some depth.

7.3 Phase Two: Quantitative Data:

Quantitative research is concerned with data which can be presented in the form of discrete units. The chief purpose of such research is to accumulate information that can be quantified and compared with each other by using statistical techniques. Bell (1993) suggested that such research should use scientific techniques to produce quantified and generaliseable conclusions. However, the choice of a particular perspective according to Verma and Mallick (1999, p. 26),

has implications for the type of evidence to be collected and the mode of analysis used in the investigation of a research question or issue.

The findings of the first phase of the survey supported the impression gained from the literature that the current situation of the Arabic language curriculum in S. A., needs to be tackled and improved. Different suggestions and views were also collected to develop the curriculum. Therefore, the need was for quantitative evidence and statistical analysis to arrive at generaliseable conclusions on these issues.

The researcher had to consider the time involved, bearing in mind that he hoped to gather information from at least two hundred respondents.

Munn and Driver (1995, p. 2) alluded to the advantages of the use of the questionnaire suggesting four advantages of using a questionnaire. They are:

- *an efficient use of time*
- *anonymity (for the respondent)*
- *the possibility of a high return rate*
- *standardised questions.*

Recognising the special characteristics of the study, the rationale of designing the questionnaire was as expressed by Lewin (1990, p. 129):

I felt that it would enrich the insights derived from school-based work, permit some generalizations to emerge with more confidence than would otherwise be possible, provide a valuable source of baseline data, and allow qualitative as well as quantitative data to be collected from more respondents than could be interviewed.

The questionnaire would enable the researcher to gather a substantial amount of data both quantitative and qualitative, from a larger number of different categories, and the researcher felt that interviews and questionnaires would complement each other.

Consequently, the questionnaire was believed to be the most appropriate technique for this phase of the study. Questionnaires are a good technique for collecting data, though great care must be taken in its four stages: construction, piloting, administration and analysis which will be elucidated farther in the following sections.

7.3.1 Constructing the Questionnaire

Probably constructing the questionnaire is the most crucial stage in doing a questionnaire-based survey. Bell (1993, p. 75) made it clear that

It is harder to produce a really good questionnaire than might be imagined.

Cohen and Manion (1994, p. 92) claim that

An ideal questionnaire possesses the same properties as a good law.

Verma and Mallick (1999, p. 117,118), recommended that the first step in constructing the questionnaire is a review to identify clearly the general information needed and the objectives of the study, to provide a touchstone against which the first draft of the questionnaire can be tested. They added:

Care should also be taken to ensure that, so far as can possibly be foreseen, the questions cover all aspects of the study. On the other hand, in designing a questionnaire, the researcher must be wary of making excessive demands on the people for whom it is intended.

So, to develop the questionnaires, the researcher first decided the general types of information required, as indicated earlier. Secondly, it was necessary to determine, in general, the sort of people from whom data would be obtained. Three categories were suggested as sources of the information wanted: teachers, educational supervisors and university lecturers -more details about these categories and why they were selected will be given later, in Chapter Nine. Thirdly, in accordance with the model chosen to be suitable for developing the Arabic language curriculum in Saudi Arabia (see chapter five), the main body of the questionnaires was arranged in four sections in order to cover the components of the Arabic language curriculum. They are:

- a. The requirements related to curriculum objectives and foundations;
- b. The requirements related to curriculum content and learning skills;
- c. The requirements related to teaching methods and resources; and,
- d. The requirements related to evaluation.

Having decided the subsidiary topics and the information required, the potential research population, and the general theme of the questionnaire, the task then, as recommended by Cohen and Manion (1994, p. 93), involves the structure of the questionnaire itself, collecting its items and questions. However, as Bell (1993, p. 75) made clear

Care has to be taken in selecting questions type, in question-writing, in the design, piloting, distribution, and return of questionnaires.

Undoubtedly, within each step, as Youngman, (1994, p. 249) explains,

...for worthwhile results a much more rigorous procedure is necessary.

Prior to constructing the questionnaire, identifying the sources of the questionnaire items or questions is of crucial importance. The first source for the questionnaire, as recommended by Youngman (1994, p. 249), was relevant literature which he described as "*the prime source*", presuming that

This implies two possibilities; either the literature study will have revealed specific questions, or more generally it will have suggested important areas needing more detailed investigation.

Five areas of the literature were examined with the hope of collecting the appropriate requirements. They were:

- a. the main characteristics of the Arabic language and of the methods of its teaching in various historical periods (see chapter 2) .
- b. the current situation of the educational system and, in particular, the Arabic language curriculum in modern Saudi Arabia (see chapter 3) .
- c. the methods and approaches of language acquisition and learning (see chapter 4) .
- d. methods and models of curriculum development (see chapter 5) .
- e. empirical studies for developing the Arabic language curriculum (see chapter 6) .

This was recognised to be the most important aspect of the literature as a source for collecting the requirements or the questionnaire items.

The second source was the results from the exploratory interviews described in the previous section.

On starting to construct the questionnaire, a decision had to be made regarding the type of questions that would be asked. In the light of the nature of the investigation, closed questions were believed to be the appropriate form. This type of question was selected in accordance with the advice of Oppenheim (1992, p. 114) who suggested they are

... easier and quicker to answer; they require no writing, and quantification is straightforward, this often means that more questions can be asked within a given length of time and that more can be accomplished with a given sum of money.

A large number of items and questions were assembled which required reviewing, refining and reducing. For each item an examination was conducted against the following criteria suggested by Bell (1993, p. 88):

Is there any ambiguity, imprecision or assumption? Are you asking respondents to remember? Will they be able to? Are you asking for knowledge respondents may not have? any double, leading presuming, hypothetical or offensive questions?

Undoubtedly, it was a difficult process to select and improve the most appropriate items. Therefore, in addition to the researchers' own refining, a great deal of consultation with the researchers' supervisors and with some colleagues who share the same interest were conducted. The two phases of piloting and the advice that emerged from them helped also in assuring better quality of the items included in the actual questionnaire.

The response categories suggested in the early stage of questionnaire construction were four: 'Necessary', 'Very important', 'important' and 'not important'. Respondents were asked to locate each item (requirement) of the questionnaire into one of them. However, it was recognised that the response categories or sets of the questionnaire are of crucial importance. They can cause invalid responses in which, as Gall et al. (1994, p. 271) suggest,

an individual's responses reflect a general predisposition rather than a careful response to the content of each item.

The requirements included in the questionnaire were taken from both the literature and from the interviews. It can be argued that each one, in itself, is very necessary for some reason or another or at least in relation to a certain group of students which means that a large number, if not all, of the requirements would be allocated in the 'Necessary'

category which would yield meaningless data. The two categories: *'Necessary'*, and *'Very important'*, overlap and might cause ambiguity. This, also, would let less interested respondents get away with answering carelessly and it would not be possible to distinguish those who are interested and give valid data and those who fill out the questionnaire unthinkingly. On the other hand, prioritising the requirements would involve each requirement being assessed in comparison with the others in each section, rather than weighted separately. The need then, was for an appropriate technique to address these problems. Therefore, an idea used by Wright and Bottery (1997) was developed to be suitable for the current study. Three categories were determined: *'Most important'*, *'Of some importance'* and *'Least important'*. Within the first category, *'Most important'*, a maximum number of choices was set, to prevent respondents locating most requirements in this category. At the foot of each page the respondents were asked to look back to what they had already located in the category: *'Most important'* and select *'The most important three requirements'* (in evaluation-related requirements they were asked to select only two as there was a smaller number). It is worth mentioning here that, when this form of layout was adopted, it was realised that, as this format requires more effort and attention to be paid, it might reduce the rate of response or it might reduce the valid number of the returned questionnaires. Indeed, filling the questionnaire would take a longer time. Some respondents either would not respond or would fill out the questionnaire without following the instructions. Although deciding between the adoption of this format and an easier, more quickly filled format was quite difficult, the researcher maintained the view that getting valid data was better than getting a larger amount of data of doubtful validity.

Regarding the questionnaire layout (see Appendix 4.1. and 4.2) the first page was a coloured covering sheet with the title of the study and related information. The second page contained an introductory letter, explaining the purpose of the study, thanking the respondents for their co-operation and presenting clear instruction for filling the

questionnaire. The following four pages covered the four sections mentioned earlier. The last page of the questionnaire was devoted to classifying and personal questions following the idea suggested by Oppenheim (1992, p. 109) who argued that

...personal data questions should always come near the end of a questionnaire and should be preceded by a short explanation such as 'now, to help us classify your answer and to make our statistical comparison, would you mind telling us...

In order to gain some qualitative information the last section of the questionnaire was left for the respondents' comments and advice. It was an open section asking respondents to feel free to add any advice and explanations that they believed would be valuable and important to the researcher. Respondents were asked to turn the page if they needed more space. At the very end of the questionnaire, there was a brief thanks for their participation and an offer to send a short abstract of the major findings when the study is completed.

Three versions of the questionnaire were produced to be suitable for the three categories of the research. The content of the three versions was exactly the same, except the general (personal) information sheet which was set to be suitable to each category. The covering sheet was coloured to make the appearance of the questionnaire look better, and each version was a different colour to facilitate classification.

7.3.2 Standardising and Piloting the Questionnaire

Standardising the questionnaire is believed to be a crucial part of the construction of the questionnaire. Although it was a continuous process since the beginning of constructing the questionnaire, it is presented in a separate subsection to highlight three crucial issues: piloting, validity and reliability, in addition to the translation process of the questionnaire.

Piloting, as Youngman (1994, p. 262) believes,

Is an integral part of any research and questionnaire survey is no exception.

Undoubtedly, to get the right questionnaire, "*careful piloting is necessary*" (Bell, 1993, p. 11), as "*The investigator will get valuable feedback,*" (Johnson, 1994, p. 176), but the question is what should be piloted? Oppenheim (1992, p. 48) makes it obvious that

In principle, almost anything about a social survey can and should be piloted,... When in doubt – and especially when not in doubt – do a pilot run.

Therefore, a first stage of piloting was conducted in the period from 12.12.97 to 5.1.98 to try out the questionnaire with similar samples to those to be used in the main study.

The aims of this pilot study were:

1. To improve the validity of the measure through seeking opinions toward it and applying a type of face validity: "panel of judges".
2. To ensure the clarity and correctness of the questionnaire.
3. To identify possible problems and dilemmas that may occur in the main study.
4. To consider what statistical tests may be appropriate for use on the data intended to be collected.

The sample of this pilot study included 14 people, who were living temporarily in the U.K. and who used to be either Arabic language teachers, or university lecturers; one of them was a former educational supervisor. Although the sample was relatively small, and from a sample similar to but not the same as the main study, it is accepted by Verma and Mallick (1999, 120) that questionnaires should be piloted in

A group similar to the sample for which it is destined. This need not be large: a dozen or 20 is usually adequate.

The researcher asked respondents if they would complete the questionnaire and tell him whether they believed that the questionnaire was appropriate to identify the requirements for developing the Arabic language curriculum in S. A. They were asked to let the researcher know if any of the items were ambiguous or not incisive and asked

if they would time themselves completing the questionnaire. The respondents reported that they found it easy to understand and were able to complete the questionnaire within fifteen to twenty five minutes. Valuable suggestions and corrections that arose from this pilot study included splitting some items into two and moving some items from one section to another, in addition to summarising and shortening the instruction letter.

When the questionnaires were collected, four respondents were interviewed (around 40 minutes each) to discuss the points emerging from their advice.

However, the researcher felt that conducting a second run of piloting on the actual sample in the city of Riyadh would be of great help to him. Conducting more than one stage of piloting was suggested by Youngman (1994, p. 262) saying

It is likely that more than one piloting will be needed because any changes suggested by the first pilot will themselves require testing....

Hence, the second stage of piloting was carried out involving 32 teachers from the target population. With the exception of several language corrections, not many suggestions emerged from the second stage of piloting. However, three crucial issues arose:

- * The rate of response was lower than expected (less than 60 %) although the questionnaires were hand delivered;
- * Some questionnaires were completed carelessly, suggesting that the percentage of useable questionnaires would be smaller;
- * It was possible to deliver the questionnaires through the schools' pigeonholes which enabled the sample to be increased without exceeding the time limit set for the study.

These issues encouraged the researcher to increase the sample size; i.e. instead of the intended random selection of 50 % of the Arabic language teachers, the plan was

amended to include all Arabic language teachers in intermediate and secondary schools in Riyadh. More details of the actual target sample of the study will be illustrated later.

Regarding reliability and validity, Neuman (1994, p. 127) warned that

Perfect reliability and validity are virtually impossible to achieve. Rather, they are ideals researchers strive for. Researchers want to maximize the reliability and validity of indicators.

Two types of validity were considered. First, **content validity**, which refers to the degree to which the measure adequately represents the content or conceptual domain, it purports to measure (Gall et al., 1996). To assure the content validity of the questionnaire the various aspects of the definition of the requirements for developing the Arabic language curriculum were specified. The questionnaire items were then developed to cover all various parts of the definition.

Second, **face validity**. This validity is believed to be the easiest and the most basic type of validity. According to Neuman (1994, p. 131, it is

...a judgement by the scientific community that the indicator really measures the construct.

Although this technique has been criticised by some researchers such as Oppenheim, (1992), and Munby (1982), it is accepted by others such as Bell (1993), Neuman (1994) and many others. Youngman (1994, p. 263) also justify this technique as he argues that

Validity is typically assessed in terms of face validity, more often than not a euphemism for doing nothing. If any objective measure is available then it should be considered.

For the current study, in view of the lack of a similar instrument, this type of validity was accepted. Nine people of the first stage sample were considered to be the 'the scientific community' as eight of them were university lecturers in the field of the Arabic language and one was a former Arabic language educational supervisor. There was a complete agreement among them that the questionnaire was suitable to identify

the requirements for developing the Arabic language, which indicated the face validity of the questionnaire.

In order to improve the questionnaire reliability, all questions were refined qualitatively to ensure they were unambiguous, clear and uncomplicated. The instructions for the questionnaire was written clearly on the top of each page. The two stages of piloting were felt to maximise the reliability as some items believed not to be clear were replaced. The type of response categories was considered to assure reliability, as each respondent must think carefully before ticking any item, which can be taken as an indicator of the reliability of the questionnaire. To assess the reliability of the questionnaire, representative reliability was suggested by Neuman (1994, p. 128) as it addresses the question

does the indicator deliver the same answer when applied to different groups? An indicator has high representative reliability if it yields the same result for a construct when applied to different subpopulations

The data obtained were analysed to determine whether the questionnaire has this type of reliability. It was found that there was a high level of similarity in the answers of sub-samples as it can easily be seen in the responses of the intermediate and secondary teachers shown in Chapter Nine (see Table 9.2.1).

In relation to assuring a greater possible level of correctness and accuracy of the translation of the research instrument, a strategy which was thought of in the early stage of the questionnaire construction was 'translation-back-translation'

However, three points should initially be made clear. First, there was, as far as it is known, no similar study or instrument neither in Arabic or in English, which could be taken as a base for the structure of the questionnaire. Second, the questionnaire items were drawn from both Arabic and English literature and from the interviews which were in Arabic in origin. Third, the first version of the questionnaire had to be produced in

English to be discussed at the academic supervision level, and in Arabic to be used in the first stage of piloting. Therefore, at that time the researcher needed to ensure the correctness of the translation of both the Arabic items into English and vice versa. The researcher gave two English copies and an Arabic copy to three people, asking them to translate them, and when the researcher had them back he phoned one of those who had translated the English version and discussed some of his suggested translation.

In addition to getting some helpful ideas, the researcher came to the conclusion that, in the light of the difficulty of achieving absolute accuracy of translation, due to practical and, perhaps, linguistic reasons, it was necessary to recognise either English or Arabic as the 'original' version and the other as the 'translated version'. Because Arabic is the first language of the researcher and also the questionnaire had to be administered in Arabic, the Arabic version was adopted as the original questionnaire. The amendments that emerged from piloting the questionnaire were made only in the Arabic version.

The job then was to assure that the items analysed and presented in the study really represented the questionnaire items answered in Arabic by the respondents. After collecting the questionnaire, the English version was amended to reflect the changes that emerged from piloting the questionnaire, and two copies were given to be translated into Arabic again using the mentioned strategy, 'translation-back-translation'. There were some differences in both vocabulary and language style, but the researcher could make sure that the ideas and meanings were correct. Benefiting from this strategy, some small changes were conducted, in addition to changing the content-related item from *'Avoiding over-crowding of experience in the curriculum'* to *'Avoiding over-crowding of material to be covered in the curriculum'* as it was understood, then translated, incorrectly.

7.3.3 Questionnaire Sample

Prior to discussing the research sample, a distinction should be made between the two terms: population and sample. As a research term, population refers to a discrete larger group of units from which a sample is selected for study. Although only the sample participates, generalisations are made about the population. So, a sample is always assumed to be representative of the population, and treated as though it were the population (Bryman and Cramer, 1996).

The current study was applied in the city of Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia. The total population of Riyadh reported in the 1993 National Census was around 2.8 million (Ministry of Planning, 1993) representing around 20 % of the whole urban population of the country. In Riyadh, in the academic year 1998, the number of boys' schools was 972. This figure includes public, private and Qur'anic schools for the three stages: Elementary, Intermediate and Secondary. There are two universities, Al-Imam University and King Saud University, both of which offer Arabic language studies.

As this study aimed to identify the requirements for developing the Arabic language curriculum in Intermediate and Secondary Schools in Saudi Arabia, the required data would be obtained from two categories of sources: Practitioners and Specialists.

1. ***Practitioners***: This source encompasses two categories:
 - a. Arabic language Teachers:
 - b. Educational Supervisors (E.S.) of teaching Arabic in Riyadh.
2. ***Specialists***: Lecturers in the departments of Arabic of the two universities in Riyadh, which prepare Arabic language teachers

The rationale for selecting the two practitioner categories was that they are the people most involved with the Arabic language curriculum. Although they have some theoretical knowledge, as they graduated from Education departments (colleges) in

universities which prepare teachers for Arabic, their main experience comes from their practical work as they are either currently teaching or, according to the Saudi education system, have taught for more than four years before becoming Supervisors and are required to work with teachers in schools at least 70 % of their work-time. Teachers' experience comes from dealing daily with the curriculum, and, therefore, they are more likely to determine and evaluate the importance of the requirements for developing it. Educational supervisors have wider experience of different stages and schools, which may enable them to recognise the requirements from broader viewpoints.

Regarding specialists, although they may have some pedagogic experience in their field, as some of them supervise student-teachers and some are former teachers, their experience generally is theoretical as they are involved with pure and deeper study of the Arabic language. The main rationale for selecting this category is, partly, that the specialists are more likely to be aware of the characteristics and linguistic aspects of the Arabic language. On the other hand, they deal with students who come to university after graduating from the general schools. This would enable lecturers to evaluate the outcome of the curriculum of the Arabic language, at least during the six years of the Intermediate and Secondary Schools.

Thus, the researcher defined these three categories to be the population of the study.

The chosen district was Riyadh. The reasons for choosing this city are:

1. It is inhabited by more than 20 % of the total population of Saudi citizens (Al-Riyadh newspaper, Issue 109691997) .
2. It has the biggest two of the five Saudi Universities involved with Arabic language studies (The Ministry of Higher Education, 1996);
3. It is the capital city of Saudi Arabia.

Therefore, the research population consisted of three categories:

- a. All the Arabic Language teachers working in boys' General Intermediate and Secondary Schools in the Riyadh Educational District in the academic year 1998.

- b. All the Arabic Language Education Supervisors working in the Riyadh educational District in the academic year 1998.
- c. All the male Arabic language university lecturers working in Al-Imam University and King Saud University in the city of Riyadh in the academic year 1998. Those who were appointed as assistant lecturers were not recognised as part of the population.

Regarding the sample, because of the time and resources available to the researcher, it was not possible to obtain the research data from the whole of the survey population. It was suggested by Robson (1994, p. 237) that

It is usually necessary to reduce your task to manageable dimensions by sampling from the population of interest.

Therefore, the study had been planned to involve all educational supervisors and 50 % of the teachers and of the university lecturers of the research population of Riyadh Educational District of Saudi Arabia as the sample of the study. However, because of some issues emerging from the second stage of piloting, mentioned earlier (see page 245), the plan was amended to include all Arabic language teachers.

The actual sizes of the research population and sample of the three categories are illustrated in the following table:

Table 7.2**The Actual Sizes of the Research Population and Sample**

Category	The population	The actual target Sample	Notes
Intermediate teachers	562*	562	The number of schools is 189**
Secondary Teachers	242*	242	The number of schools is 71**
Education Supervisors	32***	32	
Al-Imam University Lecturers	102****	51 (50 %)	
King Saud University Lecturers	57*****	28 (50 %)	
Total	994	914	

Sources: *The Riyadh Education District (1998 a) (Unpublished poster) ** The Riyadh Education District (1997) and the Riyadh Education District (1998 b) (Unpublished document). *** The Riyadh Education District (1998 c) (Unpublished communication list). **** Al-Imam University (1998) (Unpublished list provided to the researcher on request). ***** King Saud University (1998) (Unpublished list provided to the researcher On request).

Two pieces of information regarding the previous table still need to be clarified. First, the exact number of Arabic language teachers working in the Intermediate and Secondary Schools in the Riyadh Educational District for the academic year 97/98 is 823, but 19 of them teach in Qura'nic Schools. As the actual population is those who teach in general schools, Qura'nic school teachers were excluded. Second, in Al-Imam University, there are three departments involved with Arabic language studies and the number given above includes all three departments: syntax, literature, and rhetoric.

Regarding the selection of the target sample (50 %) of the university lecturers population, it was the interest of the researcher to draw a representative sample of this category. Methodologists agree that random sampling is the most powerful technique of sampling. Oppenheim (1992, p. 39) considers a random sample to be representative since

... every member of the population has a statistically equal chance of being selected.

The simple random sampling technique involves selecting at random from a list of the population. According to Bryman and Cramer (1996, p. 95), this sampling is

The most basic type of probability sample.

That is because, as Neuman (1994, p. 201) pointed out,

Both the easiest random sample to understand and the one on which other types are modeled.

However, one of the problems associated with this type of sampling, as Cohen and Manion (1994, p. 89) suggest that

A complete list of the population is needed and this is not always readily available.

Nevertheless, as lists of all the university lecturers population was attainable, the simple random technique was applied for selecting representative sample. On the generation of simple random samples Munn and Driver (1995, pp. 12,13) advise the researcher that

First, you must define as clearly as possible the population you are interested in. ... You then acquire or create a list of all the members of the population. Then you prepare a set of random numbers corresponding to the size of sample you want, and select individuals from the list accordingly. You can select random numbers from commercially produced tables or generate them using a microcomputer.

These guidelines were followed precisely. The facility of the SPSS program was used to select randomly 50 % of the whole population of the university lecturers population.

7.3.4 Administering the Questionnaire

Questionnaires can be given to respondents directly (self-administered) or mailed to respondents who read the instructions and questions and then record their answers. The decision as to which method is to be adopted, according to Bell (1993) should be made at an early stage

Youngman (1994, p. 263) emphasised that

Cost, effort, delay and willingness are just a selection of the factors affecting choice of distribution method and therefore no single ideal procedure can be offered.

In the light of such considerations, the plan before the second stage of piloting had been made to adopt a self-administered method with all research categories. However, while the researcher was conducting the second stage of piloting it was noted that, first, it was not possible to meet the Arabic language teachers as they were tied up with teaching and administrative duties. Additionally, some head-teachers did not let the researcher meet the Arabic language teachers asking the researcher to allow them to distribute questionnaires for him. Second, although the researcher met the head-teachers and explained the purpose of the study and asked them to do their best to encourage response, the rate of response was relatively low.

Therefore, the researcher was persuaded that for the teacher sample, the postal method of administration was more appropriate and, therefore, was adopted, while self-administering was suggested to be suitable for the other categories, educational supervisors and university lecturers.

The public mail system was not believed to be cost-effective compared with school pigeon-holes, which were permitted to be used for academic research purposes. So, for the teachers the school pigeon-holes were used to distribute the questionnaires. For the other two categories, educational supervisors and university lecturers, the researcher was desirous to meet them and hand them the questionnaire. However, in some cases, especially with the university lecturers, it was not possible to meet the selected respondents as they were out of their offices, which left no choice but the use of their pigeon-holes, and a follow-up call to their offices to meet them later.

The researcher started to distribute the questionnaire in the middle of February 1998.

The following steps were followed for distribution and collection of the research questionnaires:

1. The questionnaires were given personally, put in the prospective respondent's pigeon-hole or sent to the Arabic language teachers through the school pigeon-holes (during the third and fourth weeks of February) .
2. The researcher phoned the schools, called into lecturers' offices, and visited the sub-supervision bureau to check that the questionnaires had arrived and encourage the sample to reply.
3. Questionnaire collection was begun. By the end of this stage (the second week of March), around 30 % of the questionnaires were collected.
4. Reminder letters were sent to those who had not replied, encouraging them to send the questionnaire back (in the third week of March) .
5. The school head teachers were phoned five days after sending out the first reminder letter (in the third and fourth weeks of March and the first week of April) .
6. A second reminder letter was sent suggesting a deadline for replies of Wednesday 22nd April.
7. The respondents were checked either through phoning schools' head-teachers or calling in their offices, and encouraged to reply.
8. The last collection of questionnaires was made on Wednesday 29th April.

As mentioned earlier, the questionnaires were sent through the school pigeon-holes which are supposed to be checked twice a week by one of the school administrators.

However, due to shortage of staff, their pigeon-holes were not checked when the questionnaires were distributed. Therefore, 41 questionnaires did not get to the intermediate school intended, and 26 questionnaires did not get to the secondary school intended. Two of the educational supervisors were off work (one was on an in-service-training programme and the other was on sick-leave) while six out of the university

lecturers sample were either on study-leave or temporarily engaged in administrative duties outside the university. Consequently, the overall number of questionnaires presumed to be delivered to the prospective respondents was 839.

Regarding the return rate Cohen & Manion (1994, p. 98) recommend

'A well planned postal survey should obtain at least a 40 % response rate and with the judicious use of reminders, a 70 per cent to 80 per cent response level should be possible.'

The total number of questionnaires returned was 505. This represented around 61 % of the total number presumed to be received by the respondents. Although as Munn and Drever (1995, p. 15) state: *'Obviously the larger the sample the better.'*, the time available for the research did not offer the chance to do more follow up trials.

Nevertheless, the researcher was pleased with the response rate and found many of the questionnaires returned to be full of comments which were analysed and compared with the interview findings. The main problem was that not all the questionnaires collected were valid or useable. In chapter nine, a more detailed discussion of this issue will be provided.

7.3.5 Analysing the Questionnaires

Educational research relies heavily on data gathering for the advancement of knowledge. Indeed, in quantitative research, the most objective and carefully collected numerical information does not and cannot speak for itself. The data must be organised, evaluated and analysed in order to be useful and to make sense of it. So, the appropriate statistical technique for collecting, presenting and analysing data must be used effectively. Healey (1996, p 1) put it clearly:

Without a good understanding of the principles of statistical analysis, the researcher will be unable to make sense of the data. Without the appropriate application of statistical techniques, the data will remain mute and useless.

Therefore to make sense of the quantitative data collected, four main stages were followed: data preparation, describing the data, analysing the differences and similarities, and interpreting data.

In the data preparation stage, the need was to put the data into a form that is easy to work with. Hardman (1994, p. 330) advises that

At this stage in the research process you should have data pertaining to all the relevant variables you wish to examine for each case to be included in the study.

In the current study the data were coded using a word processor then transferred to the SPSS program, because it is one of the most powerful statistical software packages for social research and also because the researcher has some experience of using this software.

The main job of the second stage, describing the data, according to Munn /Drever (1995, p. 44) was

Counting the number of times each code appears on a column and checking that all the respondents are accounted for.

The data were statistically described starting with the questionnaire return rate, the general characteristics of the research sample and then the main data of the four curriculum components mentioned earlier, as will be apparent in Chapter Nine.

The researcher was concerned in the third stage to make some comparison between the views of the research samples according to various variables such as work and experience. For this purpose, the analytical statistical techniques and their findings are presented in Chapter Nine.

The fourth stage was devoted to interpreting the data described and analysed.

According to Munn/Drever (1995, p. 37), two questions are of interest at this stage:

... what do the numbers mean? What is their importance?

Therefore, in a later chapter, the significance and coherent meaning of the data expressed in numbers will be illustrated to tell how they relate to other numbers and to the general questions of the research. The research will go further to link the findings of the current study with those of the other studies in the field of Arabic language curriculum.

The comments made by the respondents at the end of the questionnaires were analysed qualitatively using the same techniques used for analysing the interviews.

7.4 Summary

This chapter has focused on the main methodological issues arising from the research question for the empirical part of the study. The research strategies employed have been outlined and consideration has been given to the way in which the first phase of the study influenced the following phase. Within each phase a discussion was presented of the advantages and disadvantages of using the appropriate technique, how the research techniques were constructed and conducted, and then, how the data were analysed.

In the first phase of the study, the interviews were conducted. Through reviewing the related literature the researcher felt that the Arabic language curriculum was suffering from serious problems. This pointed to a need to make sure of the seriousness of this problem, investigate its causes and identify how it can be solved. Semi-structured interviews were suggested as most appropriate for doing this job. The interviews were analysed and their findings set the base for the second stage of the empirical study. The questionnaire was selected to be the most appropriate technique for the second phase of the empirical study. The rationale for selecting this instrument was the need for quantitative data from a large number of specialists and practitioners. The interviews had suggested many requirements for developing the Arabic language

curriculum, which, in addition to other requirements emerging from the related literature, needed to be refined and prioritised. To fulfil this purpose, a questionnaire was constructed, developed and distributed. The data collected were then analysed to come to generaliseable findings of the requirements for developing the Arabic language curriculum in Intermediate and Secondary Schools in Saudi Arabia.

In sum, the researcher attempted to travel progressively from the examination of documentary evidence about the past and present situation of the Arabic language curriculum, through initial interviews with the most involved people to a questionnaire survey with a large number of teachers, educational supervisors and university lecturers.

It is believed that the methodology adopted was appropriate and adequate for determining the requirements for developing the Arabic language in Saudi Arabia.

The following chapter reports and analyses the results of the interviews and in the subsequent one. Chapter Nine, the questionnaire survey data will be presented and discussed. The last chapter, Chapter Ten, will be devoted to a summary of the study, conclusions and the implications for practice and further research.

Chapter Eight

Exploratory Interviews:

The Current Situation of Learning the Arabic Language In SA

8.1. Sample Characteristics

8.2. The Current Situation of AL Education

8.3. The Media Role Toward Learning Arabic

8.4. The Problems and Obstacles to Learning AL

8.5. Possible Solutions to the Problems

8.6. Requirements for Developing the Learning of Arabic

8.7. Scaled Questionnaire Data

8.8. Summary

Chapter Eight

Exploratory Interviews

The Current Situation of

Learning the Arabic Language in SA

At an early stage of the study, the researcher had rough ideas of the actual situation of the AL education in SA. It was believed helpful, if not necessary, to the researcher to conduct an exploratory field work study to help to identify views of the current situation of the Arabic Education and how it can be rectified. Such a study was conducted to have qualitative data which as Verma and Mallick (1999, p.27) believe

involves the gathering of evidence that reflects the experience, feelings or judgements of individual taking part in the investigation of a research problem.

As this study was exploratory in nature, the researcher did not follow or develop particular ideas, but rather examined the field, gaining a wider picture of the interviewees' perspectives of the themes being investigated. This chapter, therefore, will be presented in six sections: (1) Sample Characteristics, to give some details about this study's sample, (2) the Current Situation of Arabic Education, (3) the Media Role Toward Learning Arabic, (4) Problems and Obstacles to Learning AL, (5) Possible Solutions and to the Problems, (6) Requirements for Developing Learning AL in SA, (7) Scaled Questionnaire Data, which presents the data obtained from the short questionnaire attached to the interviews. A short summary is provided of the main issues which emerged

8.1. Sample Characteristics

The main scope of this study, as mentioned, was to interview people most involved with the AL curriculum in SA. Therefore, the researcher undertook these interviews to obtain data from the following sources.

1. Educational Supervisors of AL (ESs);
2. Ministerial Personnel (MPs) including those responsible for the AL Unit and also the Supervisor of the Educational Media at the Ministry of Education;
3. University Lecturers (ULs) in the AL department in Al-Imam University and King-Saud University in the city of Riyadh, in SA

The following table shows breakdown of the sample into the three categories:

Table 8.1.1
Interviews Sample Categories

The Categories	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Education Supervisors	12	50 %	50 %
University Lecturers	8	33.3 %	83.3 %
Ministerial Personnel	4	16.7 %	100 %
Total	24	100 %	

The sample data in Table 8.1.1 show that 50 % of the people taking part in this study were Educational Supervisors. That is because they are the people most involved with the AL curriculum and they are more likely to be aware of the situation in teaching and learning Arabic, and associated problems.

Although six of the AL Unit attended the meeting, the Ministerial Personnel category (MPs) included only the three who were willing to participate in the open interview/discussion, which was held at the researcher's request. This category also refers to another MP who acts as the Supervisor General of Educational Information/Media in the Ministry of Education.

The sample chosen were intended to be from different backgrounds in their experience and their qualifications. The sample included five non-Saudis, one of whom was an Educational Supervisor and four were ULs. The researcher chose them because they might be able to comment on how the situation in SA compared with that in other

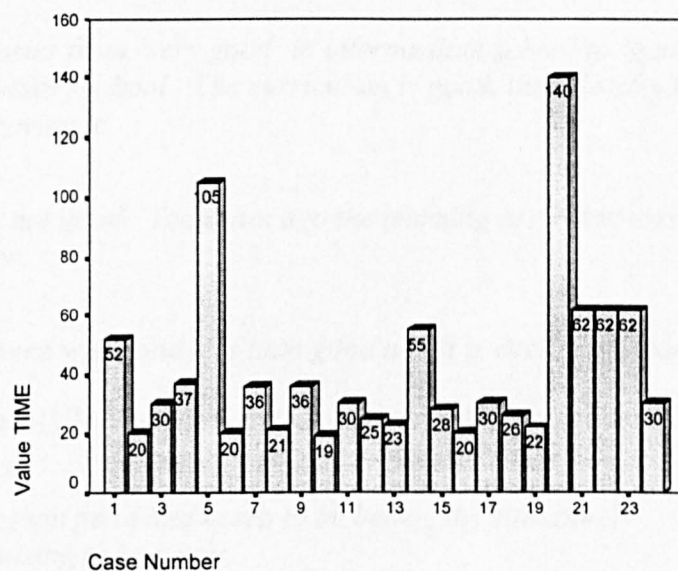
countries in which they had worked, namely, Egypt, Syria, Qatar and Yemen. The time spent on the interviews is shown in Table 8.1.2 and Figure 8.1.1.

Table 8.1.2

The Time Spent in the Interviews

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Time spent in interviews	19	140	41.3	29.21

Figure 8.1.1.
The Time Spent on Each Interview Case



From Figure 8.1.1, it can be seen that respondents 21, 22 and 23 were interviewed for the same length of time; that is because there were the three people interviewed in a discussion group. These cases refer to the MPs who work at the AL Unit.

8.2. The Current Situation of the AL Education

By way of introduction, interviewees were asked the following open question:

What do you think about learning AL education today?

This was not the sort of question which asked for a ranked assessment, nor did the researcher mention this when he was asked to clarify the question. However, many interviewees started their replies by attempting such an assessment. The Educational Supervisors' (ES) responses were,

It is getting better, although there are many obstacles.

Less than good and does not satisfy either AL teachers or learners.

Good, and it could get better.

The situation needs to be studied and the attainment of students is less than it should be, I hope it is going to be better,

There was some progress, but this has not continued.

It varies from 'very good' in intermediate school to 'good' in secondary school. The curriculum is good, the Ministry keeps improving it.

It is not good. Ten years ago the learning of Arabic was better.

Between weak and less than good and it is declining steadily.

University lecturers (ULs) assessed the situation of learning Arabic as follows:

less than good and needs to be better, the situation is promising to be better.

Students' attainment is 'insubstantial'; the current situation is not usual and must be studied.

Students in SA are mostly either very weak or excellent, there are a few students who are in the middle (non-Saudi lecturer).

The level is very weak and it is getting worse year by year.

Outwardly, a lot of attention is paid to it, but the level of students is one of the weakest compared to the other Arab countries. (non-Saudi lecturer),

The level is very weak, but there is some optimism regarding improvement of the learning of Arabic.

Moderate, or it could be said less than accepted.

One of the ULs had a different opinion. He suggested:

There are noticeable weaknesses, but not only in the AL, but in all of the educational subjects. ... The real causes are likely to be social rather than educational causes.

The researcher interviewed those most responsible for the AL education in SA, who work at AL Unit in the Curriculum Development Directorate General of the Ministry of Education. One of them said,

There is an old problem of learning Arabic and, in fact, there are noticeable weaknesses in this field. Our job is simply to solve this problem.

The President of the AL Unit was anxious to point out that the Saudi case was by no means unusual. He said:

There is dissatisfaction in the level in general. However, the educational procedure is complicated and it would be difficult to judge it. All the nations of the earth complain about their education

He added,

The problem of mother tongue learning is a global problem, and the problem of AL learning is all Arab countries' problem, it is not only a Saudi problem.

From the views of the people interviewed, it can be said that there is, in general, dissatisfaction about the current level of Arabic learning in Saudi Arabia. However, there is some optimism about the changes being applied to the education system in general, and in the field of Arabic in particular. It could also be noted that the views of ESs are more optimistic than those of the ULS, whilst on the contrary, MPs were more formal and diplomatic in expressing their opinions. The comment of one of the interviewees who said,

The situation needs to be studied and the attainment of students is less than it should be,

can be taken as a summary of the assessment of the people interviewed. In this sense it might be worth mentioning that after reviewing some academic studies, and prior to

conducting the interviews, the researcher analysed around twenty Saudi newspaper and magazine articles that he believed particularly relevant to Arabic language education in the period from November 96 till the end of April 97. The reason for that was that as the academic studies, generally, are considered old, – i.e. even those published in 1996, were conducted in 1994 – there was a need to gain a general understanding of the on-going situation of Arabic language education and the current views toward it. The interviewees raised the same issues that had been put forward by the articles' writers about the seriousness of the Arabic language education problems and the level of students' achievement in particular. In addition, several researchers have come to the same findings and criticised the poor standard of Arabic among students and have emphasised the importance of studying AL teaching and learning problems. Amongst the most recent of these studies are those of Al-Majed (1996), Al-Rashed (1996), (the current Minister of Education, in his report of the academic year 1996), and Gorah (1996). They all mention weaknesses in Arabic, but to different degrees. Latterly, Al-Moaigal (1997), in his study about achievement in Arabic literature in Saudi Arabia, stated that he found the achievement to be 50.84%, which is less than the acceptable criterion of 60% set by Al-Moaigal. Al-Hakami (1999) came later to confirm such views of the students' achievement. He found the students' achievement scores "*predominately low*" with mean scores of 1.44 out of 3.

Nevertheless, as the people responsible state that all countries complain about their education, the question, however, is whether such claims rely on a confirmed base or can be inspected. In other words does a standard measure exist which can be used to assess, scientifically, the level of attainment of students in different years? Indeed, no such standard measure exists in the Saudi education system.

The open question about learning AL in Saudi Arabia prompted many comments and observations. One non-Saudi UL who had worked in Egypt and Yemen before working

in Saudi Arabia suggested that Egyptian students are better than Saudis, who are better than students in Yemen,

Another UL remarked that,

The final result of learning Arabic in Saudi Arabia is not commensurate with the efforts made in this regard.

This view might conflict with that of a Saudi UL who believed that,

The Saudi family plays an active role towards learning Arabic and the attainment of the student, whilst the curriculum is still weak.

On the other hand, some of the people interviewed had different views. A UL who worked as a Head of Department stated:

I do not like exaggeration and I want to be realistic.

He went on:

The current situation is not bad, either in students' attainment or in the conscious language.

The researcher asked him:

What do you think about the view that non-Saudi students are better than Saudi?

He answered:

No, no, no, Saudi students are more able to use standard Arabic. Unlike the others, Saudi students like to speak standard Arabic even if they are not of an acceptable level, they try, and this is an advantage. ... we desire better education but we should not be too pessimistic.

He mentioned that he listened to many T.V. and radio programmes from many other Arab countries and he noted that many people from other Arab countries, even educated people cannot get rid of their colloquial dialect, while Saudis are more likely to do so.

However, a UL had a different view:

In the light of the lack of a standard measurement for comparative study, it would not be possible to know the level of any Arab student compared to another.

However, he suggested that the view of non-Saudi ULs who claim non-Saudi students are more proficient, is due to the view that non-Saudi educators might see the financial potential of Saudi Arabia and crave for it to be reflected in the level of students.

There were many other comments and opinions about the current level of students' achievements. An ES pointed out that one cannot be sure that the results are reflective of the actual situation, or whether they are biased, or based on inaccurate methods of assessment. Another ES confidently stated that while the educational system has been improving for a number of years, student ability to use standard language has been decreasing. One MP made the comment:

The issue of Arabic weakness has been studied more than enough and proven to exist. What we need now is to try to resolve the problem rather than proving such a weaknesses.

Regarding the positive side of language learning, many of the people interviewed agreed in their optimism about the arrangements for learning the AL. The difference of opinion lies in the importance of the effort that has been made. Some argued that the effort that has been made is superficial rather than reaching to the core. They believed that the changes have been made in the technique of supervision and in the textbooks, but not in the whole of the AL curriculum. This change cannot be described as an educational reform, but rather as an educational change.

One of the constructive efforts that has been made recently concerns teachers' training courses. Yet, it was argued that those courses are still inadequate and have not been established in accordance with the actual needs of the teachers. One ES went so far as to say that:

It is still hollow, it is only for prestige.

An experienced ES suggested that all the training courses that had been set up, were the result of individual efforts, especially by some educational supervisors. He pointed out that:

Those courses or programmes are held in certain educational districts, but not over all the country, and you cannot find any arranged programmes or enactment about them.

Some other ESs are satisfied with the teacher training courses being implemented, as one explains:

The number enrolled is still small and they are very short courses, in addition to being poorly arranged. However, we welcome such courses as they promise to be better soon.

An ES suggested that the components of learning Arabic are satisfactory, except one thing. He said:

We concentrate on knowledge instead of proficiency, We concentrate on theories instead of practice.

One MP mentioned that the Ministry of Education is about to conduct a national system of achievement evaluation in the field of learning Arabic, which will help to assess student progress each year. Nevertheless, such a system has not been implemented yet in any subject, although it is of great importance.

There was a distinct feeling among the MPs that the National Family (Committee) of AL (was established in 1983) has begun to take an active part in addressing the issue of the AL curriculum. Although its role is purely advisory, the current Minister of Education has placed more confidence in this committee. One of the MPs indicated that curriculum development began in 1978 and has not stopped yet because it is a continuous process. Nevertheless, it has recently become more active, but for less than five years.

8.3. The Media Role Toward Learning Arabic:

The second question was about the role of the media in SA, whether or not it is constructive in relation to learning the AL, and whether 'educational media' existed.

The replies by interviewees on this question suggested conflicting opinions. Some individuals considered the media to have a negative role in relation to learning Arabic while some others had opposite views.

Among the first category were such views as the following:

It is very destructive. It has been demolishing the standard of AL for a long time. (ES)

It has a negative role, but it can be changed one day. (ES)

It is destructive in general, although it is better than the media in other Arab countries. (Non-Saudi UL)

Less than it should be (UL).

It is practising 'language destroying'. (UL)

It has not any role in favour of the curriculum. (UL)

Typical of the other side would be replies such as:

It started recently to understand its role in some good ways (UL).

It has been improving for about a year (ES).

The media help students to practise standard language (ES).

Except for comical films and some social programmes, the media have an important role. They contribute to make standard Arabic easy for people (UL).

Some interviewees interposed and suggested that:

Its negative and positive roles are in balance (ES).

It's good, but we need it to be better (UL).

Radio is constructive, T.V. is destructive, and newspapers are in the middle (UL).

There are only a very few educational programmes and few of them match the curriculum aims. (ES)

The Media are promising to be better. However, I am not satisfied with the current level. (The Chief of the Educational Media at the Ministry of Education.)

The Chief of the Educational Media at the Ministry of Education who was interviewed reported that last year a new department at the Ministry of Education was established in order to enhance the role of educational media and also to arrange co-operation between the educational institutions and the media. He went on:

Actually, the efforts for improving the educational media started six years ago, but recently there has been an emphasis on this matter. Many meetings and conferences have been held in the last two years to improve the educational media..

The researcher then asked whether this was a revolution, and the answer came back that it was not, but was something that should have been started some years ago.

We are still on the first steps of the way .

One of the ESs believed that the communication staff had done enough work but the educationalists had not, and they should work hard to achieve the aims of the education media.

The people interviewed made many comments about the educational media, for example:

There used to be a satisfactory programme which could help students to some extent in learning Arabic. It was

stopped several years ago and not been replaced with any alternative.

The methods used to produce and present educational programmes are still old and traditional. They need to be modernised, and that is what we must make some committees for. (The Chief of the Educational Media)

The interviewees suggested some points that they thought should be taken into account in any reform related to the educational media. Among these recommendations were:

- The Educational Media should have all the advantages of other programmes, like attractiveness, excitement and competitiveness;
- The mass Media should participate in improving students' abilities, giving them chances to write and compose, for example by holding competitions;
- It is important to set special exams for the people involved with the media in general, and also to arrange appropriate courses and training programmes;
- Some special programmes should be directed to the teachers themselves.

Three of the people interviewed have also suggested the importance of establishing an educational channel. An ES stated that:

Establishing an educational channel would be very helpful to the educational process in general and the learning of AL in particular.

This idea was developed by a UL who said:

Organising a special channel for education purposes should be given a high priority by the Ministry of Education. This should be a target. However, the Ministry could start to broadcast four or five hours a day through any general channel, then this could be developed to a separate educational channel.

Another UL believed that there should be two or three hours educational programming daily, broadcast through the general channel. He thought it should be like the 'Open University' in England, rather than to be a separate channel, suggesting that,

I think a separate channel is neither important nor possible.

From the various opinions and ideas about the role of the media in general or the educational media in particular, toward learning Arabic, it is clear that much attention has been paid to this matter by the Ministry of Education. It is felt that there is some progress in this field. The people interviewed showed some optimism. They agreed that there have been many devoted efforts in this area. It seems that the focus of these efforts, which have been appreciated, has been twofold:

1. The Ministry of Education has been trying to spread its message using the media facilities. The Minister of Education has re-issued the only magazine for teachers, '*Al-Ma 'rifah*', which was issued for a short time in the past, but stopped more than 25 years ago. The journal of educational research, "Educational Documentation", has also been revived after being stopped for more than six years. Many activities have been undertaken recently. The Ministry has been involved with some newspapers and some Radio and T.V. programmes. In addition, a new strategy has been adopted within schools, related to educational media, involving issuing newsletters and giving high priority to out of class activities. All these mean that additional efforts are being made to improve the role of the educational media as announced in the Minister of Education's Report of 1996, (Al-Rashed, 1996).
2. The media are encouraging the Ministry of Information to concentrate on the educational aspects of programmes and films, especially those designed for children and young people. The Minister of Education has asked the people involved with the media to concentrate on the educational aspect of their work. The Ministry of Education has held many conferences and official meetings to achieve these aims, for instance, the Educational Media Colloquium (The Ministry of Education, 1997^b) and Educational Media Strategies (The Ministry of Education, 1996^c).

8.4. The Problems and Obstacles to Learning AL:

Dealing with and looking for problems of learning AL can be a problem itself.

This was an introductory response of one of the ULs to the third question of this interview which was, What do you think are the main problems, if any, in learning AL today?

People interviewed, generally, talked at length about this point. Some of them believed that there is a strong link between the problems of learning Arabic and the general situation of the AL in society. An educational supervisor supported this, saying:

It is a social problem rather than an educational problem.

However, another supervisor argued:

Even if it is a general problem, it is the responsibility of education and the curriculum to solve it.

This idea was developed by one of his colleagues who argued:

Apart from the problems in many aspects and levels of Arabic, we, at school, must deal with one problem. It is the weakness of the students' achievement.

A non-Saudi UL pointed out that problems in learning Arabic have been facing all Arab countries since the beginning of the twentieth century.

Another ES concentrated on the problem from a scholastic point of view, saying:

AL is still one of the hardest subjects. We note that students do not like Arabic, especially grammar, and many students find it difficult to pass grammar exams. Many of the teachers I meet, emphasise that students have obvious real weaknesses in the lack of ability to use Arabic and the lack of appreciation for the beauty of the AL.

Many people interviewed more or less claimed such problems. However, a UL said:

Although the problem is too old and too big, it is solvable.

The reasons for the problem are complicated. MPs believe that it is not possible to point to any one reason for the current weaknesses, because they believe the educational

process must be seen as a whole and it is difficult to give a single element as the reason. They argued that the important thing is not to know the reason, but to alleviate the problems.

ESs and ULS gave their ideas on the problems in some detail. These can be classified in two groups:

- General substantial reasons and;
- detailed or specific obstacles and problems.

Among the general reasons quoted by ESs are:

- Failure to give learning the Arabic in the elementary schools enough attention, although this is the foundation stage. Arabic in this stage is often taught by non-specialist teachers, and the time allocated to Arabic is not sufficient;
- Lack of fundamental change in the curriculum, especially in the Arabic curriculum;
- Lack of co-operation between AL teachers and the other subject teachers.

An ES and two of the ULs suggested that one of the most important reasons for the weakness of Arabic is that the current curriculum deals with AL as knowledge, although it is, in fact, behaviour. Other ULs mentioned some further reasons, for example:

- The lack of usage standard Language in AL lessons. As one of the ULs put it:

sadly some AL teachers use colloquial language to explain some standard Arabic sentences in their lessons .

- Restricting the recommendations of the conferences which have been held for many years;
- The usage of colloquial language in society to the extent that there is bilingualism in thought and practice;

The people interviewed called attention to many detailed problems and obstacles which can be categorised into six themes. They are:

1. problems and obstacles related to students;
2. problems and obstacles related to teachers;
3. problems and obstacles related to curriculum content;
4. problems and obstacles related to teaching and to assessment;
5. problems and obstacles related to educational supervision;
6. problems and obstacles related to social and school environment.

Related to students, the main obstacles perceived by the people interviewed were: the lack of motivation and desire to learn Arabic; and the fact that the students are busy with watching satellite television which detracts from their Arabic learning. One of the university lecturers mentioned that students progress to the next grade or stage of their studies, although they have not had enough experience and they are not ready to accept a new level of experience.

It would be appropriate, in relation to the student-related problems, to refer to Al Moaigal (1997) who reported that in his research he found that the aims of literature and phraseology courses were not being achieved. According to him, this was because of the weaknesses of teachers, the lack of experience of 46% of the sample of teachers within his study, and the excessive content of the curriculum, compared to the time allowed. Mohammed (1995) found that the weakness of teachers is the main contributory factor in the weakness of students, especially in reading.

Related to teachers, one of the serious obstacles and problems is that teaching in elementary schools is done by non-specialist teachers. Moreover, it was claimed that weak teachers enter the elementary school system, even though the educationalists agree

that the elementary school stage is the basis of the rest of the student's education. The interviewees cited other problems. Among them are:

- Teachers lack motivation and they are not willing to be more creative;
- There is no workable system for rewarding teachers or offering bonus incentives.
- Teachers are overburdened by teaching and administrative duties;
- Newly qualified teachers are weak and have no experience.

University lecturers criticised the current system of preparing and evaluating student teachers. One said:

The university tends to concentrate on the knowledge rather than the skill and proficiency in a particular field and, also, there is a lack of relationship between what is taught at University and the actual fieldwork .

- Saudilization has caused the loss of experienced foreign teachers in favour of less expert new Saudi teachers;
- There are too few in-service training programmes and teachers are not required to undertake them.

The content of the Saudi curriculum, or in particular the textbooks, has been changed many times recently. However, a lot of educational supervisors have some doubt about the current programme. They stated that many of the problems and obstacles are related to the content. Amongst them are:

- the concentration on theory and knowledge rather than practical skills;
- lack of integration of the subject matter of the various AL courses;
- much of what is taught at intermediate and secondary schools is irrelevant to the actual lives of the students,

- deviation from the aims of some subjects, such as composition, which aims to develop the ability to create new ideas in writing or speech, but has now become a descriptive rather than a creative course.

University lecturers who were interviewed mentioned that some course units are not very important, and some units are not suited to the ability of the students.

In this sense it might be necessary to mention that the conference, "*The Phenomenon of Weakness in Arabic*" emphasised in its fifth recommendation that the reform of the content of the AL curriculum must be reviewed at all stages. (The Ministry of Education, 1996). Al-Gahtani (1997), found that the grammar textbook in the first grade of elementary school did not meet his evaluation criteria. The content, according to him, is inadequate.

Regarding teaching and evaluation, the Educational Supervisors mentioned many problems and obstacles, some of which were:

- the use of traditional methods of teaching which leads to a concentration on the teachers' work rather than involvement of the student;
- the lack of educational aids and the lack of training in their usage;
- insufficient time allowed for the teaching of the Arabic curriculum.

The current system of student education which concentrates on knowledge, may be the major problem. Many students get good grades simply because they can memorise the content, even though they do not understand it and cannot practise it. This problem was emphasised more by university lecturers. One of them said:

Many times I became very surprised when I compared students' records with their interviews. Everything was recorded perfectly, but the student was unable to

demonstrate any language skills or proficiency. They just cram in the information and then forget it.

The whole approach to the Arabic curriculum has been criticised by Gorah (1996, p.18) who said:

The current methods of teaching Arabic as many separate subjects, is worthless. We must look at Arabic in terms of integrated subjects in order to achieve its practical aims.

The study of Al-Damogh (1995) about the usage of teaching technologies in AL lessons, has found that people are aware of the importance of educational aids, but there were not enough teaching aids and teachers were not trained in their usage or in making and designing them.

The problems and obstacles related to educational supervision, according to ES, are:

- the lack of co-operation between the workers in the field of teaching and the education chiefs, and between the teacher and those responsible for co-ordinating the curriculum regarding planning, implementing and evaluation;
- centralised, top-down decision making, which is not informed by discussion with staff at different levels;
- the ES is kept busy with managerial work rather than providing supervision, to the extent that one of them said,

ES does everything regarding education, except supervision.

Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education has expressed deep concern over this matter, as mentioned by Ministerial Personnel. Many efforts have been made to improve the work of ES in the schools recently, and there has been a marked rise in the level of interest (The Ministry of Education, 1996^d).

Finally, there are problems and obstacles regarding the educational and social environments. Amongst those, mentioned by ES were:

- The influence of foreign T.V. channels and also the influence of foreign workers, especially those who work as housemaids. They influence standard Arabic by creating a new level of language which is neither standard Arabic nor colloquial; they have also brought many Arabian dialects to Saudi Arabia in the last 20 years.
- The increased importance of foreign languages, especially English, within society, because of the foreign and internal media and the people who promote these languages;
- negative attitudes amongst society in general, and the media in particular, towards Arabic teachers and people who try to speak standard Arabic;
- lack of appropriate school buildings, especially where classes are held in rented buildings, rather than purpose built schools.

Clearly, the educational and social environments are very influential factors in learning Arabic. The people in charge of education and the media have begun to recognise this fact, and as a matter of fact, the educational media has increased its focus on this area, and many conferences and meetings have been held in this field. On the other hand, Al-Nassar (1996) found that out-of-class language activities are very few and inadequate. He also found there are many problems regarding applying such activities, whether because of the students or those people responsible for these activities.

Although these problems and obstacles are related to the main problem, the researcher believes that mentioning them in detail will highlight the areas and aspects which should receive more attention in efforts towards solving problems in learning Arabic. However, the researcher is not able to determine the seriousness of those individual problems in such as exploratory study. The common conclusion which can be drawn is

that there are problems at both the planing and the implementation levels of the curriculum, and that more research and efforts must be carried out in order to improve the learning of Arabic and solve the related problems.

8.5. Possible Solutions to the Problems

The fourth main question asked in this interview was: If there are problems in learning AL how can we rectify them? Or if learning AL is generally satisfactory, how can we make it even better?

The interviewees suggested many solutions. The main relevant suggestions will be divided into the following themes:

1. solutions related to students;
2. solutions related to teachers;
3. solutions related to content;
4. solutions related to teaching and evaluation;
5. solutions related to educational supervision;
6. solutions related to language and social environment;

Among the solutions related to students, perceived by ESs, are:

- The creation of a special department at the Ministry of Education devoted to enlighten students on the importance of their language;
- Constructing a curriculum based on the ability of students and the available time;
- Placing students at the centre of any change in the curriculum;
- The orientation of the students, according to their ability and inclination, rather than according to the results of their exams.

ULs emphasised the last point. They argued that one of the solid solutions is to begin to teach Arabic at a very early age in the child's development, using the Qur'an and other high quality texts. A UL developed this idea, saying,

We need to firmly implant the standard use of the language into the student, rather than teach them the language.

Regarding the teacher, amongst the solutions, in ESs' view, are preparing teachers and increasing their ability and efficiency through well-designed teacher-training programmes. They also suggested evening classes with some incentive bonuses. Other solutions are decreasing the teachers' duties and teaching hours, especially in the secondary schools, and establishing a link between the yearly financial increment and overall performance. ULs stressed the importance of establishing clear criteria and entry exams by the Ministry of Education for people who apply to start teaching, to ensure their competence. They mentioned also the value of dealing with AL teachers in a special manner, because they teach a very demanding and difficult subject.

In respect of teaching methods, the focus should be on practising language instead of being taught it or, as one of the ULs explained:

Dealing with language as behaviour rather than as subject matter.

The idea is to implant the language firmly in the minds of the students. Many ULs and some of the ESs are convinced of this need. Another UL believed that we should go back to the method of teaching Arabic used many years ago, which was to teach pupils aged between five and nine, using only language and the Qur'an. Some of them mentioned the importance of benefiting from the strategies used in first language teaching in other countries. ESs believe that amongst the solutions in this respect are the usage of practical tasks, speaking standard Arabic within the class, providing teachers with sufficient teaching aids, and using the principle of 'teaching for competence'.

Regarding the curriculum content, some of the most important solutions, as mentioned by ESs, are:

- Placing the emphasis in the text book, on proficiency, rather than knowledge;
- Using new strategies for compiling textbooks;
- Not altering the textbooks for at least five years, rather than continually changing them, so they can be properly evaluated;
- Concentrating on the value of texts in the field of literature rather than the history of literature;
- Using the 'system concept' of any change or development in the curriculum, instead of the current part-changes.

ULs believed that university specialists in the AL should construct the curriculum.

They also emphasised the necessity of courage to make sweeping changes in the Arabic curriculum, the importance of reaping some financial benefits for education, opening evening classes in Arabic for children below the age of nine as part of the curriculum, and making the Qur'an the primary text of learning.

One of the expert supervisors mentioned that an integrated (holistic) method of learning the AL was implemented in 1974 and it was not successful. He reasoned that this was because the student concentrates on one subject to achieve a good mark and forgets some other inflexible subjects like grammar. He suggested that if we need to implement a method such as the integrated method, we have to change the whole system of education. The researcher followed up this claim of the experiment, trying to find more information about it. However, no information was found, and the Centre for Educational Documentation at the Ministry of Education deny having any record of it. This might suggest that this experiment was limited to a school or a number of schools for academic purposes, rather than a Ministerial trial.

The ESs suggested that educational supervisors should have a Masters' Degree in the field of AL. They also thought the style of supervision should be improved to benefit from the findings of studies in this field. An ES repeated twice :

We must have many training programmes in order to improve our work.

One of the ULs suggested that each school should have a position of:

a 'senior teacher' as head of department, who must be very experienced and who should act as a resident supervisor.

One of the ESs stated that a new method of supervision implemented last year, according to which all the ESs no longer have responsibility for assessing teachers, has improved the level of supervision. Another ES thought that this change would reduce the level of importance of the supervisor in the eyes of the teacher, since he no longer evaluates him.

Related to the social and educational language environments, ESs cited many solutions to the problem, amongst which are the following:

- ensuring the linguistic accuracy of shop signs and road signs, to make people aware of the importance of using standard Arabic and to encourage a more positive attitude to it;
- making proficiency in standard Arabic a condition of employment, especially in writing-related jobs;
- encouraging talking in standard Arabic within the family;
- making the teaching of Arabic a duty of all teachers, regardless of their primary subject. As was explained,

Each teacher must be an AL teacher.

ULs believe that great importance should be attached to the Translation Centres, to Arabize the new terms and specialised vocabulary. They also emphasised the

importance of linguistic accuracy of all published material. They believed that the colloquial language should be banned from publication in books and newspapers. MPs stressed the necessity of holding a training programme for those involved with the media, and giving the learning of Arabic a high priority amongst social and communication activities.

The AL itself needs more attention in order to simplify it and to decide which are its most important aspects to be learned, according to ESs, as one of them pointed out:

We must accept the new styles and vocabulary of language which are easy and clear, and are accepted as standard Arabic.

They suggested that Arabic grammar should be studied and re-shaped in a new learning style. ULs supported this idea and argued that studies in this field should be encouraged and developed.

The area of solving AL problems has been studied for a long time and has been given priority in educational reform. It received efforts from the very early stages of this movement. Amongst those efforts were the study of the Arab League (1959) about learning AL in the Arab Homeland; the meeting under the supervision of Educational Directorate of the Arab League (Arab Leagues 1974) which studied the problems of learning Arabic and arranged a priority list of solutions; the study of the Arabic Organisation of Education, Culture and Sciences (1977) on ways to improve the proficiency of teachers; the Conference of AL Curriculum in the Pre-university Level (Al-Iman University, 1985); and lastly the colloquium of 'The Phenomenon of Arabic Weakness at University Level' (Al-Imam University, 1996). All these meetings and conferences aimed to solve problems in learning Arabic and suggested how to develop the standard of student, teacher, content, teaching, educational supervision, educational and social environment, and the nature of Arabic itself. In recent years, numerous

studies have been carried out all over the Arab world which could help to solve some of the problems, and indicated that this field should be studied and receive more attention.

8.6. Requirements For Developing the Learning of Arabic

The last question in the interview was about the current requirements for developing the learning of Arabic as perceived by interviewees. It is believed that there is a link between this question and the previous one. However, the researcher aimed, by this question, to move away from the current situation and its problems, asking directly about the requirements for developing the curriculum. The clarification given to respondents was *"If we want to have an 'ideal' curriculum, what do we have to do?"*

Some of the respondents were asked explicitly: *"if you were the person mainly responsible for decision-making about the ALC what would you do?"*.

The ESs demonstrated larger attention to develop the curriculum. Some of the requirements mentioned by the ESs are:

Relying on continuous studies and research which should be used to improve educational procedure, especially in learning Arabic,

Holding open meetings and conferences or through the media in order that all those interested in learning Arabic can participate,

Consultation is needed with the people directly involved in the learning of Arabic,

Benefiting from foreign research and studies in the field of learning languages,

Concentrating on the Qur'an in order to improve the proficiency and ability of students,

Using a 'system approach' to the Arabic curriculum development,

Maximising the enthusiasm of students towards Arabic and making a link between religion and the acquisition of language,

Constructing a curriculum based on the abilities of students and their growth requirements.

ULs believe we should view the teachers as the starting-line in the reform movement within the learning of Arabic. They also suggested that some of the requirements for developing learning Arabic are:

The emphasis on out-of-class activities in the learning of Arabic.

Using comparative studies between learning Arabic and learning another language as a mother-tongue and the benefit from these techniques, and also profiting from methods and strategies of teaching Arabic as a foreign language.

Some respondents concentrated on developing the teaching and use of Arabic. Many suggestions were offered as necessities for developing the learning of Arabic. ESs said:

We should move from a teaching and learning concept towards a training and practising concept in the acquisition of Arabic at various stages regarding all language skills.

Practising standard Arabic with the children when at home and in school.

Using the 'mastery learning' concept and not relying on the amount of knowledge.

ULs emphasised that language must be considered as behaviour and also emphasised that Arabic should be taught through reading, and they suggested concentrating on the Qur'an and other high quality texts rather than dull grammar. Some of them also mentioned,

The accent must fall on the usage of standard Arabic by teachers in the classroom, not only by AL teachers but by all teachers.

We should make the efficient use of standard Arabic a basic condition of teaching.

Providing pre-school students with quality usage of standard Arabic.

Some of the ESs stressed that it is important to make the efficient use of language a condition of any job. Another one suggested making a link between yearly increments of teachers' salary and the standard of performance. In fact, the researcher appreciated this idea and asked the Ministerial Personnel about it. However, they argued that yearly increments should not be linked to the standard of work in the field of teaching only.

One stressed,

We have the judge and police officer, and other government employees, and they have their system of yearly increments, which does not link with their standard of work, and I do not see why teachers should be an exception. It should be implemented for all, or left for all.

ULs mentioned some requirements, some of which were:

The emphasis on measuring efficiency and skills rather than knowledge.

Establishing a national examination system to assess the efficiency of students at yearly intervals in order to make the results the solid basis on any appraisal or development in the curriculum at all stages.

The speaker justified this suggestion by saying that we need to know the trend in the standard of learning Arabic. Another requirement is having remedial training courses for students, teachers and those involved in the learning of Arabic.

8.7. Scaled Questionnaire Data:

The second part of this exploratory study was a short scaled questionnaire which was given to the interviewees at the end of each meeting. Sometimes, if the interviewee so desired, this part was implemented as a structured interview. This short questionnaire was designed to obtain views on particular problems of AL learning.

The items and statements of this questionnaire were collected from articles about learning Arabic. The researcher, as mentioned, had analysed the content of the articles appeared in Saudi Newspapers and Magazines during the period from 1/11/96 to 31/4/97. The researcher took these statements from the articles in order to obtain the interviewees' opinions on them.

The sole aim of this short questionnaire was to assess the seriousness of the problem of learning Arabic and how valid and accurate those statements were, as perceived by the people interviewed. In other words, the purpose was to determine the most serious area, which should have higher priority and attention. It should be mentioned that only 20 people agreed to reply to this questionnaire.

The questionnaire gave four choices to the respondent. They were:

- a. Strongly agree.
- b. Agree.
- c. Not sure.
- d. Disagree.

The statements of the questionnaire will be shown in order of the frequency of ' Strongly Agree' allocated to each one in order to clarify the extent of agreement with each statement.

Table 8.7.1**The Statements of the Exploratory Study Questionnaire (*N*=20)**

statement	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1) There is observable weakness in students' abilities in the use of standard Arabic.	1 (5 %)	1 (5 %)	5 (25%)	13 (65%)
2) There are noticeable weaknesses in students' abilities in writing especially in 'Dictation'.			10 (50%)	10 (50%)
3) The current Arabic language curriculum needs to be evaluated and developed from an integrated perspective.	3 (15%)	1 (5 %)	6 (30%)	10 (50%)
4) There is observable weakness in students' abilities of language construction.			11 (55%)	9 (45%)
5) Language maturity at general educational levels is less than it should be.		1 (5 %)	10 (50%)	9 (45%)
6) Current Arabic language teachers need more training		1 (5 %)	13 (65%)	6 (30%)
7) The current curriculum of Arabic needs to be developed and improved	4 (20%)	1 (5 %)	10 (50%)	5 (25%)
8) There is evident weakness in students' writing at the university.		6 (30%)	10 (50%)	4 (20%)
9) The current Arabic language curriculum does not focus on increasing students' abilities to read and their reading motivation.	6 (30%)	4 (20%)	7 (35%)	3 (15%)
10) There is no clear written curriculum for Composition, which is one of the problems of learning Arabic.	4 (20%)	7 (35%)	6 (30%)	3 (15%)
11) There is no clear curriculum (or written content) for Dictation, which is one of the problems of learning Arabic.	10 (50%)	7 (35%)		3 (15%)
12) The current generation of students at university have more difficulties with Arabic than former ones.	1 (5 %)	2 (10%)	15 (75%)	2 (10%)
13) There has been a steady decline in students' achievement in Arabic in the last fifteen years.	4 (20%)	4 (20%)	10 (50%)	2 (10%)
14) Some university students are not able to write simple words such as 'Tuesday' and 'The car' correctly.	6 (30%)	4 (20%)	9 (45%)	1 (5 %)

It is apparent from the list that 75% or more of the sample agreed or strongly agreed with the first seven statements, which indicates general agreement on the seriousness of these problems. These findings strongly confirm the necessity of finding a way for developing the Arabic language education and the curriculum in particular in Saudi Arabia, which is the main target of the current study. However, it should be noted that at the end of the list, it can be seen that while only one person strongly agreed with the statement, ten out of twenty of the respondents' answers were either Not Sure or Disagree. It might be helpful to indicate that this statement was the title of a newspaper

article (Al- Riyadh Newspaper 7.11.1996). Undoubtedly, that this statement was considered by 50 % of the sample as a little exaggerated, could be considered as indicator of the validity of the respondents' views on the other statements, i.e. they did not exaggerate on the existence of the other statements/problems.

8.8. Summary

From these 24 interviews with ESs, ULs and MPs, some main issues emerge.

Firstly, there is almost complete agreement between the people interviewed about the existence of problems in the learning of Arabic, though they differed in their assessment of the seriousness of the problem. Some people believed it was an extreme problem, others believed only slight improvement was needed. They had many opinions about the causes of the problem regarding the various aspects of educational procedure. The problem can also be seen in various areas of learning. However, it is very obvious at the level of the student's awareness and proficiency in language. The interviews indicated that it is a solvable problem and should be dealt with as a whole, rather than as many separate issues.

Second, the people interviewed mentioned many solutions and requirements which, taken in conjunction with related literature, can help in drawing up a complete list of the necessary requirements for developing the learning of Arabic. Nevertheless, as it would not be possible, in a study such as this, to treat all the aspects of the Arabic language education, and in the light of the high concerns paid by the people interviewed to the curriculum, the focus in the current study will be on the curriculum only.

Regarding the scaled questionnaire data, the researcher believes that this short questionnaire can be indicative of the issue and the aspects involved. However, the researcher doubts the appropriateness of the generalisation of the findings from this questionnaire as regards either the existence or the seriousness of the problems

mentioned. The researcher, however, believes that more attention and investigation should be paid both to the problems of learning Arabic in general and for solving those problems.

Thirdly, solving the problems, as interviews revealed, relies on two things:

- a. Carrying out appropriate research and studies into the essence of the problem;
- b. Giving high priority to utilising the results of the research.

The latter might imply that studies in the field of learning the AL should be directive and utilisable not only by decision makers but also by other levels such as educational districts and schools.

Finally, this exploratory study was invaluable in the construction of the main research instrument as it was explained earlier in this study. In response to the four dimensions of the curriculum, this exploratory study, alongside the literature reviewed, laid the foundation for preparing four lists of the requirements for developing the ALC in SA. Those requirements will be presented, with the level of importance given to each of them by the samples of the main study, in the next chapter.

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Chapter Nine

Quantitative Data: **Tabulation and Discussion**

9.1. Samples' Characteristics

9.1.1. The Questionnaires Returned

9.1.2. The Practitioner Samples

9.1.3. University Lecturer Sample

9.2. The Requirements Related to Objectives

9.3. The Requirements Related to The Curriculum Content

9.4. The Requirements Related to Teaching Methods and Resources

9.5. The Requirements Related to Evaluation

9.6. Respondents Advice and Comments

9.6.1. Comments and Advice Related to Questionnaire Construction

9.6.2. Comments and Advice Related to the Requirements

9.6.3. General Comments, Advice and Suggestions.

Chapter Nine

Quantitative Data: Tabulation and Discussion

In the previous chapter, the qualitative data from the interviews carried out in the first phase of the study was presented. In this chapter, the main data gained from the questionnaire in the second stage of the study will be tabulated and presented to enable both sets of data to be compared with each other and with the findings of related studies and literature. This chapter will be divided into six sections, starting with the sample characteristics, which will include some clarification of the returned questionnaires. The second, third, fourth and fifth sections concern, respectively, the requirements related to curriculum objectives; the requirements related to curriculum content; the requirements related to teaching methods and resources and the requirements related to evaluation. The sixth section will present the most relevant comments gained from the questionnaire respondents. Finally, the main issues which arise from this chapter will be summarised. Initially, it must be noted that, in the light of the richness of the data being presented, some restriction to the main scope of the study, i.e. the requirements for developing the curriculum, was necessary. Nevertheless, the presentation of the data was intended to raise further ideas and questions, which deserve to be considered by interested readers.

9.1. Samples' Characteristics

The decision to make the section on sample characteristics the last section in the questionnaire has already been justified. However, in this chapter, it would be more appropriate to present the characteristics of the sample first, as this will aid understanding of the main data which will be presented in the next four sections. Therefore, the main characteristics of the practitioners' samples will be presented,

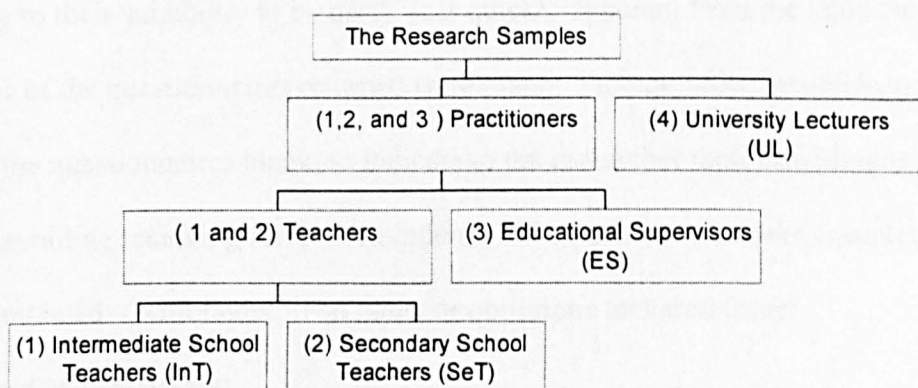
followed by those of the UL, but the questionnaires distributed and returned will be discussed first.

9.1.1. The Questionnaires Returned

The reasons for the importance of having a large sample, in terms of both the size of the sample and the response rate, have already been stated. Although having limited means, the researcher attempted to obtain as large a sample as possible, though it was still fairly limited. As details of the sample size have already been indicated, the focus now is on the actual questionnaires returned.

Prior to tabulating this, it is important to bear in mind that the samples originally consisted of two main groups: practitioners and university lecturers (UL). Practitioners are subdivided into two samples, namely, educational supervisors (ES) and teachers. The latter group is again subdivided into two further categories: secondary school teachers (SeT) and intermediate school teachers (InT). Figure 9.1.1. shows this.

**Figure 9.1.1.
The Research Samples**



Clearly all four samples are strongly relevant to the field of Arabic and in their various ways practise teaching, or giving lectures in Arabic. However, the use of the term: 'practitioners' in this study will be restricted to those who work 'into' intermediate and

secondary general schools, which include mainly teachers and educational supervisors as the system in the country requires them to spend at least 75% of their worktime inside schools. UL are considered as ‘specialists’ rather than ‘practitioners’. Within this chapter, some presentation and comparison will be conducted between the two main categories and also between the sub-categories as well. However, first, Table 9.1.1 gives a detailed account of the distribution and response rate of the questionnaires analysed in this chapter.

Table 9.1.1**Detailed Numbers of Questionnaires Distributed and Collected**

Category	The ques. Distributed	Ques. collected	Invalid Ques.		Valid Ques
			Blank	Returned with faults	
InT	521	291	19	72	200
SeT	216	132	11	51	70
ES	29	23	2	3	18
UL	73	59	9	8	42
Total	839	505	41	134	330

The number of questionnaires collected (505) was satisfactory, as it represented more than 60% of the original sample. However, not all questionnaires returned were useable. As the questionnaires were collected, they were classified into three categories according to their suitability to be used. It is quickly apparent from the table that around 41 of the questionnaires returned were blank. Perhaps some respondents returned the questionnaires blank, to indicate to the researcher their unwillingness to fill them in, avoiding receiving further reminders. 134 questionnaires were completed – or partly completed – with faults. The faults or omissions included those:

- a. completed carelessly;
- b. exceeding the stated maximum number of responses in the column: “Most Important”; and,
- c. not putting the numbers of “The most important requirements” in the boxes provided.

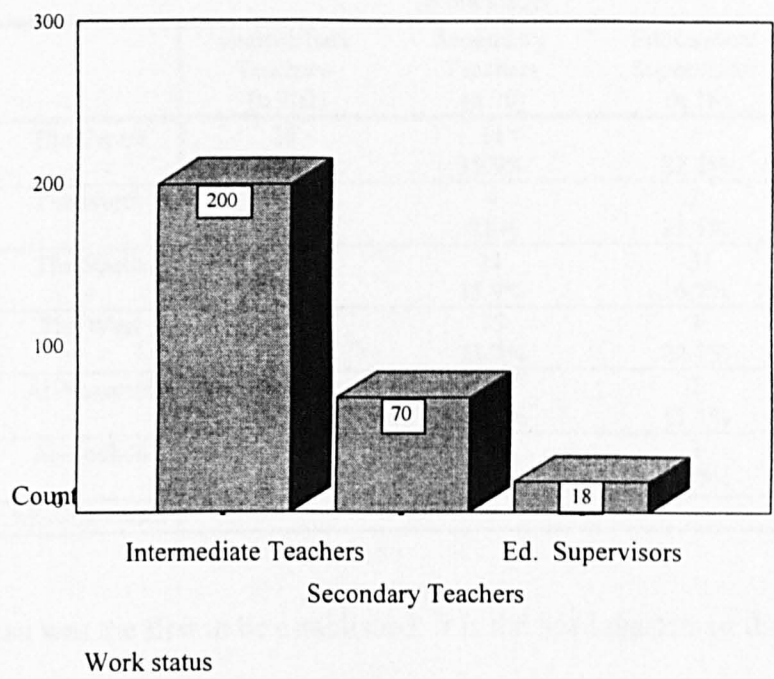
It is clear that responses among this category did not follow the instructions of the questionnaire which have already been justified in chapter 7. Although having a larger sample would be better, certain instructions of the questionnaire may necessitate dropping some of them with the aim maintaining the “quality” of the data being analysed. Therefore, the questionnaires returned with faults are excluded from the following discussion and will not be analysed. This is considered to contribute to the validity of the data which will be presented. In sum, in this study the number of questionnaires that will be analysed is 330, representing 39.3% of the questionnaires administered. Although this proportion might be considered small, Metcalfe (1997) indicated that in the United Kingdom Rosen and Weil in their study of 1995 could analyse only 25% of the questionnaires they distributed.

Prior to presenting the next sub-sections and the following sections, two points should be noted that will help with the statistical analysis. First, it must be indicated that when testing for differences, the level of significance of 0.05 has been set to reject the null hypotheses. Second, where no significant differences are found, tables will not be provided.

9.1.2. The Practitioners' Samples:

As already indicated “The Practitioners” in this study involved the people who are most directly involved with the teaching of Arabic in intermediate and secondary schools in S.A. The general system in Saudi Arabia, as it was detailed in chapter 3, consists of three stages, elementary, intermediate and secondary. All are supervised by a single body of supervisors who are involved in the whole Education system and not attached to any one particular school stage, so they stand as a separate category. The bar chart (figure 9.2.1) shows the three practitioners' samples and the numbers of each.

Figure 9.1.2.
The Three Practitioners' Samples



The ES population was relatively small, so, this bar chart shows the small proportion of the ES sample, which represents less than 7% of the practitioners' sample, while the great majority of the practitioners, representing around 70% of the sample, teach in intermediate education.

Riyadh Education District is divided into 6 sub-directorates which are called 'sub-supervision bureaux'. Table 9.1.2. illustrates the distribution of the respondents within the bureaux.

Table 9.1.2**Distribution of Practitioners by Sub-Supervision Bureaux**

		Work status			Total
		Intermediate Teachers (n 200)	Secondary Teachers (n 70)	Educational Supervisors (n 18)	Total
The Sub-supervision Bureau	The Centre	24 12.0%	11 15.9%	4 22.2%	39 13.6%
	The North	25 12.5%	4 5.8%	2 11.1%	31 10.8%
	The South	61 30.5%	11 15.9%	3 16.7%	75 26.1%
	The West	42 21.0%	15 21.7%	4 22.2%	61 21.3%
	Al-Nasseem	23 11.5%	14 20.3%	2 11.1%	39 13.6%
	Al-Rodhah	25 12.5%	14 20.3%	3 16.7%	42 14.6%
	Missing Cases	--	1	--	1

The central bureau was the first to be established; it is the headquarters of the other bureaux and it covers the central area of the city. The other bureaux supervise the educational process in the four geographical divisions of Riyadh, the East area having two bureaux which are Al-Rodhah and Al-Nasseem. From the table it is clear that the number of respondents vary from one bureau to another, ranging from 31 in the North to 75 in the South.

Respondents were asked about their qualifications and the results are presented in Table 9.1.3.

Table 9.1.3.**Respondents' Qualifications**

		Work status		
		Intermediate Teachers (n= 200)	Secondary Teachers (n= 70)	Educational Supervisors (n= 18)
The Qualification	Bachelor	197 100.0%	63 91.3%	14 77.8%
	Master		4 5.8%	4 22.2%
	Ph.D.		2 2.9%	
	Missing Values	3	1	

It is clear that the vast majority of the practitioners' sample had a bachelor degree.

There were only two Ph.D holders among the practitioners, both of whom taught in secondary schools. The ES sample were more highly qualified, in having a far higher proportion of employees with Master's degrees.

Regarding the respondents' experience, four response categories were offered in the questionnaire to reflect the different levels of experience. Table 9.1.4. provides a better understanding of the three samples' experience.

Table 9.1.4.

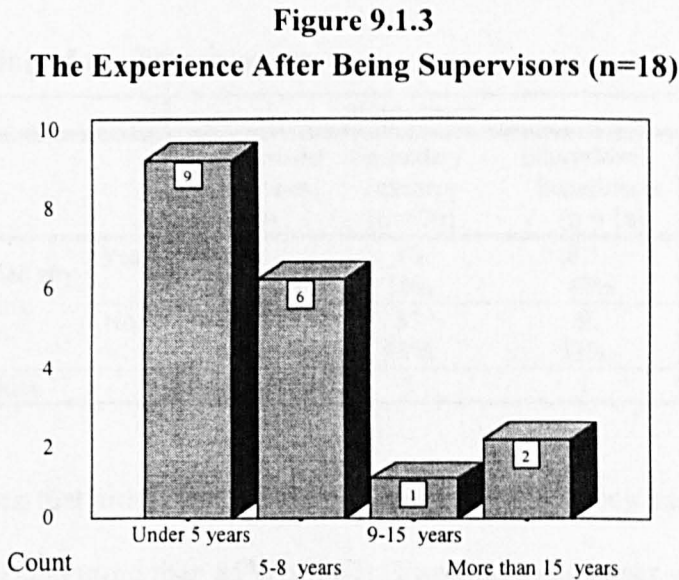
The Practitioners' Experience After Graduation.

		Work status		
		Intermediate Teachers (n = 200)	Secondary Teachers (n = 70)	Educational Supervisors (n = 18)
The experience after graduation	Under 5 years	116 58.6%	24 34.8%	
	5-8 years	69 34.8%	15 21.7%	6 33.3%
	9-15 years	4 2.0%	7 10.1%	4 22.2%
	More than 15 years	9 4.5%	23 33.3%	8 44.4%
	Missing values	2	1	

This table shows that while the experience of around 60% of InT was less than 5 years, only 35% of the SeT and no ES were in this level of experience. At the same time, the highest proportion of those with more than 15 years experience were either ES or SeT. Again, two thirds of ES had more than nine years' experience. To test the Ho that there is no significant difference in the experience levels between the three practitioners' groups. The Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted and the differences found to be significant (P.0.000). To investigate the differences of the experience levels between each pair of the three groups, three Ho were set: there is no significant difference in the level of experience between InT and SeT, InT and ES, and SeT and ES. The Mann-Whitney (M-W) test was used and revealed significant differences between each pair (p.

< 0.01). Thus, it can be concluded that although SeT have more experience than InT, ES have more experience than both groups. Such figures may give an indication of the importance given to both educational supervision and teaching in secondary education, but, unhappily, at the expense of the importance of experience that should be given to the intermediate level. Two reasons stand behind the lack of experience for teachers. One is that they may have been newly appointed because of the large number of schools being established, as explained in Chapter 3. The other is the rapid increase in the number of newly graduated teachers from Saudi universities which contributes to the ‘Saudization’ or, in other words, substituting the ‘experienced’ non-Saudi teachers by ‘less experienced Saudis’.

Regarding the length of experience, the ESs were asked about their experience after becoming supervisors. Within the same categories, the data given can be seen in the following bar chart (Figure 9.1.1.)



Of the ES sample, only three might be described as experienced, having worked as ES for nine years or more while more than three quarters of the sample had less than nine years of experience.

In-Service Training

The importance of in-service training of teachers is well known and the Ministry of Education in SA is fully aware of this fact, as it was stated in a 1994 report (The Ministry of Education, 1994, p.62) that

Teacher training comes first in any educational development program in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The teacher is the human element who can make the best use of the pre-requisites of the educational process.... The Ministry of Education and the Presidency of Girls Education made emphasis on in-service teacher training because this training is the means for employing modern education ways.

With the lack of experience of a large proportion of teachers, identified earlier, and in the light of the claim made by the ministry, discussing in-service training among AL teachers became more important. The respondents were asked whether they had received in-service training in the last five years of work. The answers of the three samples are summarised in the following table.

Table 9.1.5
In-Service Training of the Practitioners

		Work status		
		Intermed iate Teachers (n = 200)	Secondary Teachers (n = 70)	Educational Supervisors (n = 18)
Have practitioners had any in-service-training programme ?	Yes	40 20%	10 15%	8 47%
	No	156 80%	57 85%	9 53%
Missing values		4	3	1

It can easily be seen that around half of the ESs responded that they had not, as did around 80% of InT and more than 85% of SeT. Two null hypotheses were formulated: that there is no significant difference in the number who had in-service training (1) between InT and SeT samples and (2) between teachers and ES. Statistical tests led to acceptance of the first hypothesis, as no significant difference was found between the

two teachers' groups (χ^2 p. .32), while the difference is significant between teachers and ES (Fisher's Exact Test p. .011). It is thus believed that teachers are less trained than ES which indicates that either teachers are not offered in-service training or that they are not inclined to take it.

In this connection, it must be recalled that one of the ESs interviewed (see Chapter 8) claimed that in view of the general lack of the institutional awareness, the in-service training programmes for teachers are arranged by the personal efforts of the supervisors. The question, therefore, arises whether ES and teachers who are trained are employed in particular supervision bureaux, or whether there is an even distribution of them in the different bureaux. Table 9.1.6. shows the relevant data.

Table 9.1.6
In-Service Training of the Practitioners Among the Supervision Bureaux

		The Sub-supervision Bureau						Total
		The Centre (n = 39)	The North (n = 32)	The South (n = 75)	The West (n = 61)	Al-Nasseem (n = 39)	Al-Rodhah (n = 42)	(n = 288)
Have practitioners had any in-service-training programme ?	Yes	11 28.2%	8 25.8%	15 20.5%	9 15.3%	8 22.9%	7 16.7%	58 20.8%
	No	28 71.8%	23 74.2%	58 79.5%	50 84.7%	27 77.1%	35 83.3%	221 79.2%
	Missing cases	--	1	2	2	4	--	9

Immediately it is clear that training is not concentrated in particular bureaux. The bureau which had the highest percentage of affirmative responses was the Centre, but when the null hypothesis of no significant differences in the number trained between different supervision bureaux was tested, it was found that the differences were not significant (χ^2 p. 0.638).

Two points which still need to be raised in regard to in-service training are the length of the programme for those trained and their subject of training. Table 9.2.6 addresses the first issue but it should be mentioned that in the questionnaire, the respondents were

asked simply to indicate the length of the programme they had received in the last five years. The data then were arranged into the categories mentioned in the following table.

Table 9.1.7.

The Length of the Training Programmes that Were Received by Practitioners

		Work status			Total
		Intermediate Teachers (n = 40)	Secondary Teachers (n = 10)	Educational Supervisors (n = 8)	(n = 58)
the length of the training programme	1 -3 days	19 50.0%	4 40.0%	1 12.5%	24 42.9%
	4 -7 days	9 23.7%	2 20.0%	3 37.5%	14 25.0%
	8 days to less than 5 weeks	4 10.5%	2 20.0%	1 12.5%	7 12.5%
	5 weeks to less than 13 weeks	2 5.3%			2 3.6%
	13 weeks or more	4 10.5%	2 20.0%	3 37.5%	9 16.1%
Missing Cases		2	--	--	2

A large proportion of the people who received in-service training had only three days or less which indicates the shortness of the programmes provided. It can also easily be seen that a higher percentage of ES than of teachers received longer training-a full semester or more. M-W test was used to examine two H_0 : that there is no significant difference in the numbers falling into each category first, between InT and SeT, and, second, between teachers as one group and ES, It was found that the differences were not significant neither between the first pair (p. .507) or between the second pair (p. .073).

The second aspect of in-service training to be considered is the main subjects of the training provided to both teachers and ES. Each respondent who answered affirmatively to the question of whether they had received in-service training in the last five years was asked 'What was the subject of the programme?' The answers were rearranged into six categories, as presented in Table 9.1.8.

Table 9.1.8.**The Subjects of the Training Programmes**

		Work status			Total
		Intermediate Teachers (n = 40)	Secondary Teachers (n = 10)	Educational Supervisors (n = 8)	(n = 58)
The training programme subject	Arabic language specialist courses	2 5.6%			2 3.7%
	General educational skills	12 33.3%	3 30.0%		15 27.8%
	Teaching methods	14 38.9%	7 70.0%		21 38.9%
	Counselling	2 5.6%		1 12.5%	3 5.6%
	Educational supervision			7 87.5%	7 13.0%
	Other non-educational subjects	6 16.7%			6 11.1%
	Missing cases	4	--	--	4

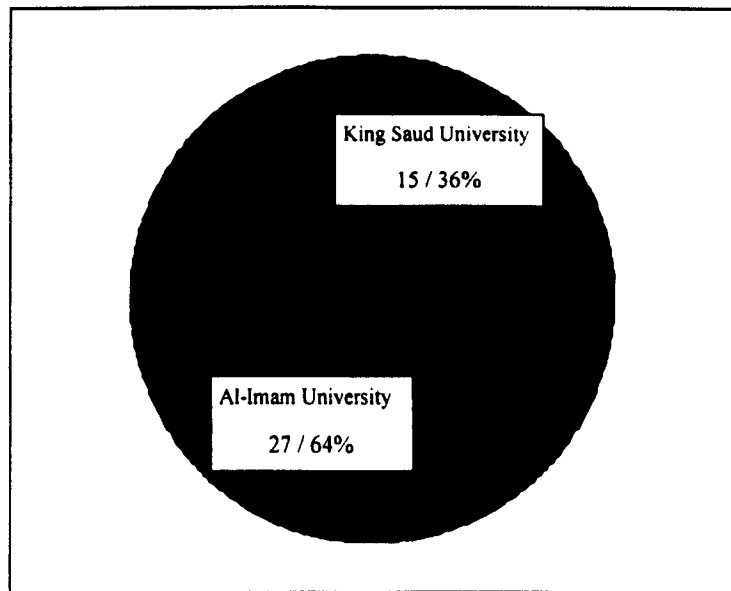
One conclusion that can be drawn from this data is that while the majority of teachers, more than 65%, received general training in educational skills or teaching methods, all ES bar one were trained in educational supervision. Although the titles may indicate some functionality of the subjects provided, the small proportion, mentioned earlier, of those who had been trained, must be borne in mind. Moreover, there is some doubt about the content of the programmes, which might be seen in the light of Falateh's (1988) findings that there was a lack of connection between the training programmes provided to the Arabic language teachers in Jeddah, S.A. and their actual needs.

9.1.3. University Lecturers Sample

The two universities in Riyadh were selected as each of them has a specialised department for the study of the Arabic language. Both universities also prepare teachers to teach at Intermediate and Secondary levels. There are some differences in the administrative arrangements in the two universities. Al-Imam University prepares teachers through the Arabic Language College which stands as a separate faculty, while King Saud University trains teachers through the Arabic Language department, which is

a part of the Arts College. 58 questionnaires were returned and 42 questionnaire were completely valid. Pie-chart 9.1.4. illustrates the numbers of the universities' sample.

Figure 9.1.4.
The Numbers of The Universities Sample



This figure shows that the sample from Al-Imam University was around double the size of that of King Saud. Indeed Al-Imam University population, as mentioned, is larger than that of King Saud University. Al-Imam University has three Arabic language-related departments, while in King Saud University there is only one department, Arabic Language Studies, which is, officially, subdivided into three specialisms.

The researcher bore in mind these important subdivisions at the time of the distribution of the questionnaires and they were represented in the study. Table 9.1.9 gives a more precise picture of the sample.

Table 9.1.9.
The University Lecturers' Major Subjects (*n* =42)

Major Subject		
	Al-Imam	King Saud
Syntax	16	3
	59.3%	20%
Literature	6	8
	22.2%	53.3%
Rhetoric	5	
	18.5%	
Linguistics		4
		26.7%
Total	27	15
	100%	100%

It is quickly apparent that, while the specialisms of syntax and literature are common to both universities, Al-Imam University has another particular specialism, rhetoric, which includes some literary criticism. King Saud University has a specialism called linguistics, which involves study of other languages and comparative linguistics. The respondents were asked about their qualifications. The data is presented in Table 9.1.10.

Table 9.1.10.
ULs' Qualifications (*n*= 42)

			Total
Master			9
			21.4%
			.4%
The Qualification	Ph.D. (Assistant Professor)	12	16
		44.4%	38.1%
The Qualification	Ph.D. (Associate Professor)	4	10
		14.8%	23.8%
	Ph.D. (Professor)	6	7
		22.2%	16.7%

From this table it is clear that a large proportion, more than 40% of Al-Imam UL are Assistant Professors while a similar proportion of King Saud UL are Associate Professors. To study the differences between the two universities, a Ho was formulated: there is no significant difference of the qualification level between the two UL. MW test led to acceptance of the Ho as the differences were not significant (p. .77). The fact

that more than 75% of the UL were of PhD level may indicate both the value placed on higher qualification among UL and the experience they had after graduation. Although some of those respondents of Masters level would be new graduates, others might be appointed as UL according to their experience. This can be made more clear when looking at Table 9.1.11 which tabulates the experience of UL with their qualifications.

Table 9.1.11

The Experience of the UL With Their Qualifications.

		The Qualification				
		Master (n= 9)	Ph.D. (Assistant Professor) (n= 16)	Ph.D. (Associate Prof.) (n= 10)	Ph.D. (Professor) (n= 7)	Total (n= 42)
The Experience after graduation	Under 5 years	1 11.1%				1 2.7%
	5-8 years	1 11.1%	2 15.4%			3 7.9%
	9-15 years	5 55.6%	3 23.1%	3 33.3%		11 28.9%
	More than 15 years	2 22.2%	8 61.5%	6 66.7%	7 100%	23 60.5%
	Missing cases	--	3	1	--	4

Another idea that should be clarified is that of the difference of level of experience between the UL in the two universities, Al-Imam and King Saud. Although there are some differences, a M-W test revealed these to be far from significance.

The previous table reveals that the great majority of the UL had more than 15 years experience, with only around 10% having 8 years or less experience. Some comparison may be made with the experience of the practitioners, which was indicated in Table 9.2.

3. Generally speaking, the UL had more experience as the largest proportion had nine years or more, whilst a great number of teachers had fewer than five years experience. The differences in the level of experience between practitioners and UL are very significant statistically, when using the M-W test (p. 0.000). Indeed, the low level of experience of most teachers is explained by the increasing trend in recent years to train and appoint Saudis to replace non-Saudi practitioners. This was noted by one non-

Saudi ES interviewed (Chapter 8) which confirmed the comments of Al-Maigal (1997) who gave this as a reason why he found non-Saudi teachers to have greater success in literacy teaching than Saudi teachers. This suggests that much in-service training is needed for these new graduates to counterweight their lack of experience.

The sample characteristics reviewed above may help us to understand and explain some of the differences of views between the samples toward the requirements determined through the four main parts of the questionnaire which will be presented in the following sections of this chapter.

9.2. The Requirements Related to Objectives

The objectives of the curriculum constitute the main base of the development process.

It is no exaggeration to say that the development process cannot be successfully achieved unless great attention is paid to develop this element of the curriculum.

Indeed, without a developed view which produces development objectives, no aspect of the curriculum can be improved. The objectives-related requirements for developing the Arabic language curriculum in S.A. were collected and suggested through both documentary and empirical reviews (see Chapter 7). In this section, a detailed account of these requirements and the respondents' views toward the importance of each one is presented as in Table 9.2.1.

Table 9.2.1.

The Objective- Related Requirements for Developing the Arabic Language Curriculum

No.	The Requirements	Work status			
		Intermediate Teachers (n = 200)	Secondary Teachers (n = 70)	Educational Supervisors (n = 18)	University Lecturers (n = 45)
1	Least important	2 1.0%			
	Of some importance	43 21.5%	15 22.4%	1 5.6%	4 9.8%
	Most important	36 18.0%	17 25.4%	1 5.6%	6 14.6%
	The most important	119 59.5%	35 52.2%	16 88.9%	31 75.6%
	Considering Arabic language as training behaviour				

No.	The Requirements	InT (n = 200)	SeT (n = 70)	ES (n = 18)	UL (n = 45)
2	Concentrating on theoretical knowledge about the Arabic language.	Least important	66 33.7%	19 29.2%	7 41.2%
		Of some importance	110 56.1%	40 61.5%	9 52.9%
		Most important	11 5.6%	3 4.6%	1 5.9%
		The most important	9 4.6%	3 4.6%	4 9.8%
3	Providing a total review for developing the whole Arabic curriculum instead of piecemeal changes.	Least important	21 10.7%	1 1.5%	1 5.9%
		Of some importance	78 39.8%	20 29.4%	4 23.5%
		Most important	36 18.4%	20 29.4%	7 41.2%
		The most important	61 31.1%	27 39.7%	5 29.4%
					11 26.8%
4	Considering Arabic as an integrated subject involving several different skills.	Least important	33 16.5%	9 13.6%	4 23.5%
		Of some importance	64 32.0%	16 24.2%	7 41.2%
		Most important	41 20.5%	15 22.7%	1 5.9%
		The most important	62 31.0%	26 39.4%	5 29.4%
					16 39.0%
5	Involving those engaged in teaching Arabic in developing the curriculum.	Least important	8 4.1%	4 5.8%	1 5.6%
		Of some importance	57 29.1%	14 20.3%	5 27.8%
		Most important	44 22.4%	19 27.5%	5 27.8%
		The most important	87 44.4%	32 46.4%	7 38.9%
					13 31.7%
6	Establishing a link between religion and the study of Arabic.	Least important	5 2.5%	4 5.9%	2 11.1%
		Of some importance	46 23.1%	18 26.5%	5 27.8%
		Most important	39 19.6%	16 23.5%	7 38.9%
		The most important	109 54.8%	30 44.1%	4 22.2%
					24 57.1%
7	Constructing objectives based on the students' interests and hobbies.	Least important	50 26.2%	20 30.8%	5 27.8%
		Of some importance	115 60.2%	35 53.8%	9 50.0%
		Most important	15 7.9%	7 10.8%	3 16.7%
		The most important	11 5.8%	3 4.6%	1 5.6%
					2 4.9%
8	Structuring objectives on the basis of students' developing confidence, independence and self-learning.	Least important	28 14.4%	13 19.7%	2 11.8%
		Of some importance	104 53.6%	37 56.1%	11 64.7%
		Most important	34 17.5%	7 10.6%	2 11.8%
		The most important	28 14.4%	9 13.6%	2 11.8%
					1 2.5%

No.	The Requirements	InT (n = 200)	SeT (n = 70)	ES (n = 18)	UL (n = 45)
9	Least important	161 83.0%	56 84.8%	17 94.4%	34 87.2%
	Of some importance	26 13.4%	9 13.6%	1 5.6%	4 10.3%
	Most important	6 3.1%			1 2.6%
	The most important	1 .5%	1 1.5%		
10	Least important	37 18.8%	13 19.4%	2 11.8%	5 11.9%
	Of some importance	113 57.4%	33 49.3%	15 88.2%	27 64.3%
	Most important	26 13.2%	12 17.9%		9 21.4%
	The most important	21 10.7%	9 13.4%		1 2.4%
11	Least important	36 18.7%	16 24.6%	1 5.6%	10 25.0%
	Of some importance	109 56.5%	34 52.3%	5 27.8%	20 50.0%
	Most important	37 19.2%	8 12.3%	8 44.4%	7 17.5%
	The most important	11 5.7%	7 10.8%	4 22.2%	3 7.5%
12	Least important	26 13.2%	10 15.4%	1 5.9%	3 7.1%
	Of some importance	77 39.1%	20 30.8%	8 47.1%	11 26.2%
	Most important	56 28.4%	23 35.4%	5 29.4%	18 42.9%
	The most important	38 19.3%	12 18.5%	3 17.6%	10 23.8%
13	Least important	47 23.6%	19 28.4%	5 27.8%	15 36.6%
	Of some importance	104 52.3%	31 46.3%	12 66.7%	16 39.0%
	Most important	28 14.1%	14 20.9%	1 5.6%	9 22.0%
	The most important	20 10.1%	3 4.5%		1 2.4%

Selecting the data or the most relevant aspects of data to be presented relies heavily on the importance attached to the data and the connection to the original questions of the main study. Thus, the researcher in this section and the following three sections will concentrate on presenting the different views of the four research samples toward each requirement. The differences in the importance given to each requirement between the InT and SeT and between teachers as one group and ES and, also, between all practitioners as one group and the UL will be investigated. Differences between groups

will also be examined in the light of what is believed to be the most important variable in each case. For InT and SeT, the views of teachers of different levels of experience will be investigated. Two levels of experience in supervision among ES (less than and more than 5 years) will be tested. For UL the views of those employed by King Saud and those employed by Al-Imam University will be compared.

To facilitate the investigation of differences, the following null hypotheses will be tested against each requirement mentioned in the table.

- a. There is no significant difference in the level of importance given to the requirement between practitioners and UL, nor among practitioners' groups.
- b. There is no significant difference in the level of importance given to the requirement between the views of those who are less experienced (have less than 5 years) and those who are more experienced (5 years of experience or more) among the practitioners' groups.
- c. There is no significant difference in the level of importance given to the requirement between Al-Imam UL and King Saud UL.

For the sake of brevity, when testing the mentioned hypotheses and interpreting their findings, the phrase: "the differences between..." will refer to: the differences in the level of importance given to the requirement between....

Another crucial note which must be borne in mind is that the instructions for the questionnaire placed a limitation on the number of items that could be included in both 'Most important' and 'The most important' categories, the reason for which has already been explained, which strongly affected the views or the level of importance being given to each requirement.

From Table 9.2.1. it is apparent that **the first and most highly evaluated requirement** is that of "considering the Arabic language as training behaviour". More than 75% of the two teachers samples believed it is "most important" which means that developing

Arabic cannot be achieved without this requirement. Among UL, 90% ranked this item in 'Most important' category. Not only that, but, more than half of each group of the teachers samples, and three quarters of the UL believed it is 'The most important' requirement, as did around 90% among ES. To test the aforementioned hypothesis, M-W test was used to investigate the differences between practitioners as one group and UL. The differences were significant at the level of .05 ($p = .039$). Moreover, among the practitioners, ESs gave significantly ($p = .01$) higher importance to this requirement than teachers, who were in agreement about it (the difference between them was not significant. $p = .460$).

So it can be concluded that both ES and UL gave the requirement higher importance than teachers did. This might be because a large proportion of teachers were new graduates who tend to use their taught knowledge more than ES and UL who appreciate the value of applied practice in the use of language. This idea can be examined studying the significance of differences between those who are new graduates and those who have greater experience among InT and SeT.

Using M-W test for the differences between the two levels of experience (less than 5 and 5 years or more), it was found that the differences are not significant between the two groups among InT nor differences between different level of experience among SeT. The difference between different level of experience, after being supervisor, for ES were, also, not significant, nor was there any difference between lecturers of the two universities.

The 2nd requirement might be recognised as at the bottom of the priority list of the objective-related requirements. Only less than 10% of the teachers' samples held the view that it was in the most important categories. Interestingly, a much larger proportion, around 25%, of UL, believed it was the most important. They appreciated 'concentrating on theoretical knowledge about the Arabic language'. The difference,

however, is not significant between practitioners and UL, nor between any pair of the practitioners themselves (M-W p. >.05). Again, the experience level did not affect the view towards this requirement, as the probability was not significant (M-W p. >.05). The level of importance attached to this requirement – and some others in the lower places of the lists discussed – may raise question as to the use of the term ‘requirement’. The term ‘requirement’ would imply importance by the nature of the word. The dictionary states that a requirement is “*that which is required or needed; a want*” (Oxford Dictionary 1992 2nd edition) “*that is depended on or needed*” (Oxford Dictionary, 1995). The use of another word which would not imply importance, such as ‘function’ or ‘task’ can be justified in this case. However, two points must be borne in mind. First, all requirements in the four lists for developing the ALC were originally collected from either the literature or the interviews, and they were considered ‘requirements’ for developing the curriculum, i.e. were claimed to enhance the curriculum. So, despite the low importance given to some, they can still be considered a ‘requirement’ in the light of the stipulative definition adopted for the term as clarified in Chapter Seven. Secondly, if the majority of the study samples believe an item is not important, this endorses the suitability – or even the necessity – of the method and term used in the current study. Clearly, the two mentioned sources offered a number of recommendations, which, in many cases, represent the point of view of individual researchers. The main duty of the current study is to put those ‘requirements’ in a context in which they can be compared with each other by asking a large number of those involved in the AL education, i.e. practitioners and specialists, to consider their importance and priority for developing the Saudi ALC. Each requirement, in accordance with the data obtained from the research samples, was rated, prioritised or might be rejected, even if it was considered by a single study as a requirement.

The third requirement, as is apparent from Table 9.2.1, was “providing an overall view for developing the whole Arabic curriculum instead of piecemeal changes”. This requirement was supported by the majority of the respondents within each group, who rated it in the most important category. Using the M-W test to examine the differences between pairs of groups showed that while the difference did not reach the level of significance between teachers as one group and ES, or between the practitioners and the UL, the differences were significant between InT and SeT (M-W test p. 0.009). This requirement was supported by SeT more than their colleagues who teach in intermediate level, as a larger proportion of SeT, around 70% believed this requirement to be ‘the most important’ or ‘most important’ in contrast with around half of InT who did so.

The problem of developing the curriculum in Saudi Arabia has a long history as indicated in chapter 3. Minor changes have occurred almost every year. In the last few years many and dramatic changes have been conducted in the secondary stage in particular. Those changes, generally, relied on adding and deleting followed by other piecemeal changes. This leads SeT, who are more involved with those processes to be more supportive to a comprehensive review rather than small and isolated changes. No significant differences in support for this requirement were found among respondents of different levels of experience nor between the two groups of UL.

Moreover, a complete review of the Arabic curriculum has not occurred for the last 20 years. In fact, the whole policy was produced in 1970 and is still largely unchanged to the present day. Many researchers, as mentioned in Chapter 6, have suggested a complete review of the curriculum which was supported, theoretically, by the leaders in Education (Al-Rasheed, 1996). For this requirement to be at this level of importance will encourage decision makers to award it a higher degree of attention in order to develop the Arabic language curriculum.

Table 9.2.1 gave a detailed breakdown of **the fourth requirement** which was 'considering Arabic as an integrated subject involving several different skills'. Whether Arabic should be regarded and presented as an 'integrated subject' or as 'several subjects' has long been a matter of controversy, as indicated in Chapter 6. Such disagreement was reflected in the views of the respondents. While ES were rather conservative, the majority of teachers and UL still held the view that this requirement is either 'the most important' or 'most important'. This proportion increases from 51% in the InT sample to more than 60% of both SeT and UL. However, the M-W test found that the differences between any pair of group, InT and SeT, teachers and ES, and the practitioners as a group and the UL were not significant ($p. >.05$). Therefore, it might be concluded that the disagreement over this requirement is amongst the whole sample and no group significantly supports this requirement more than another.

Regarding different experience levels, there are different views of SeT, which Table 9.2.2 illustrates precisely.

Table 9.2.2

Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on The Importance Given to the 4th Objectives-Related Requirement ($N = 70$, Missing Cases 5)

		The experience after graduation			
		Under 5 years	5-8 years	9-15 years	More than 15 years
Considering Arabic as an integrated subject involving several different skills.	Least important	5 21.7%	3 20.0%		
	Of some importance	6 26.1%	6 40.0%	1 14.3%	3 15.0%
	Most important	4 17.4%	3 20.0%	3 42.9%	5 25.0%
	The most important	8 34.8%	3 20.0%	3 42.9%	12 60.0%

Clearly, 85% of those who were most experienced strongly supported this requirement, placing it within the most important categories. This suggests a need to look for the differences between the most experienced (15 years or more experience) and the least experienced (less than 5 years experience). The differences were found to be significant at the level of .05 ($p. .024$). It can be concluded, therefore, that the more experience an

SeT has, the more they support the integration of different Arabic language skills in one subject. This conclusion suggests that with longer experience, teachers become aware of the importance, or probably the necessity of the integration. However, this idea cannot be further supported, due to the lack of difference in regard to the level of experience among other practitioner categories.

Regarding the fifth requirement, it should be indicated that in many cases, especially with a top-down hierarchical educational system such as that in Saudi Arabia (see Chapter 3), the curriculum is revealed to teachers without their knowing how it was developed or who helped to develop it. Therefore, for a successful process for developing the Arabic language curriculum, the fifth requirement which was highly supported was 'involving those engaged in teaching Arabic in developing the curriculum'. Table 9.2.1 shows that around two thirds of each group of the practitioners assessed this requirement as 'most important' or even 'the most important'. There was agreement among practitioners, as the differences between each pair of practitioners are not significant as M-W tests yielded probabilities larger than .05. However, the significant differences occurred between the practitioners as a group, and UL (M-W $p=0.042$). A proportion of around half of UL evaluated this requirement as either 'least important' or 'of some importance'. It can be interpreted that practitioners were more confident in their abilities to contribute usefully to curriculum development. Another reason which justifies the practitioners' views might relate to their experiences of the problems caused by the 'revealed curriculum', so they attached higher level of importance to involving the field practitioners.

Different levels of experience in teaching for InT and SeT or in supervision for ES, between the pairs of group, did not significantly affect the views of the respondents

towards this requirement. There was also no significant difference between Al-Imam UL and King Saud UL. This reflects the consistency of the views among each group.

The sixth requirement mentioned in Table 9.2.1. is that of 'establishing a link between religion and the study of Arabic.' This requirement was evaluated as the second most important requirement, which also was emphasised by many interviewees from different groups (see Chapter 8). The great majority of the respondents, around three quarters of each group, viewed this requirement either 'the most important' or 'most important'. Such importance was given to this requirement not only because of the religious orientation of the Saudi society but, also, it seems, because of:

- a) the long tradition of the link between the learning of Arabic and Islamic studies.

This point was made clear in Chapter 2.

- b) the lack of link between the 'Arabic Language' and the 'Islamic Education' in the current Saudi curriculum. This point still needs more clarification. It was shown in Chapter 3 that the first aim of learning Arabic, both in intermediate and secondary schools was stated to be "to cultivate a comprehensive understanding of Islam". However, without being able to analyse the whole content of the current Arabic language curriculum, it can be assumed with some level of confidence that the Arabic curriculum serves these aims. However, the big question is whether the Islamic Education curriculum helps or participates in teaching Arabic. Therefore, this requirement invites interrelationship between these areas or subjects which can help in achieving both aims.

For these two reasons, this requirement was suggested by the InT sample to be the second most important requirement, by which is meant that the development of the Arabic language curriculum cannot be achieved without concentrating on this requirement.

The data in Table 9.2.1 also shows different views of the four samples toward this requirement. However, statistically significant differences occurred only between the two main groups, i.e. practitioners and UL (M-W test p. 0.034). UL accorded this requirement higher importance than it was given by practitioners. The reason for this may be because the views of UL are dominated by those who are from Al-Imam Islamic University which is involved with Islamic studies. This assumption needs to be investigated further, by studying the differences in the views between the two universities' samples. Table 9.2.3 helps with such comparison.

Table 9.2.3
Views of Al-Imam UL and King Saud UL on the Importance Given to the 5th Objectives-Related Requirement (*N* = 42)

		The Universities Sample	
		Al-Imam University Lecturers	King Saud University Lecturers
Establishing a link between religion and the study of Arabic.	Least important	1 3.7%	3 20.0%
	Of some importance	1 3.7%	3 20.0%
	Most important	7 25.9%	3 20.0%
	The most important	18 66.7%	6 40.0%

This table shows a notable difference between the two groups. Two thirds of Al-Imam UL believed this requirement to be ‘the most important’ while in contrast, two thirds of King Saud UL evaluated it in the categories below this. The difference was found to be significant (M-W test P.0.034).

The differences related to the experience levels in teaching among SeT, InT and in supervision among ES in the importance given to this requirement were not significant.

The 7th requirement as noted in Table 9.2.1 was ‘constructing objectives based on the students’ interests and hobbies’. This was regarded as most important by only less than

10% of UL sample, around 15% of the two teachers samples and less than 23% of the ES sample. However the great majority still held the view that the requirement was of some importance. As with the two former requirements, differences according to the level of experience among InT, SeT, and ES do not appear significant (M-W p. >.05). Significant difference, however, occurred between the views of UL in the two universities (M-W p. .046). In SA King Saud University is considered as modern compared with Al-Imam, which is rather conservative. Therefore, King Saud UL appreciated this requirement rather more than those of Al-Imam. Table 9.2.4 shows the figures clearly.

Table 9.2.4
Views of Al-Imam UL and King Saud UL on the Importance Given to the 7th Objectives-Related Requirement (*N* = 42, Missing Cases 1)

		The Universities Sample	
		Al-Imam UL	King Saud UL
Constructing objectives based on the students' interests and hobbies.	Least important	11 42.3%	2 13.3%
	Of some importance	13 50.0%	10 66.7%
	Most important	1 3.8%	2 13.3%
	The most important	1 3.8%	1 6.7%

It is well known in recent educational literature that students' interests and hobbies are a very important base of constructing the curriculum (Oliver, 1977). Nevertheless, no less than a quarter of each sample regarded this requirement as least important, although they were free to put it in the 'of some importance' category, which suggests their low perception of its level of importance. Questions need to be raised as to, first, the awareness of the different samples of the importance being allocated to this requirement in current educational thought, and second, the extent of practice of this requirement in the current curriculum. Further research is needed which might lead eventually to

discover some causes of the general weakness of the Arabic language among students in Saudi Arabia.

The eighth requirement as shown in Table 9.2.1 is 'Structuring objectives on the basis of students' developing confidence, independence and self-learning'. For this requirement, the method of filling out the questionnaire can be seen to bring controversy, as it is apparent from Table 9.2.1 that although only around one quarter of the number of the practitioners groups believed it should be in either of the "most important" categories, less than 20% of each group believed it to be 'least important'. In other words, those who believed this item was within most important categories outnumbered those who placed it in the 'least important' category. Regarding the differences among the practitioners' groups and between them as one group and the UL, M-W tests showed no significant differences at the level of 0.05 between any pair of groups. This reflects some similarity of views among the different groups towards this requirement. However, some disagreement was found in relation to experience level only within SeT. Table 9.2.5 shows this pattern clearly.

Table 9.2.5

Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 8th Objectives-Related Requirement (*n* = 70 Missing cases 5)

		The experience after graduation			
		Under 5 years	5-8 years	9-15 years	More than 15 years
Structuring objectives on the basis of students' developing confidence, independence and self-learning.	Least important	6 25.0%		1 16.7%	6 28.6%
	Of some importance	11 45.8%	7 50.0%	5 83.3%	13 61.9%
	Most important	4 16.7%	2 14.3%		1 4.8%
	The most important	3 12.5%	5 35.7%		1 4.8%

It is easy to see that this requirement was supported by a higher proportion of the less experienced SeT, in contrast to less than 10% of those with 15 years or more experience. This difference is significant (M-W p. .018). Indeed, there is a new global

trend in educational thought which gives high importance to individual learning and concentrates on developing learners' confidence and independence. New graduates are positively influenced by these new trends in education. Thus, the pattern of support for this requirement can be explained by the positive response of new graduates to these trends.

The ninth item of the list referred to 'structuring objectives based on effective communication in local dialect Arabic'. The issue of whether to insist on the use of standard Arabic only or whether there is flexibility in the use of colloquial Arabic to encourage expression amongst students, is a subject of much debate. The use of colloquialisms in education in some countries, such as Britain, has been accepted. Cox (1991, p.128), for example, recognised the link between dialect and identity and the self-esteem and motivation which can be damaged by correcting students' dialect forms, concluding that although they should be able to use standard "*All children should be supported in valuing their own dialect*". On the other hand, colloquial language is also existent and used in schools and even in Arabic lessons (see Chapter 8), despite people believing that the standard form of Arabic is a sacred language. Moreover, it is greatly used in the media in general, with special sections in the press and even supplements. However, as Table 9.2.1. revealed, there is almost complete agreement among all research samples that this is of least importance as a requirement. Indeed around 3% of InT and lower proportion of ES and UL still held the opposite view as they may argue that because colloquial language is used, it should be taught, to help students to express themselves through it. Nevertheless, the lowest position of this requirement is statistically supported by all the samples as the differences are not significant between any pair of groups. ($P. >.05$). There was lack of significance either in relation to the level of experience or between the two groups of the UL.

The next requirement, as is apparent from Table 9.2.1, is that of linking Arabic language objectives with those of other subjects. This requirement was believed by around one quarter of the InT, SeT, and UL samples to be in the ‘most important’ categories while the great majority believed it is ‘least important’ or just ‘of some importance’. Surprisingly, none of the ES were in favour of this requirement, but this difference is not significant between any pair of groups (M-W $p > .05$). Moreover differences were not recognised as being significant when using M-W test between any two pairs of groups of the experience level of InT, SeT, and ES, nor between the lecturers in the two universities. This requirement can be compared with the second requirement of this section which suggested the ‘link between religion and the study of Arabic’. The respondents placed a stronger emphasis on the link between the learning of Arabic and Islamic religious education than on its link with other subjects. Indeed, Islamic Education relies heavily on both the accuracy and the meaning of texts, which must be linked to the learning of Arabic; hence the need to develop students’ language.

The 11th requirement, as it is apparent in Table 9.2.1, suggested ‘stating objectives in behavioural terms, indicating clear attainment targets and levels.’ This requirement was supported by a quarter of all InT, SeT and UL while more than half of ES allocated it to the most important categories. These differences cannot be supported statistically due to a lack of significant differences between any pair of groups. Practitioners’ groups of different levels of experience had similar views on the importance of this requirement, which may raise a question of the expertise that practitioners could gain through their work. In other words, in the light of the lack of in-service training (see Table 9.1.5) a question which deserves deep consideration is, ‘do teachers and educational supervisors gain more experience through their career or do they simply perpetuate what they have learned from their pre-service experience?’ In this sense, the lack of motivation –

caused by the current Saudi educational system – for self-development admitted and criticised in Chapter Eight should be recalled.

The 12th requirement was one which around half of each group assigned to the two most important categories. This requirement, ‘setting objectives for the effective use of standard Arabic only’, is clear in theory but when put into practice is more difficult, as already indicated in Chapter 8. Some educationists blame the construction of the curriculum for this problem, believing that if the curriculum required standard Arabic only, then it must affect the content and the teaching methods (Arab League 1974). It is apparent from Table 9.2.1 that the requirement was supported, as most important or the most important, by more than 70%, of UL, and around 50% of each practitioners groups. The differences, between the practitioners’ groups or between them and UL were not significant ($p. >.05$), The question is, then, whether the length of experience of practitioners’ groups affects their view of the priority of this requirement. It was found that while the differences between InT’s and ES’s of different levels of experience were not significant, the differences were found significant between the less experienced (less than 5 years) and the most experienced (more than 15 years) among the SeT sample (M-W $p. .031$). The latter assigned it a higher importance level. Table 9.2.6. can give a whole picture of this.

Table 9.2.6

Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 12th Objectives-Related Requirement ($n = 70$ Missing cases 6)

		The experience after graduation			
		Under 5 years	5-8 years	9-15 years	More than 15 years
Setting objectives for the effective use of Standard Arabic only.	Least important	6 26.1%	2 14.3%	2 28.6%	
	Of some importance	9 39.1%	5 35.7%	2 28.6%	4 20.0%
	Most important	3 13.0%	3 21.4%	3 42.9%	14 70.0%
	The most important	5 21.7%	4 28.6%		2 10.0%

It is quickly apparent from the table that around 80% of the experienced respondents marked this requirement as being in the most important categories, in contrast with less than 35% of the less experienced respondents (under 5 years). That is probably because those who had more experience were more aware of the shortcomings of the current curriculum which allows colloquial Arabic to be used even in Arabic lessons, as denoted by the ESs interviewed (see Chapter 8). On the other hand, experienced SeT are more conscious of the strong effect of the objectives on the other components of the curriculum.

The thirteenth requirement was 'providing teachers, students and parents with detailed lists of the objectives of Arabic learning'. Although around 25% of the teachers samples and UL allocated this requirement in the most important categories, the greater proportion of the four samples believed it is 'of some importance' suggesting that it helps in developing the curriculum, rather than that it should be a foundation stone of such process. This is the general view of all four samples, which marks agreement in their assessment of this requirement as the difference is not significant. Practitioners' groups with different levels of experience had similar views in the importance given to this requirement as the difference was not significant ($p > .05$).

In concluding this section, one point that might deserve some attention is that the eleventh and thirteenth requirements of this section, i.e. providing a detailed list of the objectives and stating objectives in behavioural terms, were generally given lower importance compared with the other requirements. Indeed, these issues were highly recommended by the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States in their study (1984). They were, also, strongly recommended by some researchers in SA, in relation to ALC, who argued that a clear statement of objectives would encourage teachers, students and parents to work towards the same goal and thus improve learning levels (Othman, 1993). Moreover, in The National Curriculum in England and Wales, a

complete list of attainment targets for the learning of English was offered and made available to the public (DfEE, 1995), gaining the approval of many educationists as

an important basis for teachers' assessments and many national tests that might be taken (Moon, 1996, p. 6)

Despite the importance of this requirement, the 11th and 13th requirements were still considered by the majority of the research samples as "of some importance", which would place them in the bottom of the priority list. Two possibilities might be thought of:

First, it can be argued that, since the researcher set a limit to the number of requirements that could be included in the most important categories, despite the great level of importance of these two requirements, there are other requirements for developing the curriculum which have even greater importance so each respondent – according to the instruction of the questionnaire – must think carefully before deciding which requirement should be selected as 'most important'. This can be considered as an advantage of the current study and the importance of prioritising the requirements is clear; failure to do so may lead to decision-makers being attracted by some study findings, while overlooking other 'more important' requirements.

The second possibility, however, is the level of 'awareness' among those involved in the Arabic language curriculum of the applications of such a requirement. Further investigation of such issues is essential and may lead to some of the roots of the old problems of the AL education. The idea of a lack of awareness may be supported by the fact that Al-Khoraief (1997) found that only around 26% of the secondary schools teachers were fully acquainted with the aims of the secondary education. He recommended providing teachers with the aims and objectives and training them to be aware of their importance and implications. Moreover, the question of the level of awareness among those involved in teaching the Arabic language might also be supported by the lack of in-service training, confirmed earlier (see Table 9.1.5).

9.3. The Requirements Related to The Curriculum Content

It is widely believed that the content is the heart of the curriculum as it refers to the material being studied by students. For many people, ‘curriculum’ denotes the content itself, rather than the other components of the curriculum. Some models in curriculum design, as indicated in chapter 5, rely heavily on content to construct the other aspects of the curriculum. The importance of the content was reflected, to some extent, in recent empirical studies of the Arabic curriculum. In Chapter 6, some studies related to curriculum content were reviewed which led to two main conclusions: the weakness of the current curriculum content and the uncertainty of how to improve upon it. This does not mean that no efforts have been made. Rather, however, it indicates the serious need to move on in this field.

In this section, the requirements for developing the Arabic language curriculum content will be presented showing their importance as perceived by the four samples of the study. As in the previous section, the requirements will be presented in their order on the questionnaire and the hypotheses listed earlier (see p. 314) will be tested against each requirement. Table 9.3.1 shows the content-related requirements with the level of importance attached to them as perceived by the four research samples.

Table 9.3.1
The Content-Related Requirements as Perceived by the Four Research Samples

		Work status			
No.	The Requirements	Intermediate Teachers (n = 200)	Secondary Teachers (n = 70)	Educational Supervisors (n = 18)	University Lecturers (n = 45)
1	Least important Placing the emphasis of the textbook on practical and functional syllabuses. Of some importance Most important The most important	11 5.6%		1 5.6%	
		61 31.0%	28 40.0%	1 5.6%	4 9.5%
		48 24.4%	8 11.4%	2 11.1%	10 23.8%
		77 39.1%	34 48.6%	14 77.8%	28 66.7%

No.	The Requirements	InT (n = 200)	SeT (n = 70)	ES (n = 18)	UL (n = 45)
2	Selecting texts and units that reflect students' lives and their social and geographical environment.	Least important	2 1.0%	1 5.9%	5 12.2%
		Of some importance	83 43.0%	30 43.5%	10 58.8%
		Most important	49 25.4%	23 33.3%	3 17.6%
		The most important	59 30.6%	15 21.7%	3 17.6%
				5 12.2%	
3	Avoiding over-crowding of material to be covered in the curriculum.	Least important	27 14.2%	8 11.9%	2 12.5%
		Of some importance	117 61.6%	39 58.2%	10 62.5%
		Most important	26 13.7%	9 13.4%	3 18.8%
		The most important	20 10.5%	11 16.4%	1 6.3%
				6 14.3%	
4	Emphasising oral skills in standard Arabic such as making a speech, leading debates and participating in discussions.	Least important	6 3.0%		
		Of some importance	59 29.8%	20 28.6%	6 35.3%
		Most important	67 33.8%	18 25.7%	3 17.6%
		The most important	66 33.3%	32 45.7%	8 47.1%
				25 59.5%	
5	Choosing content that develops students' sense of their literary heritage and increasing the range of their vocabulary.	Least important	6 3.1%	1 1.4%	1 2.4%
		Of some importance	65 33.3%	23 33.3%	6 33.3%
		Most important	68 34.9%	24 34.8%	7 38.9%
		The most important	56 28.7%	21 30.4%	5 27.8%
				10 23.8%	
6	Including professional writing skills such as organising content, headings, captions and taking notes.	Least important	18 9.4%	6 8.7%	
		Of some importance	119 62.0%	46 66.7%	8 47.1%
		Most important	43 22.4%	11 15.9%	8 47.1%
		The most important	12 6.3%	6 8.7%	1 5.9%
				9 22.0%	
7	Incorporating in the curriculum the skills of using electronic communication devices such Email, word processor and the internet.	Least important	96 49.2%	32 47.1%	8 44.4%
		Of some importance	78 40.0%	30 44.1%	9 50.0%
		Most important	9 4.6%	3 4.4%	1 2.4%
		The most important	12 6.2%	3 4.4%	1 5.6%
				1 2.4%	
8	Including reading skills and strategies such as skimming, reading aloud, scanning, intensive and extensive reading.	Least important	42 21.0%	11 15.7%	1 5.6%
		Of some importance	122 61.0%	41 58.6%	9 50.0%
		Most important	20 10.0%	13 18.6%	6 33.3%
		The most important	16 8.0%	5 7.1%	2 11.1%
				1 2.4%	

No.	The Requirements	InT (n = 200)	SeT (n = 70)	ES (n = 18)	UL (n = 45)
9	Trying new textbooks for sufficient time to be properly evaluated before implementing them.	Least important	19 9.7%	6 8.8%	1 5.6%
		Of some importance	84 42.9%	28 41.2%	10 55.6%
		Most important	49 25.0%	19 27.9%	5 27.8%
		The most important	44 22.4%	15 22.1%	2 11.1%
					2 4.8%
10	Giving teachers opportunities to plan and select the appropriate syllabus based on the curriculum objectives.	Least important	28 14.1%	13 19.1%	12 66.7%
		Of some importance	66 33.2%	33 48.5%	6 33.3%
		Most important	33 16.6%	4 5.9%	5 12.2%
		The most important	72 36.2%	18 26.5%	
11	Increasing the weight given to listening and comprehension skills.	Least important	6 3.1%		
		Of some importance	94 48.2%	34 48.6%	4 22.2%
		Most important	48 24.6%	20 28.6%	5 27.8%
		The most important	47 24.1%	16 22.9%	9 50.0%
					18 43.9%
12	Inserting Syntax and Morphology in their natural linguistic contexts and not as theoretical grammar.	Least important	14 7.1%	3 4.3%	1 5.6%
		Of some importance	93 47.2%	30 42.9%	7 38.9%
		Most important	37 18.8%	14 20.0%	5 27.8%
		The most important	53 26.9%	23 32.9%	5 27.8%
					13 31.0%
13	Providing textbooks with stimulating illustrations.	Least important	80 40.6%	32 45.7%	5 27.8%
		Of some importance	91 46.2%	32 45.7%	10 55.6%
		Most important	11 5.6%	5 7.1%	2 11.1%
		The most important	15 7.6%	1 1.4%	1 5.6%
					1 2.4%

The first of the content-related requirements was ‘placing the emphasis of the textbook on a practical and functional syllabus’. It is not surprising that this requirement is at the top of the list as there is a general understanding by many researchers such as Zadagay (1985) and Madkoor and Ogalan (1987) that the current curriculum is not consistent with the functions of learning language, an issue also raised by Al-Majed (1996). Al-Sayed (1987), also, emphasised this requirement, criticising the lack of functionality of the curricula of various Arab countries, including Saudi

Arabia. This view was also backed by the people interviewed in Chapter 8. It would be of some value to compare the first requirements in this section with the first of the objective-related requirements, i.e. 'considering the Arabic language as training behaviour'. Undoubtedly, both of them were highly appreciated as they focused on the value of the practical aspect of language rather than the theories about it. Table 9.3.1 shows the level of importance given to this requirement by the different samples. It is clear that it was significantly appreciated by the UL as around 90% of them believed it was in either 'Most important' or 'The most important' categories. The differences are highly significant in this respect between UL and practitioners (M-W P. .001). Among the practitioners, ES were more interested in it. Around 80% of them assigned it to the most important category, which means that development cannot be processed without taking that requirement into consideration. The differences between ES and teachers are also significant (M-W p. .000), while both InT and SeT share the same idea of its importance and the differences between them are not significant (M-W p. .416). Two consequences might be suggested from this result, i.e. for this requirement being supported by both UL and ES more than by teacher. First it is important to include different groups' views in developing the curriculum and not be restricted on a small number of 'developers' or a group of specialists who share the same interest. Second, the level of awareness among teachers might be questionable as, although for a long time this requirement has been called for, teachers did not adopt a sufficiently favourable reaction to it, so that they were, significantly, less supportive to it than the other groups.

Regarding the effect of the experience level on the importance given to this requirement, it was found that although there was no significant difference in the SeT and ES samples, there was significant difference within the InT sample. Table 9.3.2 gives a clearer idea of the opinions of InT in relation to their experience.

Table 9.3.2

Views of InT of Different Levels of Experience, on the Importance Given to the 1st Content-Related Requirement (*n* = 200, Missing cases 5)

		The experience after graduation			
		Under 5 years	5-8 years	9-15 years	More than 15 years
Placing the emphasis of the textbook on practical and functional syllabuses.	Least important	8 7.0%	3 4.3%		
	Of some importance	40 35.1%	18 26.1%	1 25.0%	1 12.5%
	Most important	29 25.4%	16 23.2%	1 25.0%	2 25.0%
	The most important	37 32.5%	32 46.4%	2 50.0%	5 62.5%

It is apparent that the great majority of the more experienced within the sample highly appreciated that requirement. Around half of those with more than 5 years of experience assigned it to the most important category while less than a third of the least experienced (less than 5 years) placed it in this category. The differences between these two groups are significant (M-W P. .018). The more experienced InT have probably come to realise the difficulties faced in teaching Arabic as a theoretical subject.

In Chapter 4, it was indicated that there is a new language teaching method which builds on a functional syllabus and has been recognised as being suitable to be used in developing the Arabic language curriculum as it was revealed in the study of Zadagay (1985). This has been backed by the research sample, especially those considered to be highly qualified, UL, and those who have more experience of the practitioners samples, namely, ES and those who have more than 5 years experience of the InT.

The second requirement, 'selecting texts and units that reflect students' life and their social and geographical environment', was supported more by teachers' samples than by ES, but the difference did not reach the level of significance (M-W p. .097). However, the practitioners as one group were significantly more supportive of this requirement than UL (M-W p. .022).

As indicated previously, in the current system of education, the textbooks are published and prepared centrally and then distributed to schools. In Saudi Arabia, different social

and geographical environments exist which means that it would not be possible for a single textbook to be totally relevant to all students' environment. Thus, this requirement, supported by more than 55% of the teachers sample to be most important, can be an indicator of the level of support for giving some freedom to construct the curriculum locally.

Different levels of experience among practitioners' samples and working in either university among UL did not yield different perceptions towards the importance of this requirement, which can be a sign of stability of the views within each sample.

The third requirement stating 'Avoiding over-crowding of material to be covered in the curriculum' was suggested by ES through the second phase of the study, as they perceived that the current curriculum suffers from being over-crowded. They argued for a better development process in which the concentration must be on the selection of taught material, avoiding over-crowding of material covered in the curriculum. More than three quarter of each sample regarded this requirement as of some importance or even most important. All four samples shared almost the same ideas and the differences are not significant. Regarding the experience, Table 9.3.3 and Table 9.3.4 help to recognise the differences between different levels of experience among InT and SeT respectively.

Table 9.3.3

Views of InT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 3rd Content-Related Requirement (*n* = 200, Missing cases 12)

		The experience after graduation			
		Under 5 years	5-8 years	9-15 years	More than 15 years
Avoiding over-crowding of material to be covered in the curriculum.	Least important	21 19.4%	5 7.5%		
	Of some importance	65 60.2%	42 62.7%	3 75.0%	6 66.7%
	Most important	10 9.3%	14 20.9%		2 22.2%
	The most important	12 11.1%	6 9.0%	1 25.0%	1 11.1%

Table 9.3.4

Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 3rd Content-Related Requirement (*n* = 70 Missing cases 4)

		The experience after graduation			
		Under 5 years	5-8 years	9-15 years	More than 15 years
Avoiding over-crowding of material to be covered in the curriculum.	Least important	3 13.0%	3 21.4%	1 14.3%	1 4.5%
	Of some importance	15 65.2%	9 64.3%	3 42.9%	11 50.0%
	Most important	3 13.0%	1 7.1%	1 14.3%	4 18.2%
	The most important	2 8.7%	1 7.1%	2 28.6%	6 27.3%

It is generally apparent from both tables that the more experienced respondents were more likely to appreciate the importance of this requirement. The differences were found to be significant between those with less than 5 years and those with 5 years or more experience among InT (M-W p. .023) and between those with less than 9 years and those with 9 years or more among SeT (M-W p. .017). Clearly, as they have suffered longer from the concentration on the amount of material to be studied, the most experienced placed more emphasis on quality of material studied, avoiding crowding the content with too large an amount of material to be covered.

The fourth requirement, as was shown in Table 9.3.1, was 'emphasising oral skills in standard Arabic, such as making a speech, leading debates and participating in discussions'. Indeed the great majority of the research samples strongly supported this requirement. Among the four samples, only six InT, accounting for less than 2% of the whole sample, gave this requirement lower attention. However, while there is general agreement among the practitioners' samples of its high importance, as the differences are not significant between any teachers and ES, UL showed an even higher level of support, with more than 80% of them believing this requirement to be in the most important categories. The difference was significant between practitioners and UL (M-W P. .005). It might be said that UL could consider the different functions of the language, and therefore appreciated oral skills more, while practitioners, although

supporting this requirement, did so less than UL as they believed this requirement might add more material to the content which is already full.

The different levels of experience among InT and SeT did not affect their views of the importance of this requirement and the differences are not significant. Different levels of experience after being ES affected the level of importance given to this requirement. Table 9.3.3. shows the details.

Table 9.3.5

Views of ES of Different Levels of Experience, on the Importance Given to the 4th Content-Related Requirement (n18 Missing cases 1)

		The experience after being educational supervisor			
		Under 5 years	5-8 years	9-15 years	More than 15 years
Emphasising oral skills in standard Arabic such as making a speech, leading debates and participating in discussions.	Least important				
	Of some importance	1 11.1%	4 66.7%		1 100.0%
	Most important	2 22.2%	1 16.7%		
	The most important	6 66.7%	1 16.7%	1 100.0%	

It is clear that the largest proportion, 6 out of 8 of those who had less than 5 years of experience viewed this requirement as a most important one, while the largest proportion, 5 out of 8 of those who had more than 5 years experience, recognised it as of some importance. This might reflect the increasing awareness among the more recently appointed ES of the importance being contemporarily given to oral skills. Currently, there is an agreement among researchers of the necessity of the oral language. Marenbon (1994, p. 21) put it clearly that

Spoken language is as important – in some respects more important – than written language.

Nevertheless, little or no weight is given to oral skills in the Saudi curriculum, a point which has been criticised by many researchers such as Madkoor (1987) and Al-Bader

(1989) and also commented upon by the educationalists interviewed for this study, as mentioned in Chapter 8.

The fifth requirement was 'choosing content that develops students' sense of their literary heritage and increases the range of their vocabulary.' From Table 9.3.1, it is quickly apparent that there is almost complete agreement among the different samples about it, as the proportion of those who believe this requirement to be within the most important or the most important categories is more than 60% of each sample. For this requirement, differences were not significant between practitioners and UL (M-W p. .717) nor between teachers and ES (M-W p. .888). No significant differences were found in relation to different levels of experience among practitioners groups. It can be interpreted that this requirement is believed to be strongly valued by all those involved in Arabic learning.

The sixth requirement was 'including professional writing skills such as organising content, headings, captions and taking notes'. More than a quarter of the teachers' sample and around half of ES and UL shared the view that this is in the most important categories with less than 10% of teachers and no ES or UL viewing it as least important. The two groups of teachers held highly similar views (M-W p. .753) while the ES might be seen as more in favour of this requirement, as the differences between teachers and ES are significant (M-W p. .029). The differences between practitioners who were dominated by the teachers' views and UL are intensely significant (M-W p. .001), supporting the view that UL were taking the side of ES (the difference between teachers as one group and UL and ES as one group are absolutely significant, M-W p. .000). Both ES and UL appreciate this requirement as they might view the functional writing skills, rather than looking at the current school timetable which gives a number of hours to writing but with questionable 'functionality'.

Although there was disagreement between groups there was consistency of views on this requirement within groups, reflected in the lack of differences between different levels of experience among practitioners' samples.

The seventh requirement, as shown in Table 9.3.1, suggested involving the Arabic language curriculum with the skills of using some electronic devices such as word processing and Email to help students to communicate effectively in today's world. Although it is an unresolved issue, this idea has been supported by some researchers in connection with the language curriculum. With some discussion, Tweddle and Moore (1994, p.117) come to the conclusion that

What is displayed on a computer screen is text and that the capacity to read that text is part of the literacy with which English teachers must be concerned

In fact, it might be expected that this requirement would be supported by the respondents, according to the strong trend toward the home computer and the inter-communicating world. Nevertheless, only around 5% of both the UL and ES and around 10% of the other two samples considered it as one of the most important categories. The vast majority allocated it to the category 'of some importance' or even 'least important'.

However this requirement might be given lower priority, partly because of the current situation of the Arabic curriculum which is full of material, so that the research sample did not want to show support for a requirement which might add more units or topics to the curriculum. A second reason might be a belief that using electronic devices is a matter of technology rather than of language, so it should be incorporated in the curriculum of computer studies or other information technology related studies. In England and Wales part of 'Information Technology' - which is considered as a 'foundation subject' and is required in the four key stages (SCAA, 1996) - deals with

'communicating and handling information' including special reference to the use of English language on screen (SCAA, 1995).

In this sense it would be appropriate to indicate that in March 1999, the Saudi Ministry of Education stated that there is in preparation a course of computer studies which will be tried next year in selected schools. According to the Ministry, this programme will concentrate on *'using computers to help students to communicate and to use information resources.'* (Al-Riyadh newspaper, issue 11211, 5 March 1999).

For this requirement there was full agreement among all research samples on the level of importance given to it (M-W p. >.05) and also between different levels of experience among InT, SeT and ES.

From Table 9.3.1, it is seen that **the 8th requirement** was 'including reading skills and strategies such as skimming, reading aloud, scanning, intensive and extensive reading'. "Information skills" or advanced reading strategies such as skimming (looking through the text to identify main points or gist) and scanning (looking swiftly through a text to find a specific item or name or date) have recently received greater attention in educational thought. Harrison (1994, pp.105,106) claimed that

In the United States, as in England, there has recently been an increased interest in information skills

Although this requirement was little appreciated by InT, and only slightly more by SeT (M-W p. .171), it was strongly supported by the ES as more than 44% of them considered it to be within the most important categories. Statistically significant differences were found between teachers as one group and their supervisors (M-W p. .017). UL stand in the middle so that the differences were not significant between them and the practitioners (M-W p. .190). One idea still of some value is that this requirement was considered to be of lower priority, perhaps because the current curriculum gives reasonable weight to reading in the school timetable. It was shown in

Chapter 3 that two courses or 'branches' out of six (or sometimes out of five) were strongly relevant to reading skills. On the other hand teachers may consider that applying this requirement would add more material to be studied, while they did not want overload the curriculum with more than it already contains. Neither different levels of experience nor the views of the two groups of UL appeared related to the importance given to this requirement.

'Trying new textbooks for sufficient time to be properly evaluated before implementing them' was **the 9th requirement as shown in Table 9.4.1**. Around half of the two teachers' samples supported this requirement as being within the most important categories while around 40% held the view that it was of some importance. UL showed less interest in this requirement; less than 15% of them assigned it one of the most important categories. The difference between practitioners and UL was absolutely significant (M-W p. .000). It is true to say that this requirement is related to professional aspects of the curriculum and thus outside the scope of UL. This justifies the lack of significant differences between the view of teachers and ES as they share the same interest.

Experienced SeT were more likely to support the level of importance of this requirement. Table 9.3.5 outline the picture in this respect.

Table 9.3.5
Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience, on the Importance Given to the 9th Content-Related Requirement (*n* = 70 Missing cases 3)

		The experience after graduation			
		Under 5 years	5-8 years	9-15 years	More than 15 years
Trying new textbooks for sufficient time to be properly evaluated before implementing them.	Least important	3 12.5%	3 20.0%		
	Of some importance	11 45.8%	6 40.0%	3 50.0%	8 36.4%
	Most important	9 37.5%	3 20.0%	2 33.3%	5 22.7%
	The most important	1 4.2%	3 20.0%	1 16.7%	9 40.9%

Significantly, the more experienced SeT were, the more supportive they were of the importance of this requirement. This was strongly apparent between the less and the most experienced levels. Differences also occurred according to the ES two levels of experience, less than 5 and 5 years or more as a supervisor, supporting the last conclusion that the more experienced are more supportive. Table 9.3.6 provides a better understanding of that.

Table 9.3.6
Views of ES of Different Levels of Experience, on the Importance Given to the 9th Content-Related Requirement (*n* = 18)

		The experience after being educational supervisor			
		Under 5 years	5-8 years	9-15 years	More than 15 years
Trying new textbooks for sufficient time to be properly evaluated before implementing them.	Least important	1 11.1%			
	Of some importance	7 77.8%	3 50.0%		
	Most important	1 11.1%	2 33.3%	1 100.0%	1 50.0%
	The most important		1 16.7%		1 50.0%

Eight out of nine of ES with less than 5 years experience in educational supervision believed this requirement was either less important or just of some importance, while six out of nine with 5 years or more held the opposite view. Experienced SeT and ES

being more interested in this requirement may be related to the view of the president of the Arabic Language Unit (the highest responsible commission for developing the ALC at the Ministry of education) interviewed in Chapter 8, as he advised that 'recently' new textbooks have begun to be tried for some time before applying them. Experienced practitioners might still recall the problems of a former system or they may not view the claimed improvement as 'sufficient'.

The 10th requirement that can be seen was 'Giving teachers opportunities to plan and select the appropriate syllabus based on the curriculum objectives'. It was mentioned in Chapter 3 that the Saudi curriculum requires teachers not only to follow precisely the set syllabus but also to use the same texts, which they must teach their students all at the same time. In other words, a particular text taught in Riyadh to a certain grade must be taught in Jeddah at the same time. Some educationalists might argue that this assures quality of content, regardless of the ability of the teachers, while others might argue that teachers become de-motivated as there is no flexibility in the content of the curriculum. This argument is reflected in the views towards this requirement; more than half InT and around one third of SeT placed it in one of the most important categories. The differences were significant between teachers' groups (M-W p. .022) However, none of the ES and only around 12% of UL gave it the same priority. Indeed the differences between teachers and ES is absolutely significant (M-W p. .000) as is the difference between practitioners and UL (M-W p. .000).

This might mark a complete conflict in that ES have a total lack of faith in teachers' ability to plan and select the syllabus while teachers are more confident of their capabilities. UL, with some reservations, are on the side of ES. It might be that ES often meet teachers of weaker ability and judge this requirement by them, seeing that there are some teachers who would not be able to take the responsibility for selecting a syllabus. It seems to the researcher, however, that without being given the opportunities

to be creative, teachers cannot improve themselves or learn the skills to select syllabuses.

While it was not the case with InT and ES samples, different levels of experience among SeT significantly affected the importance given to this requirement, as shown in Table 9.3.7.

Table 9.3.7

Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience, on the Importance Given to the 10th Content-Related Requirement (*n* = 70 Missing cases 3)

		The experience after graduation			
		Under 5 years	5-8 years	9-15 years	More than 15 years
Giving teachers opportunities to plan and select the appropriate syllabus based on the curriculum objectives.	Least important	2 8.7%	5 33.3%	1 14.3%	4 18.2%
	Of some importance	8 34.8%	6 40.0%	4 57.1%	15 68.2%
	Most important	2 8.7%			2 9.1%
	The most important	11 47.8%	4 26.7%	2 28.6%	1 4.5%

From this table, it is shown that the greater respondents' experience, the lower importance given to the requirement. The difference is highly significant, both between the most and the least experienced (M-W p.003) and between those with more or less than 5 years experience (M-W p.004). This indicates, first, that more recently qualified SeT are more confident of themselves and more keen to take some responsibility for selecting the curriculum syllabus themselves. On the other hand, more experienced teachers became complacent and appreciated being served with 'ready-made' texts and topics. Teachers with such orientation, especially with lack of in-service training programmes, may oppose implementing such a requirement, which demanding more circumspection to be taken in this respect to assure successful development process of the AL.

The 11th requirement, as Table 9.3.1 shows, was ‘increasing the weight given to listening and comprehension skills.’ Over ten years ago, Al-Bader (1987) criticised the existing curriculum as it failed to give any weight to listening skills. This gap in the curriculum was criticised later by Madkour (1991). This requirement was supported by more than 77% of ES and more than 60% of UL as most important or even the most important requirement. However, it was clear that it was less supported by teachers, as only around 50% of them saw this requirement as being in the most important categories. The statistics highlight the different viewpoints towards this requirement in that, while there is an agreement between teachers (M-W p. .693), there is a difference between teachers and ES which is highly significant (M-W p. .007). The view of teachers affects the general view of practitioners, to produce significant differences between practitioners as one group and UL (M-W p. .019). UL might recognise the importance given to this aspect of language as it has been highlighted by researchers such as Cinamon (1994, p.74) who encourage teachers to

plan more effectively to ensure talking and listening are an integral part of the curriculum with consequent benefits for all children.

The lack of weight given to listening and comprehension skills in the current curriculum might explain the teachers’ orientation. This, in turn, may call into question the awareness of teachers of the necessity of listening and comprehension skills, specially with the lack of training provided to them. The differences regarding the practitioners’ experience or the lecturers’ university were not significant.

The 12th requirement was ‘inserting syntax and morphology in their natural linguistic contexts and not as theoretical grammar’. This requirement was suggested by an ES in the first phase of the study (see Chapter 8). He claimed that through the Arabic language curriculum, “*children study everything about language without actually*

studying the language ". It is believed that applying this requirement will facilitate studying language itself instead of describing it. It would be worth noting that in the history of Arabic learning, the separation of the study of language and describing language or the rules of language is an old problem, which has existed ever since teachers started to construct sentences to prove rules instead of training students to use correct language.

This requirement, as it is apparent from Table 9.3.1, was advocated by around half of the four samples, who assigned it to the most important categories. Only around 5% believed it is least important. They may believe that studying rules may automatically lead to the ability to use language correctly. This requirement was similarly supported by the different samples, as the differences were not statistically significant.

Different levels of experience among the three practitioners' samples and being either employed in Al-Imam university or King Saud university among UL did not affect respondents' views towards this requirement, which reflects the agreement on it.

Within this section, it can be noted that, the requirements which were supported more by UL than by teachers, namely the second, the seventh, and this requirement, were related to adding or including new material to the curriculum. ES shared the view of UL on two of the requirements. This confirms the idea that teachers believe the curriculum is already full of material and they cannot accept more work.

'Providing textbooks with stimulating illustrations' was the last requirement as shown in Table 9.3.1. It was considered by the four samples to be a marginal requirement as a large proportion of each sample, especially of SeT, placed it in the least important category, but the difference between each pair of groups were not significant. However, the positive effect of illustrations is well-known in educational thought as it was proved by Hurt (1986) and Woodward (1987). Not only that but Al-Moshigah (1987) proved experimentally the value of illustrated textbooks in teaching

some texts in the Arabic language to intermediate students in SA. These studies showed that students are attracted by pictures, graphs and so on which stimulate them to interact with the material being taught. However, the low position given to this requirement by practitioners and UL may support that view that the research sample perceive students as merely being 'information stores', without giving any attention at all to the interest of the students in learning. Indeed, lack of awareness of such issues on the part of those teaching Arabic may be one of the underlying roots and causes of the current problems of student weakness. The seriousness of the problem is indicated by the fact that there was no significance between any pair of samples nor between different levels of experience (M-W p. >.05).

9.4. The Requirements Related to Teaching Methods and Resources

Every educational programme seeks to aid students in developing the ways of thinking and acting that they will need in various situations which they encounter in their lives. Indeed, teaching methods serve as organising elements of what should be learnt and maximise its effect on the learner. Although individual teachers continue that process of teaching and make the final decision, they must be influenced by the whole plan of the curriculum, as indicated in Chapter 5. Therefore developing teaching methods is a crucial part of developing the curriculum or even it might be said that it is the most important one. This section is devoted to determining the requirements of developing the teaching methods and resources in terms of developing the curriculum of the Arabic language in Saudi Arabia. Table 9.4.1 shows the list of the requirements and their importance as perceived by the research samples.

Table 9.4.1**The Teaching Methods-Related Requirements For Developing The Arabic Language Curriculum**

No.	The Requirements	Work status			
		Intermediate Teachers (n = 200)	Secondary Teachers (n = 70)	Educational Supervisors (n = 18)	University Lecturers (n = 45)
1	Teaching Arabic through reading the Qur'an and other high quality texts.	Least important	1 1.4%		
		Of some importance	29 14.6%	13 18.8%	7 38.9%
		Most important	31 15.6%	7 10.1%	1 5.6%
		The most important	139 69.8%	48 69.6%	10 55.6%
					35 83.3%
2	Adopting the principle of individual learning for language proficiency.	Least important	14 7.4%	5 7.8%	1 2.4%
		Of some importance	135 71.4%	36 56.3%	12 75.0%
		Most important	25 13.2%	13 20.3%	2 12.5%
		The most important	15 7.9%	10 15.6%	2 12.5%
					6 14.6%
3	Teaching Arabic as an integrated subject.	Least important	15 7.6%	6 8.7%	5 27.8%
		Of some importance	91 46.0%	27 39.1%	5 27.8%
		Most important	32 16.2%	13 18.8%	4 22.2%
		The most important	60 30.3%	23 33.3%	4 22.2%
					14 33.3%
4	Teaching the various linguistic skills as separate subject areas.	Least important	130 67.7%	46 68.7%	10 55.6%
		Of some importance	40 20.8%	13 19.4%	5 27.8%
		Most important	15 7.8%	3 4.5%	3 16.7%
		The most important	7 3.6%	5 7.5%	1 2.4%
					1 2.4%
5	Allowing students to choose topics for reading and writing which are related to their favourite pursuits and hobbies.	Least important	111 56.3%	35 50.7%	11 61.1%
		Of some importance	71 36.0%	28 40.6%	7 38.9%
		Most important	6 3.0%	4 5.8%	1 2.4%
		The most important	9 4.6%	2 2.9%	
6	Building a warm relationship with students to make Arabic enjoyable to them.	Least important	8 4.0%	3 4.3%	
		Of some importance	78 39.2%	28 40.0%	12 66.7%
		Most important	57 28.6%	19 27.1%	4 22.2%
		The most important	56 28.1%	20 28.6%	2 11.1%
					14 33.3%

No.	The Requirements	InT (n = 200)	SeT (n = 70)	ES (n = 18)	UL (n = 45)
7	Encouraging students to use reading and writing as sources of enjoyment and information.	Least important	3 1.5%	1 1.4%	1 2.4%
		Of some importance	80 41.0%	35 50.7%	18 42.9%
		Most important	65 33.3%	18 26.1%	5 11.1%
		The most important	47 24.1%	15 21.7%	3 6.7%
8	Providing teachers with sufficient visual and audio aids and equipment.	Least important	8 4.0%	5 7.5%	5 11.9%
		Of some importance	64 32.2%	25 37.3%	5 11.1%
		Most important	53 26.6%	9 13.4%	7 16.7%
		The most important	74 37.2%	28 41.8%	6 14.3%
9	Providing out-of-class activities such as Arabic language societies to encourage varied language activities.	Least important	22 11.1%	5 7.2%	2 4.8%
		Of some importance	134 67.3%	42 60.9%	12 27.8%
		Most important	30 15.1%	14 20.3%	3 6.7%
		The most important	13 6.5%	8 11.6%	3 6.7%
10	Using drama and role-play to practise language use.	Least important	46 23.4%	10 14.7%	4 9.5%
		Of some importance	122 61.9%	39 57.4%	14 21.1%
		Most important	13 6.6%	17 25.0%	1 1.7%
		The most important	16 8.1%	2 2.9%	2 3.3%
11	Diversifying learning resources using standard language from newspapers, radio and T.V programmes.	Least important	52 26.8%	13 18.6%	4 9.5%
		Of some importance	131 67.5%	42 60.0%	13 29.4%
		Most important	7 3.6%	10 14.3%	1 2.2%
		The most important	4 2.1%	5 7.1%	2 4.9%
12	Establishing an educational broadcasting channel and programmes through co-operation between the educational institutions and the media.	Least important	40 20.4%	7 10.0%	4 9.5%
		Of some importance	92 46.9%	48 68.6%	5 11.1%
		Most important	35 17.9%	9 12.9%	2 4.4%
		The most important	29 14.8%	6 8.6%	7 16.7%
13	Using computer and Instructional games for teaching and learning Arabic.	Least important	39 20.4%	17 24.6%	2 4.4%
		Of some importance	98 51.3%	44 63.8%	13 29.4%
		Most important	30 15.7%	7 10.1%	2 4.4%
		The most important	24 12.6%	1 1.4%	2 4.9%

No.	The Requirements	InT (n = 200)	SeT (n = 70)	ES (n = 18)	UL (n = 45)	
14	Profiting from the strategies used in teaching the mother tongue in other countries and in teaching Arabic as a foreign language.	Least important	50 25.5%	13 19.1%	3 17.6%	5 11.9%
		Of some importance	95 48.5%	44 64.7%	10 58.8%	19 45.2%
		Most important	32 16.3%	8 11.8%	2 11.8%	15 35.7%
		The most important	19 9.7%	3 4.4%	2 11.8%	3 7.1%
15	Supplying teachers with a Teacher Guide linked with the student textbook.	Least important	30 15.0%	9 12.9%	2 11.1%	9 21.4%
		Of some importance	65 32.5%	28 40.0%	8 44.4%	23 54.8%
		Most important	39 19.5%	12 17.1%	2 11.1%	9 21.4%
		The most important	66 33.0%	21 30.0%	6 33.3%	1 2.4%

It is easy to see from table 9.4.1 that **the first and most highly prioritised requirement** was ‘teaching Arabic through reading the Qur’an and other high quality texts’. Among Arabs the Qur’an is considered as a body of stable and fixed rules which are the "true" forms of language, and a highly standard language or even a language ‘standardiser’. It is because of the Qur’an that Arabic has remained the same for more than 14 centuries. Therefore, it has been argued that because the teaching of Arabic works towards the language of the Qur’an, the Qur’an itself should be used as ‘the teaching text’ (Walker 1987). Historically, as mentioned in Chapter 2, the Qur’an was the foundation stone of the learning of Arabic language from the youngest child upward. Nevertheless the curriculum in this century has taken another form of Arabic teaching, using fictitious texts to teach standard Arabic. The research sample, by supporting this requirement, are consistent with the principle mentioned earlier, of studying language rather than studying about language. The greatest proportion of UL, more than 83% agreed that this requirement was the most important requirement for developing the method of teaching the Arabic language. However, the differences between them and the practitioners did not reach the level set by the researcher (M-W p. .059) Among the practitioners, the differences were not significant between InT and SeT nor between

them as one group and ES. Thus it can be said that there is total agreement on the value of this requirement among the different groups. Agreement was also found between levels of experience and between universities for UL, as no significant differences were revealed. However, it is considered that the view towards the Qur'an from a religious perspective may affect positively the importance given to this requirement.

'Adopting the principle of individual learning for language proficiency' **was the second requirement** for developing the teaching methods and resources. Many researchers, aware of the promising findings on individual learning, have carried out some investigations to see the effects of such strategies on the learning of Arabic and found those strategies experimentally effective (see Chapter 6). Despite that, this requirement was rated in a lower position by the four research samples. This may recall the question which arise in the previous section of the awareness of the research sample of the interest, which should be given to the learner's side of the educational process.

Compared to their colleagues involved with intermediate education, SeT were significantly more supportive of it, as around 36% of them believed it is among the 'Most important' requirements (M-W p. .046). Secondary education in Saudi Arabia used to allow students full flexibility in choosing the courses to be studied and still offers flexibility in subjects taken. Teachers in this stage may perceive it to be possible to have individual learning in that system. What supports such views is that UL were even more interested in this requirement, as the university system more flexible. However, the differences between UL and practitioners cannot be taken as conclusive as they are not statistically significant (M-W p. .076)

Table 9.4.1 gives detailed figures for the third requirement which was 'teaching Arabic as an integrated subject'. The integration of teaching Arabic was discussed

earlier. However some ES as indicated in Chapter 8, still support the idea that even though Arabic language can be presented as different subjects, it must be taught as one integrated subject. Such a view places the responsibility for integration on the teachers rather than the on presentation of the curriculum. Around half of the teachers' sample supported the idea that this requirement was either most important or the most important, though it received a little less support from ES and a little more from UL. There is, however, similarity in view towards this requirement among the different groups of the sample as there were no significant differences between any two pairs of groups (M-W p. >.05). The differences between experience levels among InT and ES and also the difference between UL from the two universities in the importance attached to the requirement were not significant. However, different levels of experience among SeT were associated with different importance given to this requirement, as shown in Table 9.4.2.

Table 9.4.2

Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 3rd Teaching Methods-Related Requirement (*n* = 70 Missing cases 3).

		The experience after graduation			
		Under 5 years	5-8 years	9-15 years	More than 15 years
Teaching Arabic as an integrated subject.	Least important	3 13.0%	2 13.3%		1 4.3%
	Of some importance	16 69.6%	6 40.0%	1 14.3%	3 13.0%
	Most important	2 8.7%	2 13.3%	3 42.9%	6 26.1%
	The most important	2 8.7%	5 33.3%	3 42.9%	13 56.5%

This table reveals that more experienced people gave greater support to this requirement and the differences are highly significant. This is true for both those with less than 5 years compared to 5 years or more, and for less than 5 years compared to the more than 15 years of experience (M-W p. .000, in both tests). This might be explained by the

view that the most experienced respondents have suffered from being involved in a curriculum which separates Arabic teaching and thus come to the conclusion that it is necessary to integrate Arabic in one subject.

The integration of different branches into one course of Arabic language was dealt with earlier (see p. 318-319). This requirement, given a high priority, will support the idea that the research samples supported both presenting and teaching Arabic as one subject. This view conflicts with the current situation of Arabic teaching. The question that may arise is that of the origin of teaching Arabic as in 5 -6 separate topics. Three points are of great importance.

- a. In Chapter 2, on the development of Arabic teaching, it was concluded that, in the past, Arabic was taught as one integrated subject.
- b. It is well-known that the 'modern educational system' in the Arab countries was imported from the West during colonisation 'in the beginning of this century'. In Saudi Arabia it was received through the first Egyptian educationists who in turn gained the curriculum from the West.
- c. In the teaching of English in the developed world in general education, for example, in the United Kingdom, the various skills of the language are taught as one subject, not as separate branches.

The question which remains, though, is the origin of the curriculum. Without being able to trace fully this issue in order to come to some conclusion, the study of Protherough and Atkinson (1994) may help to assume an answer. In Great Britain, in the beginning of this century,

"English was still being divided and timetabled as nine separate 'subjects'... the various English activities were not seen as the responsibility of one teacher... (p. 5).

Gradually the thinking of the Education Department developed to create an integrated subject, but it was not until 1920 that

... 'English' was no longer used to describe a conglomerate of separate skills or a group of 'English subjects' but as a single, organic, all-embracing term for a unique, central school subject... (p. 7)

Thus, it seems to the researcher that the 'separation' of the Arabic language was imported earlier this century, corresponding to the methods of teaching first language then in use in the West. While methods have changed in the West, the teaching of Arabic has not kept abreast of the development and still retains the old methods.

The fourth requirement is related to the integration of different courses, which proves the reliability of perceptions of the sample towards integration. It referred to 'teaching the various linguistic skills as separate subject areas'. The response to this requirement strongly supported the conclusions drawn from the third requirement which highlights the strong support for integration. Only a few InT and SeT, no ES and one UL thought the idea of separation was the most important. This small proportion again highlights the issue of the unresolved nature of these requirements. The experience variables did not affect the view towards this requirement between any two sample groups. The two UL groups likewise have similar views and there was no significant difference between them.

The fifth requirement for developing the teaching methods was 'allowing students to choose topics for reading and writing which are related to their favourite pursuits and hobbies.' This requirement was believed by the great majority of the sample not to be in the most important categories. While around 40% believed it was of some importance, more than half of each sample held the view that it is least important. The placement at the bottom of the list of priorities may reflect a general distrust of the students' ability to select their own topics. Another cause might be lack of awareness of the research samples of the importance attached to offering learners what they are interested in, rather than what is of interest to the adult. The lack of awareness may be confirmed by

the disapproving view given to the seventh objective-related requirement which was 'constructing objectives based on the students' interest and hobbies'. This assumption, which is likely to be true, needs to be considered, as it may shed light on the reason for the current weakness of students in the Arabic language. The four samples and different levels of experience among practitioners samples have only marginal differences in opinions towards this requirement which are not significant between any pair of groups (M-W p. >.05). The two UL groups, also, have similar ideas and their responses are not significantly different.

The sixth requirement, which was considered to be most important or even the most important by more than the half of InT, SeT, and UL was 'building a warm relationship with students to make Arabic enjoyable to them'. It is generally perceived that Arabic language is a dull subject, a point which has been noted by many researchers, even in recent years such as Al-Majed (1996). The current curriculum, which remains very traditional, may be blamed for the lack of interest in Arabic. The problem inferred in relation to the previous requirement, regarding the lack of awareness of educationists of the value of attention to the students' interests may also contribute in understanding the roots of such problems. According to this requirement, it is the responsibility of teachers to take the initiative to impart an enjoyment of Arabic on their students. This requirement seems to be viewed similarly by all groups and levels of experience with no significant differences between them.

The seventh requirement was 'encouraging students to use reading and written as sources of enjoyment and information'. That this requirement was regarded by around 50% of each sample, as either most important or the most important, may reflect the equal support given to it by the different samples, with no significant differences emerging (M-W p. >.05). The differences in views between lecturers in the two

universities, or between different levels of experience among ES and InT were not significant, while significant differences were found among SeT of different experience as shown in Table 9.4.3.

Table 9.4.3

Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 7th Teaching Methods-Related Requirement (*n* = 70 Missing cases 2)

		The experience after graduation			
		Under 5 years	5-8 years	9-15 years	More than 15 years
Encouraging students to use reading and writing as sources of enjoyment and information.	Least important		1 6.7%		
	Of some importance	11 45.8%	6 40.0%	4 66.7%	14 60.9%
	Most important	3 12.5%	4 26.7%	2 33.3%	9 39.1%
	The most important	10 41.7%	4 26.7%		

Undoubtedly, the less experienced were the most supportive of the level of importance given to this requirement. Difference is significantly noted between those who had less than 5 years and those who had 5 years or more experience among SeT (M-W p. .043). This reflects some awareness of those recently appointed teachers of the priority of this requirement for teaching reading. The awareness of new generation of teachers might confirm the claim mentioned in Chapter Eight that there is some increasing awareness among educators, which might be a good start of reforming AL education.

The eighth requirement was 'Providing teachers with sufficient visual and audio aids and equipment'. This was the second most highly evaluated requirement by both teachers' groups for developing teaching methods. In the empirical studies related to developing Arabic learning reviewed in Chapter 6, many researchers criticised the current situation of learning Arabic for its absence of visual and audio aids. As indicated, many studies emphasised that the availability of teaching aids is necessary for teaching Arabic. However, UL were less aware of the importance of this requirement, as only around 30% believed it is among the most important categories, while practitioners evaluated this requirement much higher. The differences are absolutely

significant (M-W p. .000). Perhaps UL do not understand the value of teaching aids as they have little practical experience of their use in teaching children. Among the practitioners, more than 70% of ES allocated this requirement to the most important categories. This is in contrast to 63% and 54% of InT and SeT respectively, but the differences are not significant (p. >.05). While the views towards this requirement in according to level of experience did not occur among InT and SeT, ES, significantly, have different views as shown in Table 9.4.4.

Table 9.4.4

Views of ES of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 8th Teaching Methods-Related Requirement (*n* = 18)

		The experience after being educational supervisor			
		Under 5 years	5-8 years	9-15 years	More than 15 years
Providing teachers with sufficient visual and audio aids and equipment.	Of some importance	4 44.4%	1 16.7%		
	Most important	4 44.4%	1 16.7%	1 100.0%	1 50.0%
	The most important	1 11.1%	4 66.7%		1 50.0%

Among the ES sample, those who had 5 years or more experience rated the importance of this requirement higher than those with less than 5 years of working as supervisors. No difference between the two UL was found for this requirement.

The modern definition of the curriculum, as accepted in Chapter 5, includes all the experience provided to the children under the auspices of the school. **The ninth requirement** as shown in Table 9.4.1 was ‘providing out-of-class activities such as Arabic language societies to encourage varied language activities’. Remarkably, UL strongly backed this requirement as around 45% of them assigned it to one of the most important categories. The differences between their view and that of the practitioners are strongly significant (M-W p. .002). The lack of support given to this requirement

may be explained by Al-Damegh's (1995) study, which presented evidence that the present situation for Arabic out-of-class activities is totally unsatisfactory. He found that, despite teachers being positive towards the 'idea' of out-of-class activities, they were 'too busy' and had no time to implement them. This study shows clearly the reason for the higher importance given to this requirement by UL than practitioners. The views amongst all practitioners towards this requirement was not significantly different. (M-W p. >.05).

Out-of-class activities as suggested by Taleb (1986) and Al-Damagh (1995) are strongly related to the learning of Arabic language. However this is not evident in the present educational system in Saudi Arabia as the activities are considered to be an administrative responsibility rather than being a key integrated part of the curriculum. Among InT and ES there were no significant differences according to the level of experience, while such differences were found in reference to SeT as shown in Table 9.4.5.

Table 9.4.5

Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 9th Teaching Methods-Related Requirement (*n* = 70 Missing cases 2)

		The experience after graduation			
		Under 5 years	5-8 years	9-15 years	More than 15 years
Providing out-of-class activities such as Arabic language societies to encourage varied language activities.	Least important	2 8.3%	1 6.7%		1 4.5%
	Of some importance	8 33.3%	12 80.0%	4 57.1%	18 81.8%
	Most important	9 37.5%	2 13.3%	1 14.3%	2 9.1%
	The most important	5 20.8%		2 28.6%	1 4.5%

Clearly, teachers with less than 5 years' experience, were more supportive of this requirement which suggested more awareness of its priority and validate the view mentioned earlier that younger teachers are more aware of, or more likely to support

new, or at least unimplemented, requirements. This is true comparing with those who were more experienced (more than 5 years experience) as one group (M-W p. .006). Table 9.4.1 shows that around 30% of the SeT sample and around 15% of each group of other samples gave the level 'most important' or 'the most important' rating to **the tenth requirement** which was 'using drama and role plays to practise language use'. Through a review of empirical studies of learning Arabic (Chapter 6) this requirement was suggested as being useful for practising standard Arabic as substitution for a study of the rules. It was seen as less important, however, by more than those who believed it was most important but the majority held the view that it was of some importance which means that they still believed it can help in developing the curriculum of learning Arabic. SeT were significantly (M-W p. .028) more interested in this requirement than those who taught in intermediate education, perhaps because students of secondary school age might benefit from drama and role play more than students of other ages. The differences between the different levels of experience and between the two universities' samples did not reach the level of significance.

The eleventh requirement, as shown, was 'diversifying learning resources using standard language from newspapers, radio and TV programmes.' This was suggested as being a key link between daily life and teaching inside schools and also as a means of keeping language lessons interesting. However, while the InT held the view that it is at the bottom of the list of priorities, SeT were significantly (M-W p. .004) more in favour of this requirement than their colleagues, as more than 20% of them considered it as most important or the most important requirement. The differences between teachers and their supervisors are not significant (M-W p. .915) nor those between practitioners and UL (M-W p. .095). Practitioners' groups with different levels of experience had similar views in the importance given to this requirement as the difference was not

significant. The difference between the two universities respondents was also not significant.

Under the same issue of widening the curriculum concept, **the twelfth requirement**, as shown in Table 9.4.1, represents an application of this orientation. The research sample, through supporting this requirement, called for interaction between the school and society. This requirement invited 'establishing an educational broadcasting channel and programmes through co-operation between educational institutions and the media'. The use of TV programmes was suggested more than twenty years ago to aid teaching Arabic by many educationalists and even by some of the educational personnel in Education Ministries of the Arab Countries through the Arab Homeland Survey 1974 (Khater et al 1974).

In fact, this was suggested again by an ES, as indicated in the exploratory interviews (Chapter 8). In turn, it was highly supported by the ES in general, as more than half of them allocated it as most important or even the most important. The differences neither between practitioners and UL, nor between any pair of practitioners, were significant (M-W p. >.05). The consistency of views was also reflected in the lack of significant difference in the view towards this requirement among different levels of experience among practitioners and between the two UL groups.

The thirteenth requirement, which can be thought of as to emphasise individual learning, was 'using computers and instructional games for teaching and learning Arabic.' Although the great majority of the other samples did not recognise this requirement as being in the most important categories, InT held stronger views about it, as more than a quarter of them did so, but the differences between each pair of samples were not significant. Such divergence of views existed within experience categories, as the differences between categories are beyond the range of significance (M-W p. >.05). This requirement, which is supported by 20% of the practitioners and a similar

proportion of UL as most important, would help to develop the curriculum but not as a foundation stone of it. Individual learning, as was suggested in the empirical studies in Chapter 6, cannot be said to be the sole method of teaching Arabic, but it can support below-average students and helping students with strong abilities to gain more as well.

From Table 9.4.1 it is apparent that **the fourteenth requirement** was 'profiting from the strategies used in teaching the mother tongue in other countries and teaching Arabic as a foreign language'. Interestingly, the figures in the table show strong support by UL in general. More than 42% of them believe that it is in the most important categories, in contrast to around 20% of practitioners. The differences are significant (M-W p. .013) which can be justified by the fact that UL, through their academic work, see alternative teaching methods and their possible application for Arabic teaching in intermediate and secondary levels. On the other hand, teachers may be less open to new ideas as in Saudi Arabia as they are not obliged, or may be not offered the opportunity, to continue gaining more skills and knowledge, the fact which can be easily seen in the small proportion of teachers who could have in-service training in the last five years as shown earlier (see Table 9.1.5). The differences using M-W test were found not significant at the level of 0.05 between the two groups of UL, nor between different levels of experience of InT, SeT, and ES.

Table 9.4.1 showed the last requirement as 'supplying teachers with a Teacher Guide linked with the student textbook'. The teachers' groups strongly supported this requirement, having similar views toward its importance, as around half of them allocated it in 'Most important' or 'The most important' categories. ESs shared teachers' view, so that the differences between any pair of practitioners are not significant. (M-W p. >.05) Interestingly, as this requirement is more related to the field

of teaching Arabic, UL were less interested in it and the difference between UL and practitioners was absolutely significant (M-W p. .000) In Saudi Arabia, the curriculum, as already indicated, is highly centralised. There is usually one textbook for each subject 'language branch' which is distributed to both teachers and students. Teachers are required to follow this textbook precisely without having enough support in doing so. Moreover, while a Teacher Guide is given for mathematics, science and the English language, which have been found to be very valuable, many believe it would be of the same value for Arabic language teaching. However, the continued lack of a 'Teacher Guide' for teaching the Arabic leads the researcher to raise a question of the origin of the curriculum development. It is well-known that mathematics, science and English are taught outside Saudi Arabia and thus were 'imported' in a highly developed form, while the Arabic language curriculum has its provenance within Arab countries and thus remained 'undeveloped'. This 'grievous fact' reflects the huge efforts which must be done in respects of developing what can be called as 'home subjects', particularly, AL and Islamic education.

Different levels of experience for practitioners groups and the university for UL did not affect the level of importance given to the requirement.

Another point which is worth consideration is that this requirement was rated very inferior by UL who were considered to be 'specialists'. This may bring some discovery of the problems related to the development of the curriculum. To clarify this, in SA often the curriculum construction and development is undertaken by those who are regarded as 'specialists' or who are highly qualified (PhD holders for example) rather than educationalists with practical experience in teaching. This might lead to overlooking some 'technical' aspects that must be developed.

In looking to the requirements in this section a comment worth making is that the requirements concentrating on the students' role in the learning of Arabic (2nd, 5th, 9th,

10th and this requirement) were generally placed in lower priority. This may reflect a 'crisis' in the samples' awareness of the seriousness of the students' factors which may lead to identification of the key problems and, in turn, the beginnings of a solution. Indeed, the negative view towards students' attitudes and interests has been strongly challenged by the findings of both psychologist and educationalists (Oliver, 1977; Nicholls, 1978).

9.5. The Requirements Related to Evaluation

The term 'evaluation' has a wide range of meanings, ranging from the inclusion of all information needed to improve education to a restriction to testing the outcome of daily classroom teaching. In this section, requirements related to both students' evaluation and curriculum evaluation will be included. Table 9.5.1 presents these requirements as perceived by the four sample groups involved in the current study.

Table 9.5.1

The Evaluation-Related Requirements for Developing the Arabic Language Curriculum

		Work status			
No.	The Requirements	Intermediate Teachers (n = 200)	Secondary Teachers (n = 70)	Educational Supervisors (n = 18)	University Lecturers (n = 45)
1	Concentrating on measuring skills rather than knowledge.	Least important	16 8.0%	2 2.9%	
		Of some importance	73 36.5%	34 48.6%	5 27.8%
		Most important	37 18.5%	12 17.1%	2 11.1%
		The most important	74 37.0%	22 31.4%	11 61.1%
					19 45.2%
2	Giving sufficient weight in assessment, to students' oral skills such as reading aloud and conversation in standard Arabic.	Least important	8 4.0%	1 1.4%	1 5.9%
		Of some importance	83 41.7%	25 36.2%	7 41.2%
		Most important	48 24.1%	20 29.0%	3 17.6%
		The most important	60 30.2%	23 33.3%	6 35.3%
					8 19.0%

No.	The Requirements	InT (n = 200)	SeT (n = 70)	ES (n = 18)	UL (n = 45)
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3	Using a variety of assessment instruments such as preparing essays and take-home exams.	Least important	32 16.4%	9 13.0%	2 4.9%
		Of some importance	117 60.0%	41 59.4%	11 68.8%
		Most important	25 12.8%	14 20.3%	4 25.0%
		The most important	21 10.8%	5 7.2%	1 6.3%
4	Using teachers' records of class work as a major instrument of students' assessment.	Least important	53 26.6%	17 24.6%	2 11.1%
		Of some importance	99 49.7%	35 50.7%	11 61.1%
		Most important	21 10.6%	8 11.6%	3 16.7%
		The most important	26 13.1%	9 13.0%	2 11.1%
5	Setting criteria for acceptance of students into the various fields of study, according to their abilities and interests.	Least important	39 20.1%	19 27.1%	4 23.5%
		Of some importance	113 58.2%	38 54.3%	8 47.1%
		Most important	23 11.9%	5 7.1%	4 23.5%
		The most important	19 9.8%	8 11.4%	1 5.9%
6	Conducting comprehensive exams at the end of each stage for progression to Secondary school or university.	Least important	49 25.0%	7 10.1%	3 16.7%
		Of some importance	77 39.3%	25 36.2%	5 27.8%
		Most important	30 15.3%	12 17.4%	7 38.9%
		The most important	40 20.4%	25 36.2%	3 16.7%
7	Carrying out regular diagnostic assessment to guide curriculum appraisal and development.	Least important	12 6.1%	4 5.9%	4 9.5%
		Of some importance	79 40.1%	32 47.1%	9 52.9%
		Most important	39 19.8%	17 25.0%	5 29.4%
		The most important	67 34.0%	15 22.1%	3 17.6%
8	Establishing a question bank for Arabic by the Minister of Education.	Least important	43 21.9%	15 21.4%	6 14.3%
		Of some importance	92 46.9%	35 50.0%	11 61.1%
		Most important	17 8.7%	7 10.0%	3 16.7%
		The most important	44 22.4%	13 18.6%	4 22.2%
9	Establishing national criteria to facilitate evaluating students' achievement in each academic year.	Least important	35 17.9%	7 10.3%	1 5.9%
		Of some importance	105 53.8%	38 55.9%	11 64.7%
		Most important	32 16.4%	15 22.1%	3 17.6%
		The most important	23 11.8%	8 11.8%	2 11.8%

No.	The Requirements	InT (n = 200)	SeT (n = 70)	ES (n = 18)	UL (n = 45)
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10	Conducting a wide comparison between students in different years and stages.	Least important	64 33.2%	12 17.9%	6 33.3%	10 23.8%
		Of some importance	109 56.5%	43 64.2%	9 50.0%	26 61.9%
		Most important	16 8.3%	9 13.4%	2 11.1%	6 14.3%
		The most important	4 2.1%	3 4.5%	1 5.6%	

From this table it is easy to see that the first and highest prioritised requirement was ‘concentrating on measuring skills rather than knowledge’. More than 40% of UL and more than 60% and 35% of ES and teachers respectively perceived this requirement as being ‘the most important’, which suggests the development of the Arabic language curriculum cannot be achieved without it. While the two teachers’ groups have similar views, ES showed high interest in this requirement and the differences between their views and the teachers’ views were significant (M-W p. .038). Practitioners, as one group, and UL have similar perceptions of this requirement, as the differences are not significant (M-W p. .510)

Interestingly, this requirement which is the most appreciated one in this section, is concerned with the practical aspect of language. It is revealed that although the current curriculum focuses on theory and knowledge, the respondents, strongly emphasised the requirements of concentrating on measuring skills rather than theories. The emphasis on skills can be used as a real advantage for those working with the curriculum, showing a ‘readiness to change’, which is important in any development process. In this requirement, InT, SeT and ES with different levels of experience had similar views in the importance given to this requirement as the difference was not significant (P.>.05), which reflects remarkable consistency in their view of the great importance given to this requirement.

The second requirement as stated in Table 9.5.1 was ‘giving sufficient weight in the assessment to students’ oral skills such as reading aloud and conversation in standard

Arabic'. This requirement was highly appreciated by the UL, as two thirds of them considered this requirement as being 'the most important' in contrast to around a third of the practitioners' samples. The differences are absolutely significant (M-W p. .000) which reflects the high interest of UL in the oral skills of Arabic. This requirement validates the second of the content-related requirements which is consistent with the view of UL, who are more supportive of these requirements than the other sample groups. It has already been argued that UL view the language in general terms while practitioners are caught in their daily tasks. Moreover, UL are in a position to evaluate the outcome of general education as they meet students immediately after completing their secondary education and see their lack of oral skills. The differences between the practitioners' groups did not reach the level of significance and differences in their level of experience was not associated with different views towards this requirement. The great importance being given in the literature to oracy was indicated earlier, and now it can be stronger, as highlighted by Howe (1994, p.51), when he said,

We can see the curriculum as a kind of solid bedrock covered by the soil of learning – rich and fertile in parts, but also with large areas of thin, poorly cultivated soil. Talk is one of the essential nutrients – without it there is little long-term growth and only the strongest plants manage to prosper.

This importance is reflected in the strong appreciation by respondents of the importance of evaluating the oral skills of Arabic. However, it may be appropriate to indicate that, so far, oral skills in Arabic 'have no weight' in the Arabic language examination system, at either intermediate or secondary level. Students might pass all grades of the two stages without being given a single mark for their oral abilities and achievement in the AL.

'Using a variety of assessment instruments such as preparing essays and take-home exams' was **the third requirement**, placed among the most important categories by

less than 25% of InT and a similar proportion of the other practitioners' samples.

However, UL had high appreciation of this requirement as around half of them believed it to be among the most important categories. UL already practise these assessment instruments and find them helpful while practitioners have not used them so they do not necessarily recognise their value. Another reason may be that teachers do not see these instruments being used amongst the younger age group. Although a higher percentage of SeT than InT gave this requirement priority, the differences were not significant (M-W p. .518). The differences between teachers and ES are also not significant, nor are those according to different levels of experience among practitioners samples (M-W p. >.05).

As apparent in Table 9.5.1 **the fourth requirement** suggests 'using teachers' records of class work as a major instrument for students' assessment'. Interestingly, this was a part of the new system released at the end of 1998, which showed some improvement on the exam system, but for elementary schools only. Though not statistically significant, ES evaluated this requirement higher than the others. This requirement reflects the well-known trend of educational thought, for example the National Curriculum in England, of giving teachers greater responsibility in continuous assessment of their students. When teachers are given clear criteria for evaluating students achievement, they might be more able to be accurate in assessing students' attainment and their assessment might have higher validity than the current end of-term exam. However this requirement was suggested by only around one quarter of each practitioner sample as a most important requirement. The class sizes in Saudi Arabia may exceed 35 students, so this probably discourages respondents from giving this requirement higher importance. Another reason for this requirement not being given a higher level of importance is because teachers are burdened by heavy teaching duties

and feel that this requirement would add more. Nevertheless, for this requirement overall the great majority, around 75% or more, of each sample still believe that it is either of some importance or even most important, which means that research samples consider this requirement would help in developing the ALC in SA. In this sense, a reference must be made to Al-Hakami's (1999) study reviewed in Chapter 6, where no significant correlation was found between academic achievement and attitude and motivation in the field of AL. Following up his findings, Al-Hakami conducted further discussion to conclude that teachers' assessments of students' academic achievement were unreliable recommending increasing the proportion of marks give to the Ministerial examinations, and reducing the proportion of 65% placed currently in the teacher's hand. Two points must be indicated here.

First, Al-Hakami investigated the situation of third year secondary school, by which students qualified for the General Certificate for Secondary Education. Nevertheless, according to the current Saudi system, for the other five years, i.e. the three years of intermediate school and the first two years of secondary, all evaluation is in the teachers' hands. The question here is whether teachers should use end-of-term exams, or continuous records. The second choice was supported by the four research samples. Second, the unreliability of teachers' assessment can easily occur at present because of the lack of criteria issued to teachers, and such unreliability would still be accounted in the 20% suggested by Al-Hakami to be left in teachers' hands.

Therefore, to develop the evaluation, this requirement must be associated with the sixth and ninth evaluation-related requirements, which will be discussed later.

For this requirement, the differences in according to the levels of experience did not reach the level of significance among InT and ES (M-W p. >.05). Nevertheless, among

SeT the experience variable significantly affected the importance given as shown in the following table.

Table 9.5.2

Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 4th Evaluation -Related Requirement (*n* = 70 Missing cases 2)

		The experience after graduation			
		Under 5 years	5-8 years	9-15 years	More than 15 years
Using teachers' records of class work as the major instrument of students' assessment.	Least important	2 8.3%	7 46.7%	3 42.9%	5 22.7%
	Of some importance	14 58.3%	7 46.7%	1 14.3%	12 54.5%
	Most important	2 8.3%	1 6.7%	1 14.3%	4 18.2%
	The most important	6 25.0%		2 28.6%	1 4.5%

The table shows that the difference was significant between the least experienced, less than 5 years and those with 5 years experience or more (M-W p. .020). Those who have less experience showed higher interest in this requirement as they are younger and more willing to participate more in developing the curriculum, even if they have to work harder than at present, while those with longer experience are accustomed to the current system and find it easier for them, so that they prefer it not to be changed.

The fifth requirement was 'setting criteria for acceptance of students into the various fields of study according to their abilities and interests'. This requirement was believed to be least important by nearly the same proportion of InT as those who believed it to be most important. It was indicated in Chapter 3, that secondary education is divided into four specialisms. Students are free to choose what field of study they want, regardless of their abilities or performance in the intermediate level. Those who believed this requirement was least important realised that with the four different subject areas, it should be the decision of the students which subjects they wished to follow, while the others held the view that setting criteria helps the students to make their decisions. It seems that, in such uncertainty, it might be of some help to set some criteria which

remain flexible and are not unduly restrictive. The differences between any pairs of sample groups are not significant (M-W p. $>.05$) nor are those between different levels of experience within SeT and ES. The experience variable among InT revealed significantly different views toward the importance of the requirement, as clarified in Table 9.5.3.

Table 9.5.3

Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 5th Evaluation -Related Requirement ($n = 70$ Missing cases 3)

		The experience after graduation			
		Under 5 years	5-8 years	9-15 years	More than 15 years
Setting criteria for acceptance of students into the various fields of study, according to their abilities and interests.	Least important	27 24.3%	8 11.8%		4 44.4%
	Of some importance	65 58.6%	40 58.8%	3 75.0%	4 44.4%
	Most important	13 11.7%	10 14.7%		
	The most important	6 5.4%	10 14.7%	1 25.0%	1 11.1%

The difference between the two groups: those have less than 5 years and those who have 5 years or more was found significant. The latter, who more strongly supported this requirement, may have suffered longer from the lack of criteria problems than colleagues with less experience.

Table 9.5.1 shows the sixth requirement to be 'conducting comprehensive exams at the end of each stage for progression to secondary school or university.' UL showed higher support for this requirement than practitioners and the differences are absolutely significant (M-W p. .002). ULs realise the importance of such exams to aid accepting students at University level. As pointed out in Chapter 3, and criticised in Chapter 8, the current end-of-semester -exams, rely strongly on memorising and recitation, measuring the last semester of students' work. Thus, the current system may give a distorted picture of the whole ability of students, and, therefore, UL would prefer

comprehensive exams instead. The M-W tests showed no significant differences between ES and teachers (M-W p. >.5), but a high level of significance between the two groups of teachers. SeT were more supportive of this requirement as more than half of them believed it was in the most important categories. As indicated earlier, currently there is only one Ministerial exam held in the third year of secondary school. SeT highly supported this requirement as they view it as a solution to replace this existing system in which the Ministry have only 35% of the marks, which often give an erroneous impression of the students' abilities. Such a system was criticised so that the Ministry recently realised the problem and produced a new evaluation system for elementary schools in late 1998 (Ukadh Newspaper, issue 11789, 1 December 1998). This system, which can be seen as a sign of admission by the Ministry of the existence of this problem, although not completely resolving the difficulties highlighted by many educationalists, does go some way in showing a desire for development of the system. The differences of the views of different levels of experience towards this requirement were found not significant among InT and ES samples but they were among SeT, as Table 9.5.4 illustrates clearly.

Table 9.5.4

Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 6th Evaluation -Related Requirement (*n* = 70 Missing cases 2)

		The experience after graduation			
		Under 5 years	5-8 years	9-15 years	More than 15 years
Conducting comprehensive exams at the end of each stage for progression to Secondary school or university.	Least important	3 12.5%	2 14.3%	1 14.3%	1 4.3%
	Of some importance	13 54.2%	6 42.9%	1 14.3%	5 21.7%
	Most important	4 16.7%	2 14.3%	2 28.6%	3 13.0%
	The most important	4 16.7%	4 28.6%	3 42.9%	14 60.9%

The table shows that those with more than 15 years experience supported this requirement more than those with less than 5 years (M-W p. .002). The same was true

for those with more or less than 5 years experience (M-W p. .015). Clearly, the more experienced SeT were more supportive of this requirement, which may prove the view that those with higher experience are more aware of the need for this requirement as they have suffered longer from the existing system.

The testing problems might be seen as affecting all Arab countries. However, in the United Arab Emirates, a new system was released in March 1999 and will be applied in the academic year 2000/2001. This system was very courageous as it cancelled all mid-term and yearly exams in general education. The system put the weight of assessment on comprehensive exams of students' skills and abilities at the end of the secondary stage (Al-Riyadh newspaper, issue 11214, 8 March 1999). Such a decision can be considered to be innovative, not only in the Gulf States but in the whole Arab world, as it was commented by the Newspaper editor. This may be the impetus for some re-thinking of education in the Arab homeland. In this sense, in Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Education also announced recently that they are about to conduct a comprehensive study for developing the various aspects of the educational system. (Al-Riyadh newspaper, 11211, 5 March 1999).

It was mentioned in Chapter 5 that evaluating the curriculum itself is a crucial part of the improvement process. Therefore **the seventh requirement was** 'carrying out diagnostic assessment to guide curriculum appraisal and development'. With marginal differences which are not significant, all four samples have similar views as around half of each group assigned this requirement to the most important categories. The differences according to the different levels of experience were not significant, nor were those between the two universities' groups. During the first phase of the study, the researcher asked the AL Unit at the Ministry of Education, as indicated in Chapter 8, 'how they evaluated the curriculum and their response was that they conduct an

evaluation 'when they believe it is needed'. Their evaluations are confidential and not available for public reading. The high support and agreement towards this requirement reflects the importance of establishing a system for evaluation rather than simply carrying out single evaluation which might be thought of as not sufficiently comprehensive.

The eighth requirement shows some agreement among different samples towards it as the differences between each two groups were not significant. It stated 'establishing a question bank for Arabic by the Ministry of Education' One of the problems which Arabic teachers face is setting appropriate questions for students' assessment, partly because they have to formulate a large number of question sheets each semester and also because they may not have enough training in such issues, especially with the research findings that around 80% of AL teachers did not get any in-service training in the last five years. Therefore the eighth requirement was suggested for developing the curriculum concentrates on offering standard questions for each grade of general education. Achieving this requirement will help in reaching two targets, helping teachers to use their time productively and ensuring standardisation in the questions given to students. The questions offered by the Ministry must meet the criteria of evaluation such as validity, reliability and ease of comprehension. The agreement of the different sample groups towards this requirement was matched also by the different levels of experience; there were no significant differences between any two groups or levels of experience (M-W p. >.05).

From Table 9.5.1 it is apparent that there is a similar view of the importance given to the **ninth requirement which was** 'establishing national criteria to facilitate evaluating student achievement in each academic year'. Between a quarter and a third of each

sample evaluated this requirement in either of the most important categories. A smaller proportion held the view that it was least important, which means it helps in developing the curriculum rather than is a condition of the existence of development. It is assumed that such national criteria will help not only teachers but also parents to evaluate the attainment of their children. As with the previous two requirements, InT and ES in different levels of experience did not significantly differ in importance given to this requirement, as there are no significant differences ($M > .05$). However, the views of SeT in different level of experience differed significantly, as the more experienced ones suffered longer from the absence of the evaluation criteria, and, therefore, were more supportive of the requirement. This was significant between the least experienced, less than 5 years and the most experienced, 15 years or more ($M-W p .024$). Breakdown figures are presented in the following table.

Table 9.5.5

Views of SeT of Different Levels of Experience on the Importance Given to the 9th Evaluation -Related Requirement ($n = 70$ Missing cases 3)

		The experience after graduation			
		Under 5 years	5-8 years	9-15 years	More than 15 years
Establishing national criteria to facilitate evaluating students' achievement in each academic year.	Least important	2 8.3%	3 23.1%	1 14.3%	1 4.3%
	Of some importance	17 70.8%	7 53.8%	3 42.9%	10 43.5%
	Most important	4 16.7%	2 15.4%	2 28.6%	7 30.4%
	The most important	1 4.2%	1 7.7%	1 14.3%	5 21.7%

The last evaluation-related requirement was 'conducting a wide comparison between students in different years and stages.' The great majority, more than 80% of each sample, held the view that this requirement was only of some importance or even of least importance. The respondents may have thought of this requirement as informative rather than being of practical use. They may not have recognised its benefit for those who develop the curriculum, as they can see the general state of the curriculum from an

appraisal of individual students' results. But they may believe the third requirement to be of greater benefit in assessing the curriculum. Although the differences were not significant between either practitioners and UL (M-W p. .495) or between ES and teachers (M-W p. .982), there was a great difference between the two groups of teachers (M-W p. .009). SeT highly viewed this requirement as they perhaps were more able to realise its effect on the students up to secondary level. Level of experience did not affect the view of this requirement, which reflected some uniformity of views toward this requirement.

In overviewing the requirements in this section, it can be noted that the two requirements significantly supported more by UL: the 2nd and the 6th suggested discontent with the existing examination system. It seems that UL who are more able to see the overall education picture as they meet students upon completion of their general education view the existing system as invalid in its evaluation of students. Moreover, among practitioners, SeT were more supportive of conducting comprehensive exams rather than the current end-of-course examination system. This requirement was supported even more strongly by the more experienced among them. This suggests that supplements to the existing examination system, rather than modification, are required. It also can be noted that the 8th requirement was give remarkably higher priority by practitioners, in contrast with the position it was given by UL. This requirement suggests establishing a questions bank which is more related to offering teachers some help with the current situation. This confirms the view that practitioners are more likely to support the requirements believed to help teachers in the short-term. Finally, the 6th, 9th, and 10th requirements were more supported by experienced SeT. All of these requirements required a fundamental change to the system which reflects that those with greater experience had long suffered from the existing situation

9.6. Respondents’ Advice and Comments

In the concluding section of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to add their advice and comments. Many questionnaires were returned full of comments and advice, which the researcher has found very helpful. Table 9.6.1 shows detailed figures of the proportion of the questionnaires, which had comments among the four samples.

Table 9.6.1
The Numbers of Questionnaires Returned With Comments Among the Four Samples

		Further comments or notes	
		Added some	Nothing was added
Work status	Intermediate Teachers	58 29%	142 71%
	Secondary Teachers	29 41.4%	41 58.6%
	Educational Supervisors	7 38.9%	11 61.1%
	University Lecturers	15 35.7%	27 64.3%

Only the comments which added some more information were included in this proportion; those with simply a word of thanks or ‘no comment’ were excluded. The comments and advice dealt with many aspects of the AL education, and were generally very helpful. However in accordance with the space available to the researcher, the most relevant comments will be presented in this section under the following three headings.

- 9.6.1. Comments and advice related to questionnaire construction.
- 9.6.2. Comments and advice related to the requirements.
- 9.6.3. General comments, advice and suggestions related to the education in general.

9.6.1. Comments and Advice Related to Questionnaire Construction

Some respondents offered comments and advice related, partly, to the design of the questionnaire and secondly, to the implications of it. The most related notes will be mentioned followed by the researcher's comment about them. Within the first part, some respondents criticised the questionnaire for its restrictive nature in terms of maximum numbers under each heading of the requirements. They claimed that these restrictions caused them to exclude some points they considered to be in 'the most important' categories. An InT criticised setting a maximum number and also claimed that

"these restrictions wasted the time of many respondents and they would lose interest in filling out the questionnaire".

One SeT and one UL argued that there should be another category which should be titled 'not important at all'. They said the researcher had forced the requirements upon the respondents, with them simply having to mark the degree of importance.

The length of the questionnaire was subject to some criticism. An InT stated

"the questionnaire would bring valuable results, but it is too long and may cause lack of interest in completing it."

From another view, an ES argued that,

"although I myself find the questionnaire helpful, I doubt the rate of return will be high"

Apart from the questionnaire construction, one of the UL stated that

"this questionnaire seems to be primarily given to UL but I would suggest giving it also to Arabic language teachers in school."

From these comments, it quickly comes to mind that the decision of the questionnaire design is not an easy one. The justification for the current construction of the questionnaire was explained in Chapter 7. But it must still be pointed out that before

distributing the questionnaire it was recognised that there might be alternative designs that were more familiar to respondents and easier to fill out, but they may produce meaningless data. Therefore, in order to get valid data, the researcher preferred to go ahead with this design, which required respondents to 'spend a little more time to think' before they 'directly, or even carelessly, tick'. The length of the questionnaire was considered in the first stage of piloting and respondents at that stage said that it would take around 25 minutes to fill out which was considered to be reasonable.

As regards the second part of this section of comments, there was strong questioning of the use of the data gained, and whether the returned questionnaires would have any value, other than the researcher's own benefit, i.e. applying for an academic qualification. Some of the comments were general, as one put it

" we hope to see some practical projects related to the requirements in this questionnaire ",

While others were more directive, claiming,

" I hope the researcher himself will follow up his findings until they are put into practice. "

One UL started with a question saying

" ... it is a good questionnaire but what will be its fate? ... I hope the study will not just fulfil the obligations of the researcher's academic degree.... the least that can be done is that the results are handed to those who are responsible. "

These comments reflect a lack confidence among respondents in the applicability of academic studies and their connection with decision makers and people involved.

However, it seems that it is not the role of researchers to push their studies on those who are responsible, i.e. decision-makers for instance, but rather for them to look for studies appropriate to their work and the decision being made.

9.6.2. Comments and Advice Related to the Requirements

A large number of respondents stressed some of the requirements in their comments, or even emphasised some by repeating them. Although this helps to validate their viewpoint, such views have already been taken into consideration and thus will not be mentioned again. One ES suggested that the researcher examined the obstacles in the field to construct the list of requirements. Another made a point in regard to the requirements being identified that

"it would not happen unless certain responsible people either changed their minds or were changed!"

An InT suggested using the Arabic language texts for some moral purposes rather than being for teaching the forms of language.

The integration of teaching Arabic received high attention. The most important point to be mentioned on this subject is that of one of the ES who indicated that

" integration was applied in 1388 A H (1968) and it was found to be a failure".

In fact this claim was already made in the first stage of the study (as mentioned in chapter 8) The researcher tried to explore this point further by going to the Education Documentation Centre who said that they had no information about it. It can be assumed therefore, that integration was applied in only a few places or even just one school, as a local initiative. However, this suggests a need for more investigation of the integration issue and its former 'claimed' trial. Some teachers emphasised the significance of the teaching methods, claiming the importance of using the language laboratory, which is used generally for English, for teaching Arabic. A requirement added by SeT which is worthwhile to be considered was 'requiring the Arabic language to stimulate logical thinking among students, which will help both in learning Arabic and in applying it in life.'

9.6.3. General Comments, Advice and Suggestions.

Some respondents wrote comments which are not strongly directly related to the scope of the study but are still valuable to discuss. One of the Al-Imam UL suggested an idea to divide the curriculum components into two parts, authenticity and contemporaneous. Within authenticity, he suggested the objectives and the content and under contemporaneous, he placed teaching methods and evaluation techniques. He said both axis must go together to improve the current curriculum. Although this is a new and attractive terminological division, the researcher cannot see a practical application of such terms in the current study.

Many respondents from various categories put heavy emphasis on the role of elementary schools and one suggested that the curriculum for elementary schools should be improved prior to developing the curriculum at intermediate and secondary level. As one put it:

“instead of helping students to learn Arabic in intermediate and secondary schools, we should put stronger emphasis in elementary schools on standard language acquisition by younger children”

The acquisition and learning of language was discussed fully in chapter 4 and so does not need repetition. It was also added that in association with developing the curriculum, teachers need to be developed at the same time. It was argued that a teacher may develop a curriculum but not vice versa. This idea was fully supported by Howard Bradley, David Fulton (1994) in their book ‘*Developing Teacher, Developing Schools*’. A UL suggested that the development of the Arabic language curriculum should be at Arab Nation level, rather than at local level.

Some comments suggested dealing with the problem of learning the Arabic language, not as a scholastic issue but as “*a social issue*”. They claimed society and families should collaborate to improve the level of language amongst children. In this sense, many respondents blamed the media as they persist in using the colloquial language.

They call for colloquial Arabic to be abandoned in the media and even *"in commercial signs and advertisements"*.

A great proportion of teachers claimed that administrative duties and teaching load may be the cause of the low level of performance of teachers. One SeT put it clearly that

"to increase the creativity of teachers, they must be freed of some duties".

Such issues, although they encourage the researcher as to the value of this study, highlight the complexity of the situation of the learning of Arabic language.

Undoubtedly, huge efforts need to be made to rectify these problems and perform a comprehensive process of developing the learning of the Arabic language in SA.

9.7. Summary

Completed questionnaires were received from 330 respondents in four main sample groups, University lecturers, Educational Supervisors, Intermediate teachers and Secondary teachers.

The main data of the sample characteristics showed that, while both educational supervisors and university lecturers were well-experienced, teachers in general, and those who teach at intermediate level in particular, were less experienced. This suggests the need for a counterweight to the lack of experience by offering sufficient in-service training, which can be supported by the fact that the great majority of practitioners have had no in-service training in the last five years. However, around 50% of those who had been trained in the last five years received just five days or less training and also some of the programmes were not strongly related to their daily teaching practice. ES were more fortunate, as a higher proportion of them received in-service training which was mainly in educational supervision. This may be recognised as a strong point of the Riyadh Educational District and also a support for the case for developing the curriculum as ES are responsible, at least technically, for Arabic language education.

The second section of the chapter was devoted to the first part of the questionnaire. The research respondents gave their opinion on the importance of the objective-related requirements which included 13 requirements. The main requirements were in considering Arabic as training behaviour and establishing a link between religion and the study of Arabic. Two requirements were also given great importance which stated the necessity of involving those engaged in teaching Arabic in developing the curriculum and reviewing the whole Arabic curriculum in order to develop it. The consideration of Arabic as an integrated subject and the study of the objectives for the use of standard Arabic only were among those highly evaluated requirements. In this section it was clear that there was a lack of awareness among respondents in general and among teachers in particular of the importance that should be attached to student factors in the educational process.

The requirements related to curriculum content were listed according to their importance as perceived by the four sample groups. The research samples were interested mainly in the functional syllabuses and the practical skills of standard Arabic. Unlike UL and ES, teachers were highly supportive of giving teachers the opportunities to plan and select the appropriate syllabus. It was generally noted that UL were more likely to support the main skills in Arabic, speaking, listening, writing and reading, while practitioners were more interested in sources of the content. Among the main issues raised in this section was that of the lack of confidence in teachers' abilities to plan and select the syllabus by both ES and UL.

Fifteen requirements were prioritised representing teaching methods and resources. Using the Qur'an and other high quality texts, the provision of teaching aids and the integration of learning Arabic as one subject, were believed to be the most important requirements for development of the Arabic language curriculum. New graduates were more supportive of the new techniques, such as using computers and role plays, while

the more experienced respondents remained in greater support of teachers' traditional methods and those related to direct practice of learning Arabic such as out-of-class activities. The lack of support for the requirements related to a student-centred approach to the teaching of Arabic was considered as a problem of lack of awareness among those involved with Arabic language education. This may support the view expressed earlier and may provide insight into some roots of the current problem of the weakness of the students.

The evaluation-related requirements were also introduced according to their importance as perceived by the research samples. The samples emphasised the requirements of measuring skills rather than knowledge and also concentrating on oral skills in standard Arabic. The curriculum itself was required to be evaluated in order to conduct a continuous development process.

The most relevant of respondents' notes and comments were reviewed in Section 7. These mainly provided some ideas on the layout of the questionnaire and also emphasised the importance of applying the results of the study or at least their being given to those who are in charge of developing the curriculum. Some other suggestions were provided which are worthwhile to be recognised and need further investigation. Finally, this chapter which concerned the quantitative data has completed the empirical part of the study which included the previous two chapters, i.e. the research methodology in Chapter Seven, and the presentation of the qualitative data in Chapter Eight. The need now is for a conclusion, which will summarise the whole study illustrating the main findings and limitations, and provide readers with the main recommendations that can be forwarded in association with the research findings. This is the job of the next chapter, which is the final one of the study.

Chapter Ten

Conclusion of the Study

10.1 Summary of the study

10.2 Overview Discussion and Conclusions

10.3 Limitations of the Study

10.4 Recommendations of the Study

10.4.1. Recommendations at the Ministry of Education Level

10.4.2. Recommendations at Educational Districts Level

10.4.3. Recommendations at the School Level

10.4.4. Suggestions for Further Studies and Research

Chapter Ten:

Conclusion of the Study

To end this study, it would be appropriate first, to summarise the study, answering its questions to assure achieving the aims stated in chapter one. This will be followed, in the second section, an overall discussion and conclusions. A third section will note the limitations of the study and, then, the final section will present recommendations resulting from the study, including suggestions for further research.

10.1 Summary of the Study

The great importance given to the Arabic language in Islam and at Arab Nation and national levels is reflected in the weight give to Arabic in the Saudi curriculum. However, this emphasis is not reflected in the achievement of the students and the general situation of Arabic learning. Many linguists and educationists have criticised the current curriculum, which has remained undeveloped for a long time. Thus, two aims were set to contribute in identifying the solution. The first aim was **to investigate, via documentary evidence, how Arabic language was taught in its various historical periods, what is the current situation of the ALC, and how the curriculum could be developed.** The second aim was **to identify, evaluate and prioritise, empirically, the requirements for developing the ALC in SA as perceived by ES, InT, SeT and UL in the city of Riyadh.**

To achieve these aims, theoretical and empirical work was conducted. The theoretical part involved a developmental study of the various historical stages of Arabic learning and an analytical study of the current curriculum. Literature on teaching languages was also reviewed to clarify relevant concepts and investigate the main methods and approaches to language teaching and their possible application to Arabic. The literature

related to curriculum development was also reviewed to find models suitable for developing the curriculum in a Saudi context. The most relevant empirical studies related the main components of the Arabic language curriculum: the curriculum objectives, content, teaching methods, and evaluation, were reviewed.

The empirical part involved, in the first phase, 24 interviews conducted with some ES, UL and key personnel in the Ministry of Education. This phase of the study confirmed the 'seriousness' of the problem pointing to valuable requirements for developing the Arabic language curriculum. These interviews, together with relevant literature, informed the construction of a questionnaire designed to elicit the perceptions of practitioners and specialists on the relative importance of various requirements.

In the second phase of the study, the questionnaire was administered to all InT and SeT teachers and ES in Riyadh educational district, and to 50% of UL in both Al-Imam and King Saud Universities. The rate of response was around 60% and excluding the unusable questionnaires the actual sample involved in this study consisted of 200 InT, 70 SeT, 18 ES and 45 UL. From their answers, the importance of the requirements related to objectives, content, teaching methods and evaluation were identified in addition to some aspects of the sample characteristics and some comments and advice which were written in the questionnaire.

The main findings are summarised below in relation to the questions formed to facilitate achieving the two aims of the study. These findings will be presented in relation to the two parts of the study.

Part One

This part answered the first five questions of the study.

Question One

'What are the main characteristics of the Arabic language and how was it taught in the main periods of history?'

It was shown that Arabic is a Semitic language which was spread in the Arabian Peninsula when the Qur'an was revealed in the seventh century. The main characteristics of the Arabic language are its rich inventory of consonantal roots with a highly elaborate grammatical system. For many centuries, the Arabic language was known at two levels, standard and dialect level. However, researchers focus on standard Arabic, because of its importance as the language of Islam and Arabic culture. In the early Islamic period standard Arabic was transmitted orally; children were commonly sent to stay with Bedouin, in order to hear it in its natural environment. When it became difficult to find such an environment, Arabic was learned through reading and memorisation of highly standardised texts such as the Qur'an and some poems. In later periods, especially during periods of decline, study of standard Arabic was restricted to the study of logical grammar, affecting the methods of teaching Arabic until recently.

Question Two

‘What is the current situation of learning Arabic in modern Saudi Arabia?’

In order to understand the current situation of Arabic, it is necessary to understand that the Saudi education system is characterised by extreme centralisation, full segregation between the sexes and the reflection of conservative social values. Assessment is mainly by end-of semester exams of a type which encourage memorisation and repetition.

Arabic language is allocated 18% -19% of the study time in intermediate and in the first year of secondary education. Thereafter, it varies widely according to the branch in which the student specialises, from 28% in Islamic and Arabic studies to less than 9% in the technical and natural science branches. Arabic language is divided for teaching purposes into several distinct courses. Although there have been numerous minor changes to the textbooks, the curriculum as a whole has not been developed for more than twenty years. Education has undergone enormous quantitative expansion in the

last two decades, but educationists have recognised the need for qualitative improvement, including curriculum development (see Chapter Three).

Question Three

‘What are the appropriate approaches and methods for acquiring and learning the Arabic language?’

Because of the large distance between standard and dialect forms of Arabic, it was suggested that the approaches and methods used in second language learning could be applied for learning standard Arabic. Therefore, the main theories and methods of acquiring and learning first and second language were reviewed. It was concluded that there was no one method to be adopted but rather all methods and strategies used in the field are potentially useful (see Chapter Four).

Question Four

‘What is the appropriate model for developing the Arabic language curriculum in Saudi Arabia?’

To answer this question, chapter five provided some identification of the concepts used in this study. Although a large number of models and strategies exist for curriculum development, selection needs to be made in accordance with the characteristics of Saudi culture and educational system. The most suitable development framework is believed to be the objectives model, which necessitates a comprehensive process to develop objectives, content, teaching methods and evaluation. To develop these components, it was believed appropriate to identify and prioritise the requirements for development to help decision makers, local authorities, and schools and teachers. In this study ‘requirements’ was defined as ‘conditions, considerations and recommended solutions for developing the Arabic language curriculum’.

Question Five

‘What are the findings of recent empirical studies for developing the Arabic language curriculum?’

The claim of the weakness of students in the field of Arabic language in Saudi Arabia and the shortcomings of the curriculum, was confirmed. However, a comprehensive study for evaluating or developing the Arabic language curriculum, has not been done yet. The studies investigated narrow topics with small samples. Undoubtedly these studies contribute in offering recommendations which might help in developing the curriculum. Nevertheless, it was noted that in relation to the Saudi context, the need is for a study which covers different components of the curriculum and gives a general picture of what should be done for developing the whole ALC.

Part Two

This part concerned the empirical part of the study providing answers to seven questions of the study, question six and the following ones.

Question Six

‘How can the requirements for developing the Arabic language curriculum be listed?’

In Chapter Seven, the research methodology was determined which was suggested to be appropriate for identifying, evaluating and prioritising the requirements for developing the Arabic language curriculum. It was explained that the requirements should be collected through surveying both theoretical and empirical literature and conducting interviews with those involved in the learning of Arabic either as practitioners or specialists. These sources were used to generate and arrange lists of the requirements which, then, were presented to the most involved people with the Arabic language education including intermediate teachers, secondary teachers, education supervisors, and university lecturers to appraise their views of the importance and the position of

each requirement. The method used in presenting the questionnaire is considered appropriate as it required respondents to compare the importance of different requirements and then to rate them rather than tick the importance of each requirement in isolation.

Question Seven

What is the current situation of the Arabic language Curriculum and how it can be improved as in the views of ES, UL, and the Ministerial Personnel.

This question led to 24 interviews being conducted with ESs, ULs and MPs, to explore the current situation and arrive at suggestions to improve it. It was found that there was almost complete agreement among the people interviewed about the existence of problems in the learning of Arabic, though they differed in their assessment of the seriousness of the problem. Some people believed it was an extreme crisis, others believed some improvement was needed. It was noted the problem is reflected, mainly, in the level of the student's awareness and their skills in using standard language. The interviews indicated that it is a solvable problem and should be dealt with as a whole, rather than as many separate issues. The interviewees suggested many solutions and requirements for developing the curriculum, which, taken in conjunction with related literature, helped in drawing up a complete list of the requirements for developing the learning of Arabic. Nevertheless, as it would not be possible, in such a study as this, to treat all aspects of Arabic language education, and in the light of the strong concerns paid by the people interviewed to the curriculum, the focus in the current study was on the curriculum only.

Question Eight

What are the characteristics of the main study samples involved with the Arabic language education?

The respondents involved in the study, representing the four main sample groups, were 200 Intermediate teachers, 70 Secondary teachers, 18 Educational Supervisors, and 42 University lecturers. The number of ES was relatively small, due to the small number of ES involved in teaching Arabic in the city of Riyadh. The main data of the sample characteristics showed that, while both educational supervisors and university lecturers were well-experienced, the level of experience was low among SeT as 55% had 8 years or less. However, the level among InT was relatively lower, as more than 90% had 8 years or less and around 60% had less than 5 years of experience. Proportions of those who had not received training in the last five years were generally high, ranging from 56% among ES to 80% among InT and to more than 84% among SeT. These two features suggest the need for a counterweight to the lack of experience by offering sufficient in-service training, and systematically obligating teachers to benefit from such programmes.

Question Nine

‘What are the objective-related requirements in order of their importance for developing the Arabic language curriculum in Intermediate and Secondary schools in Saudi Arabia as perceived by intermediate teachers, secondary teachers, ES and UL?’

In presenting the answer of this questions and the following three, three points are worth mentioning to elucidate the presentation of the answers:

First, although the priority of requirements are given in front of them as perceived by each sample, they are presented in the priority order attached by InT to facilitate comparing the different priorities of each requirement.

Second, the requirements were prioritised according to the proportion of each sample who allocated them to ‘the most important’ category.

Thirdly, the numbers A1, A2, B1, B2, etc. are given to facilitate discussion. The letters A,B,C, and D indicate the four sections while the numbers indicate the requirement within the section.

Regarding the differences between the views of different samples, and between different level of experience among a sample, the following symbols are used:



‘Shading the cell’ corresponding to the sample by whom the requirement was significantly more supported. For example, in Table 10.1.1, item A7 was significantly supported by UL more than the practitioner samples, so that the UL’s cell is shaded (when referring back to Table 9.3.1. it will be found that more than 66% of the UL allocated this requirement among the most important categories comparing with around 48%, 51% and 47% of the three practitioner samples, InT, SeT, and ES respectively). The comparison, as indicated in Chapter 9, was conducted between the two groups of teachers, between teachers as one group and ES, and between practitioners as one group and UL.



‘Inserting a single star’ means that the requirement was significantly supported by those who were least experienced (less than 5 years).



‘Inserting Two stars’ means that the requirement was significantly supported by those who were more experienced (5 years or more),

The answer to the eighth question is illustrated in the following table.

Table 10.1.1
The Objectives-Related Requirements for Developing the ALC as Prioritised by the Four Research Samples

no.	The Requirements	Priorities as perceived by			
		InT	SeT	ES	UL
A1	Considering Arabic language as training behaviour	1 **	1	1	1
A2	Establishing a link between religion and the study of Arabic.	2	3 **	5	2
A3	Involving all those engaged in teaching Arabic in developing the curriculum.	3	2	2	4
A4	Providing a total review for developing the whole Arabic curriculum instead of piecemeal changes.	4	4	4	5
A5	Presenting Arabic as an integrated subject involving several different skills.	5	5 **	3	3
A6	Setting objectives for the effective use of Standard Arabic only	6	6 **	7	6
A7	Structuring objectives on the basis of students' developing confidence, independence and self-learning.	7	7	8	10
A8	Linking Arabic language objectives with those of other subjects.	8	8	12	11
A9	Providing teachers, students and parents with a detailed list of the objectives for Arabic learning.	9	12	10	12
A10	Constructing objectives based on the students' interests and hobbies.	10	10	9	9
A11	Stating objectives in behavioural terms indicating clear attainment targets and levels.	11	9	6	8
A12	Concentrating on theoretical knowledge about the Arabic language.	12	11	11	7
A13	Structuring objectives based on effective communication in local dialect Arabic.	13	13	13	13

Question Ten

‘What are the content-related requirements in order of their importance for developing the Arabic language curriculum in Intermediate and Secondary schools in Saudi Arabia?’

The following table provides an answer, illustrating the requirements as prioritised by the four research samples.

Table 10.1.2**The Content-Related Requirements for Developing the ALC as Prioritised by the Four Research Samples**

no.	The Requirements	Priorities as Perceived by			
		InT	SeT	ES	UL
B1	Placing the emphasis of the textbook on practical and functional syllabuses.	1 **	1	1	1
B2	Emphasising oral skills in standard Arabic such as making a speech, leading debates and participating in discussions.	2	2	3 *	2
B3	Giving teachers opportunities to plan and select the appropriate syllabus based on the curriculum objectives.	3	5 *	13	13
B4	Selecting texts and units that reflect students' lives and their social and geographical environment.	4	8	6	8
B5	Choosing content that develops students' sense of their literary heritage and increasing the range of their vocabulary.	5	4	4	5
B6	Inserting Syntax and Morphology in their natural linguistic contexts and not as theoretical grammar.	6	3	5	4
B7	Increasing the weight given to listening and comprehension skills.	7	6	2	3
B8	Trying new textbooks for sufficient time to be properly evaluated before implementing them.	8	7 **	8 **	9
B9	Avoiding over-crowding of material to be covered in the curriculum.	9 **	9	9	7
B10	Including reading skills and strategies such as skimming, reading aloud, scanning, intensive and extensive reading.	10	11	7	10
B11	Providing textbooks with stimulating illustrations.	11	13	11	11
B12	Including professional writing skills such as organising content, headings, captions and taking notes.	12	10	10	6
B13	Incorporating in the curriculum the skills of using electronic communication devices such Email, word processor and the internet.	13	12	12	12

Question Eleven

‘What are the teaching methods and resources -related requirements in order of their importance for developing the Arabic language curriculum in Intermediate and Secondary schools in Saudi Arabia?’

The following table provides an answer, illustrating the requirements as prioritised by the four research samples.

Table 10.1.3

The Teaching Methods and Resources-Related Requirements for Developing the ALC as Prioritised by the Four Research Samples

No.	The Requirements	Priorities as perceived by			
		InT	SeT	ES	UL
C1	Teaching Arabic through reading the Qur'an and other high quality texts.	1	1	1	1
C2	Providing teachers with sufficient visual and audio aids and equipment.	2	2	3 **	8
C3	Supplying teachers with a Teacher Guide linked with the student textbook.	3	4	4	13
C4	Teaching Arabic as an integrated subject.	4	3 **	5	3
C5	Building a warm relationship with students to make Arabic enjoyable to them.	5	5	11	2
C6	Encouraging students to use reading and writing as sources of enjoyment and information.	6	6 *	6	4
C7	Establishing an educational broadcasting channel and programmes through co-operation between the educational institutions and the media.	7	9	2	6
C8	Using computer and Instructional games for teaching and learning Arabic.	8	15	13	12
C9	Profiting from the strategies used in teaching the mother tongue in other countries and in teaching Arabic as a foreign language.	9	12	9	9
C10	Using drama and role-play to practise language use.	10	13	10	10
C11	Adopting the principle of individual learning for language proficiency.	11	7	8	7
C12	Providing out-of-class activities such as Arabic language societies to encourage varied language activities.	12	8 **	7	5
C13	Allowing students to choose topics for reading and writing which are related to their favourite pursuits and hobbies.	13	14	15	15
C14	Teaching the various linguistic skills as separate subject areas.	14	10	12	14
C15	Diversifying learning resources using standard language from newspapers, radio and T.V programmes.	15	11	14	11

Question Twelve

‘What are the evaluation-related requirements in order of their importance for developing the Arabic language curriculum in Intermediate and Secondary schools in Saudi Arabia?’

The following table provides an answer, illustrating the requirements as prioritised by the four research samples.

Table 10.1.4**The Evaluation-Related Requirements for Developing the ALC as Prioritised by the Four Research Samples**

No.	The Requirements	Priorities as Perceived by			
		InT	SeT	ES	UL
D1	Concentrating on measuring skills rather than knowledge.	1 **	3	1	2
D2	Carrying out regular diagnostic assessment to guide curriculum appraisal and development.	2	4	4	5
D3	Giving sufficient weight in assessment, to students' oral skills such as reading aloud and conversation in standard Arabic.	3	2	2	1
D4	Establishing a question bank for Arabic by the Minister of Education.	4	5	3	9
D5	Conducting comprehensive exams at the end of each stage for progression to Secondary school or university.	5	1 **	5	3
D6	Using teachers' records of class work as the major instrument of students' assessment	6	6 *	7	8
D7	Establishing national criteria to facilitate evaluating students' achievement in each academic year.	7	7 **	6	6
D8	Using a variety of assessment instruments such as preparing essays and take-home exams.	8	9	8	4
D9	Setting criteria for acceptance of students into the various fields of study, according to their abilities and interests.	9	8 **	9	7
D10	Conducting a wide comparison between students in different years and stages.	10	10	10	10

Question Thirteen

‘Are there any statistically significant differences between the viewpoints of InT and SeT teachers, between teachers as one group and ES, between practitioners as one group and UL in the importance given to the requirements and also in accordance with the level of experience within each practitioner group?’

The tables in the previous sections, already provide the answers to this question. It appears that the samples are different and have different perceptions towards the importance and the priority of the requirements. This indicates the necessity, when developing the curriculum, of including the views of all the different groups and levels of experience and of discussion between groups about their different views.

10.2 . Overview Discussion and Conclusions

For many centuries the principal aim of learning Arabic has been for communicating properly, and understanding of Islam, which continues to be supported by Saudi Educational policy. Such wide aims have not been sub-divided, in the current situation of SA, into particular objectives, which can be achieved and measured by teachers. In terms of teaching Arabic, language skills used to be presented to students as an integrated subject, leaving subdividing Arabic as a specialised subject, to older learners. the language was divided into different branches. At the beginning of this century the whole educational system was adopted from the West, including the methods for learning the mother tongue, which divided the teaching of language into six, or even more, subjects or courses. While the methods have changed in the West since that time to integrate the language skills, the system in the Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, has not been adapted in line with the changes in the West. Arabic continues to be taught in five or six subjects (or branches). It might be argued that learning Arabic lost its authentic methods – by which it used to be taught – but could not benefit properly from the contemporary development of the field of learning language.

The methods used for evaluating student achievement in Arabic in the present system in Saudi Arabia are knowledge-centred rather than giving adequate weight to skills and proficiencies. Students can score high marks by reciting accurately information that they had memorised, even if they do not understand or cannot use it.

The current situation of the ALC has led to serious weakness of Saudi students in the AL skills, which has been noted empirically and criticised by many researchers (see Chapters 1 and 6), and was confirmed by the research samples (see Chapter 8).

This general picture highlights that development of the Arabic language curriculum must be a comprehensive process. Developing one part of the curriculum in isolation will not meet the needs of the current situation. Therefore, this study presents the

requirements for developing the main four dimensions of the curriculum and clarifies what should be done in this respect.

The requirements were placed into an order of their importance to help with the level of the seriousness attached to each one. Indeed, while those of highest priority can be implemented in the short-term, for long-term development, all requirements believed important should be implemented. Moreover identifying those requirements represents the beginning of a comprehensive programme and should be the subject of much investigation and study.

In the light of the centralised Education system in Saudi Arabia, the four lists of the requirements, representing the most important findings of the study, are directed, first, to the decision-maker and Arabic language curriculum designers. Nevertheless, as they clarified what should be done in order to develop the curriculum, educational districts, AL supervisors, schools and teachers can, and should, benefit from these requirements in the four dimensions according to their abilities and responsibilities.

Some comparisons within the requirements of each dimension were conducted in Chapter Nine presenting some general trends. However, an overview of the four lists of requirements prioritised earlier, and different views towards them, reveals some common trends and general orientations which deserve consideration. The most significant general trends which have obvious implication will be highlighted here.

First, it is clear from answering question nine, which listed the objectives-related requirements, that although the four samples differed in the priorities accorded to the requirements, the two teacher samples had very similar views. Moreover, their views were closer to those of the ES than of the UL. A similar trend is discernible, to varying degrees, in relation to other sets of requirements. This can be understood in two ways. First, as there was no complete agreement between the two teacher groups, both of them must be consulted when identifying the requirements for developing the curriculum.

Second, the high similarity between the views of the two teachers groups and with some moderation between them and the ES group is an indicator of the reliability of the questionnaire and, also, of the appropriateness of the comparison conducted in the study between teachers as one group and ES and between the practitioners as one group and UL.

The second trend which can be noted is that, when looking at the list of teaching methods-related requirements it is apparent that requirements (C2) and (C3) were supported by practitioners rather than UL. Clearly, both requirements deal with the daily practice of the teaching of Arabic, i.e. can be inserted within the current curriculum in the short-term. This supportive orientation can be seen also in requirements (A3), (A4), of the objectives and (B3) and (B8) of the content. On the other hand, UL were more supportive of the requirements (C9) and (C12) of the teaching methods-related requirements, (B2), (B7) and (B12) of the content and (D3) and (D4) of the evaluation.

The requirements supported by UL, either viewed language out of the scope of the current curriculum or dealt with a comprehensive change of the curriculum, e.g. which can be considered as strategic requirements for developing the curriculum. In sum, a general trend in the findings is that the requirements supported by practitioners were all related to short-term development or related to recognising those working in the field of teaching Arabic, while those supported more by UL would have to be part of an extensive plan. Indeed, in addition to reflecting the consistency and reliability of the samples' views, this suggests that for developing the curriculum, the views of both groups must be taken into consideration, and also the crucial need of conducting meetings to discuss such views and reconcile differences.

Thirdly, it can be noted that the requirements (C8), (D10), (D13) and (D15) related to teaching methods were placed by the four samples in the tenth position or lower, except (D8) which was placed in the eighth position by InT only. Thus, there is full agreement

that these requirements are lower priorities. The common link between them is they are all student-centred, i.e. focusing on raising students' interest and motivation. Similarly, low priority was given to requirement (A10) related to the objectives and requirement (B11) related to content. These, again, are linked to students' interest, dealing with individual learning and strategies, offering students alternatives and making the classroom more interactive. Those requirements must be compared with requirement (D5) related to teaching methods, which referred explicitly to building a warm relation with students to make Arabic enjoyable to them, and was given higher priority. This suggests that 'theoretically' respondents believe that the students' interest must be maintained. However, in practice, they find it difficult to support this requirement. To put it another way, that there was some awareness of the importance of student's motivation and attitudes as a 'concept', but a lack of awareness as to how to develop them in practice. Indeed, such trend must be kept in mind in both developing the ALC, and also in designing in-service training programmes for the current AL teachers.

The issues highlighted and concluded in this section can be viewed from another perspective to reflect the importance of exploring the province of teaching AL, viewing the current study in the beginning of this field. Therefore, it would be appropriate for the current study to direct some suggestions and recommendations which help decision makers, educators and researchers. Prior to this the limitations of the study will be identified.

10.3 Limitations of the Study

In interpreting the findings of the study, care should be exercised to take account of its limitations. These are:

- a) This study was conducted in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The limited resources for the researcher did not allow him to survey practitioners and UL in the other cities. The results cannot be generalised as the views of all practitioners in Saudi Arabia, but it

can be assumed that there are some similarities in their views because of the centralised nature of the education system.

- b) Despite the complete segregation of the sexes, the Arabic curriculum is almost exactly the same for boys and girls. This might suggest the possibility of generalising these requirements for developing the girls' curriculum as well. However, the researcher advocates a separate study of the situation in the girls' curriculum rather than simply copying the developments in the male curriculum.
- c) The study was confined to the requirements for developing the curriculum, since the curriculum is the backbone of the educational process. Nevertheless, in order to produce a comprehensive improvement of education, other aspects, namely, the requirements for developing teachers and staff and the requirements for developing the wider language and educational environment, must be identified.
- d) The curriculum development literature recommends that the views of parents and learners be taken into account in the development of the curriculum. Due to resources constraints, those groups could not be included in the study. It is recommended that such categories be included in future studies.
- e) The research sample was limited to those who teach in general education and those who are employed by the universities. Other practitioners working in private schools and other specialists working outside of the universities were not surveyed in this study.

10.4 Recommendations of the Study

As a result of the study, the researcher feels that measures can be recommended for enhancing the Arabic education in Saudi Arabia. In this section, the main recommendations will be arranged under four sub-headings; at the Ministry of Education level, Educational District level, school level and suggestions for conducting further research.

10.4.1. Recommendations at the Ministry of Education Level

As it the single authority responsible for planning and developing the curriculum, the foremost recommendations of this study are addressed to the Ministry of Education as follows:

- a) **The first and most important recommendation of the study is implementing the requirements believed by the research samples to be necessary or to help with developing the ALC. Those requirements should not be implemented separately, but through a comprehensive programme.**
- b) **In association with the previous recommendation, the following proposal is offered as a practical guide to help the decision-makers in the Ministry of Education, those involved in the teaching of Arabic and also researchers interested the ALC.**

**Recommended Framework (Proposal) for Developing
the Arabic Language Curriculum in Saudi Arabia**

General Basis:

- a. This document represents the basic requirements for developing the curriculum. Other documents are needed regarding the requirements for developing other aspects of the educational process, such as teachers and the educational and language environment.
- b. This framework is restricted to developing the ALC in intermediate and secondary schools in Saudi Arabia.
- c. Although this framework is presented in four sections, **those sections are interrelated and must be viewed as a whole.**
- d. The arrangement (numbering) of the points within each section is for presentation purposes only, and not to be taken to guide the work.

Section One: Developing the Objectives for ALC.

1. **The general considerations for developing the curriculum are:**
 - All those engaged or interested in teaching Arabic must be involved in developing the curriculum. The work for developing the curriculum should be reported and feed-back

invited from the public.

- A total review should be provided for developing the whole Arabic curriculum instead of piecemeal changes.

2. The main principles for developing the objectives are:

- Considering Arabic language as training behaviour;
- Setting objectives for the effective use of Standard Arabic only;
- Constructing objectives based on the students' interests and hobbies;
- Structuring objectives on the basis of students' developing confidence, independence and self-learning.

3. In constructing the objectives:

- A link should be enhanced between religion and the study of Arabic.
- Arabic should be presented as an integrated subject involving the different skills.
- Arabic language objectives should be linked with those of other subjects.

4. In reporting the objectives:

- Objectives should be set in behavioural terms indicating clear attainment targets and levels (for the attainment targets, it would be appropriate to benefit from the National Curriculum in the U.K. DEF, 1995)
- Teachers, students and parents should be provided with a detailed list of the objectives for Arabic learning.

Section Two: Developing the Content of the ALC.

1. To select the content:

- The emphasis of the textbook should be placed on practical and functional syllabuses.
- Teachers should be given the opportunities to plan and select the appropriate syllabus based on the curriculum objectives.
- The texts and units to be studied should reflect students' lives and their social and geographical environment.
- Content should develop students' sense of their literary heritage and increase the range of their vocabulary.

2. The programme of the study must include:

- Oral skills in standard Arabic such as making a speech, leading debates and participating in discussions.
- Sufficient weight to listening and comprehension skills.
- Reading skills and strategies such as skimming, reading aloud, scanning, intensive and extensive reading.
- Writing skills such as organising content, headings, captions and taking notes.
- The skills of using electronic communication devices such as Email, word processor and the internet (this to be arranged with the computer studies courses).

3. To arrange the content:

- Syntax and Morphology should be inserted in their natural linguistic contexts and not as theoretical grammar.
- Textbooks should be provided with stimulating illustrations.
- The concentration should be on the quality of the material, avoiding over-crowding the curriculum with material which cannot be covered in the time allowed for the AL.

4. To implement the content:

- Textbooks must be tried for sufficient time to be properly evaluated before implementing them.

Section Three: Developing the Teaching Methods and Resources:**1. For planning the teaching methods:**

- Strategies used in teaching the mother tongue in other countries and in teaching Arabic as a foreign language should be considered and benefited from.
- Different skills of Arabic should be taught within an integrated subject.

2. Teaching method should rely on:

- Adopting the principle of individual learning for language proficiency.
- Teaching Arabic through reading the Qur'an and other high quality texts.
- Using computer and Instructional games for teaching and learning Arabic.
- Using drama and role-play to practise language use.

3. To facilitate and enhance teaching Arabic language:

- Teachers should be provided with sufficient visual and audio aids and equipment.
- Teachers should be supplied with a 'Teacher Guide' linked with the student textbook (the Guide should include the objectives, the programme of study with alternative activities, suggested teaching methods, strategies and resources, and suggested evaluation techniques).
- An educational broadcasting channel should be established and programmes made through co-operation between the educational institutions and the media.
- Out-of-class activities such as Arabic language societies should be provided to encourage varied language activities.
- Learning resources should be diversified using standard language from newspapers, radio and T.V programmes.

4. To implement teaching in the class-room:

- Teachers should build a warm relationship with students to make Arabic enjoyable to them.
- Students should be encouraged to use reading and writing as sources of enjoyment and

information.

- Students should be allowed to choose topics for reading and writing which are related to their favourite pursuits and hobbies.

Section Four: Developing the Evaluation

1. The general principles for developing evaluation are:

- The concentration should be on measuring skills rather than knowledge.
- Sufficient weight should be given in assessment, to students' oral skills such as reading aloud and conversation in standard Arabic.
- A variety of assessment instruments should be used, such as preparing essays and take-home exams.

2. The main principles of the examination system should include:

- Conducting comprehensive exams at the end of each stage for progression to Secondary school or university (these exams should be conducted at the ages 15 and 18 by a ministerial authority).
- National criteria should be established and made available for parents and teachers to facilitate evaluating students' achievement in each academic year.
- Using teachers' records of class work as a major instrument of students' assessment (teachers should be provided with clear criteria and their record should be used – instead of the current end-of-term tests – to report students' progress each semester in the intermediate and secondary levels).
- A question bank should be established by the Ministry of Education to offer standardised tests for the Arabic language.
- Criteria should be set for acceptance of students into the various fields of study, according to their abilities and interests.

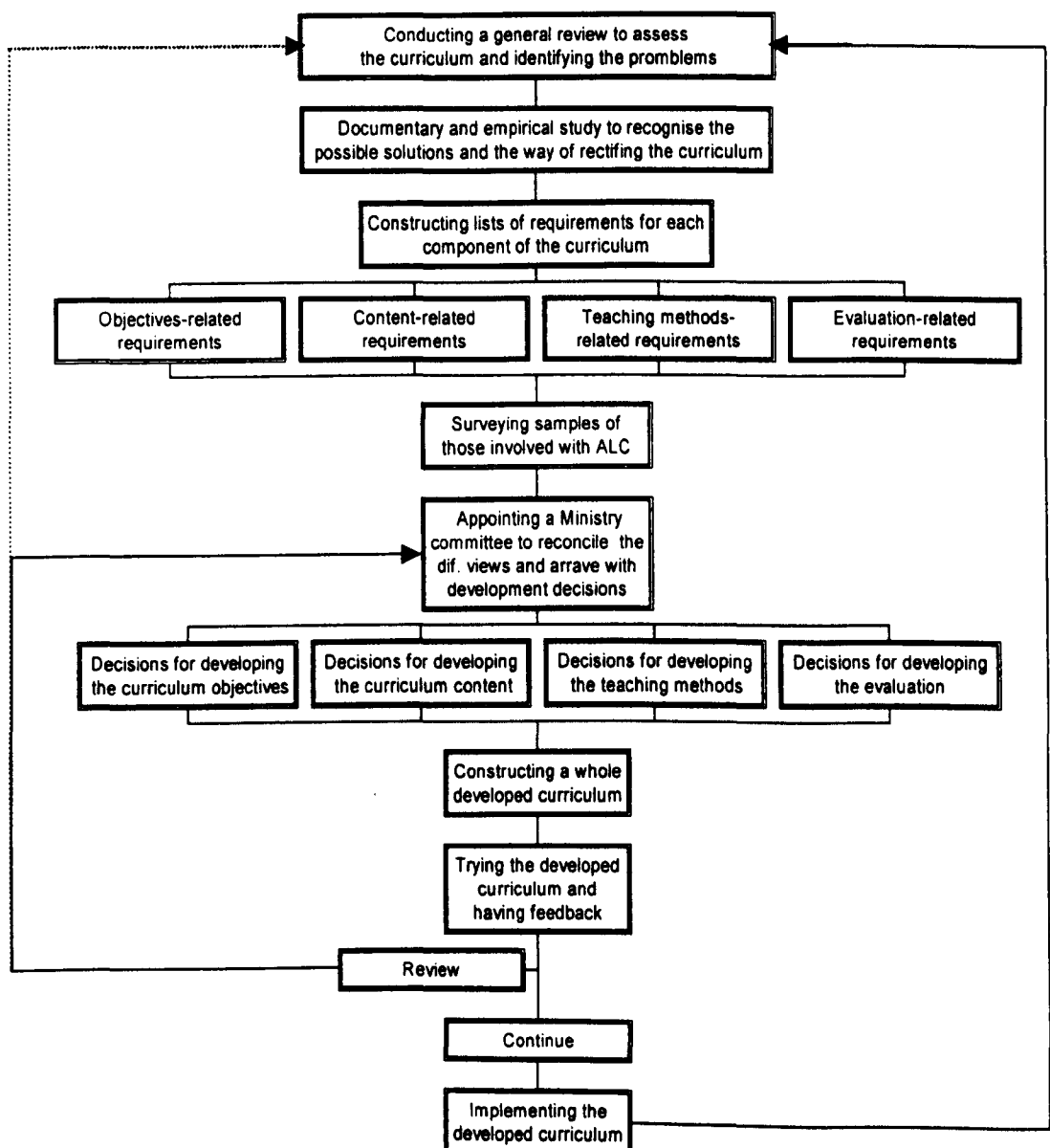
3. To guide evaluating the curriculum components

- Regular diagnostic assessment should be carried out to guide curriculum appraisal and development.
- A wide comparison should be conducted between students in different years and stages.

c) Although the 'Arabic Language Unit' exists in the Ministry of Education, the interviews conducted in the first phase of the study revealed that they were kept busy with daily managerial duties. So, it is recommended that a 'Higher Committee' be appointed to take charge of planning, trying and implementing the developed curriculum.

- d) The study arrived at four lists of requirements which were evaluated and prioritised by the four research samples. These lists, besides the proposal recommended earlier, **should be reviewed by the suggested higher committee to reconcile the differences of views of the four samples** before making decisions for developing the curriculum.
- e) **In relation to the previous two recommendations, the curriculum development model (Figure 10.4.1) is suggested, which summarises the recommended steps to be followed to develop the ALC successfully. The work of the current study is included in the model in order to facilitate using it with similar efforts.**

Figure 9.4.1
The Recommended Curriculum Development Model



- f) Some of the differences of views of the sample groups, were found to be significant in the study. **This would suggest widening the base of the curriculum development to include all those who have interest in the Arabic language and those whose views may help with developing the curriculum such as psychologists and sociologists.**
- g) The Ministry of Education generally treats its ideas and intentions as confidential. Recently the Ministry suddenly implemented a new system of examination which concentrated on elementary schools, without prior warning or public consultation (see Section 9.5). **It is recommended that the Ministry declare ALC projects and make the information more widely available to those who wish to participate in the development of the curriculum in order to improve it through extended feedback.**
- h) Chapter Six revealed that there are no comprehensive or periodical reports about Arabic language education in the country. **It is recommended, therefore, that the Ministry establish a special unit concern with 'monitoring the standards of the Arabic language'. Such a Unit should publish its reports and make it available for teachers, parents, and researchers.**
- i) It is well-known that there is a fully centralised educational system over the country (See Section 3.1.3). To enable interaction between schools and society, on the one hand, and between students and their local environment on the other, **It is recommended that the Ministry, as part of their national plan, free local authorities to take charge of some decisions to encourage their creativity and enable them to make use of the local resources and environment.**
- j) It was found in the main study that teachers, generally, did not have in-service training (Table 9.1.5). It was found, also, in the exploratory interviews, that they were not interested or encouraged to have such training. It is the researcher's belief that if an incentive were provided through the pay scale to improve their standard of

teaching and to have in-service training, teachers would be motivated to improve their skills. **The recommendation, therefore, is that salary increments be linked to performance and to level of training.**

- k) Within the Ministry of Education there is a sub-directorate which is responsible for teaching aids and resources. However, because it is general for all the subjects, most of the resources produced are for the sciences. In the Light of the lack of teaching aids for the Arabic language (see Section 8.4), **it is recommended that a separate unit be created for resources and audio-visual aids for the Arabic language.**
- l) In some schools, there are language laboratories used only for English teaching as indicated in 9.6.2. The recommendation is to provide all schools with these facilities and **to spread the use of the language laboratories to be used in the teaching of Arabic, i.e. they should be language labs, not English labs.**
- m) Arabic language is not subject matter only. It is a tool of communication and it is the duty of parents to participate and co-operate with schools in developing the language standard of their children (see Section 9.6.3.). **To increase such co-operation and point out the role of parents the Ministry of Education should issue a “Home-School Agreement”, such as the one which has already been issued in the U.K and will be put in to practice in September 1999.**
- n) The list of requirements is directed for those making the decisions in the Ministry of Education. **It is recommended also that the findings of the study be brought to the attention of those working in the curriculum departments and the Arabic language departments of the Saudi universities to help them to train student-teachers with the required curriculum.**

10.4.2. Recommendations at Educational Districts Level

Little role is given in the Saudi system to the district educational authorities. However, some recommendations can be suggested for the educational districts which are believed possible and advantageous within the existing system, as follows:

- a. At present teacher training programmes, as already mentioned (see Section 8.2), are set without a long-term plan, so for developing the level of teaching the Arabic language, **it is recommended to conduct a systematic, continuous programme to train teachers in the various aspects of the AL educational process.**
- b. Within each school, especially in the cities, there are at least three teachers of Arabic. To have a proper development of language in the school, **it is recommended that in each school one of the teachers is appointed as the 'senior teacher'** (see Section 8.5). Such a system will make it possible to benefit from the 'cascade model' as senior teachers can be trained and then pass the new knowledge and skills on to their colleagues. They can also guide the implementation of the curriculum and the development programme within the school.
- c. The 'Internet' was allowed to be used in Saudi Arabia with the beginning of the year 1999, and yet, as far as the researcher is aware, has not been used for educational proposes. In the light of the lack of in-service training provided to teachers, as indicated in Table 9.1.5, and the broad and cheap facilities available through this service, **Educational Districts should initiate beneficial application of the Internet for developing the staff. Such facilities might be used to conduct a consultation about curriculum development.**
- d. Discussion groups are a useful strategy for developing teachers. Planned discussion between teachers allows the spread of new ideas and can help to improve the teaching of Arabic (see Section 5.2.2). **The recommendation is that the Educational District can group some schools together to create discussion groups of teachers. The Internet also can be used in this respect.**

- e. Although teaching Arabic is mainly a responsibility of schools, other institutions and foundations, such as youth clubs and literary clubs, may be able to participate in students' learning by holding some activities for Arabic teaching (see Section 4.4.5). **It is the role of the Education authorities to encourage and work with these institutions to develop language amongst students.**
- f. In many Educational Districts, there is one or more college involved in preparing and training Arabic language teachers. **The Educational District may play a key role by linking those who are recognised as specialists and those who practise teaching in schools.** This link can be invested in planned teacher training, holding conferences and meetings to stimulate the teaching process and allow interaction between the two groups, each benefiting from the other.
- g. Comprehensive curriculum development cannot be conducted in a short time. In the meantime, **Educational Districts should recognise the requirements, and the programme suggested earlier, and find a way of benefiting from them for a short-term development.**
- h. Educational supervisors are responsible for spreading new innovations and ideas among teachers, but, as indicated (Table 9.1.5), the majority of them have had not in-service training in the last five years. **It is recommended, therefore, that they be provided with continuous training which will enable them to help teachers properly.**
- i. It is noted that teachers do not have sufficient teaching aids in the schools (see Section 8.4). **Local education authorities can participate in the provision of teaching aids by providing teachers with a 'Teaching Aids Guide'.** This guide could examine the possibility of using teaching aids which are currently considered as being for other subjects and showing how Arabic teachers can benefit from them. It could also help teachers to produce some teaching aids and advise them on how to use local resources for the teaching of the Arabic language.

10.4.3. Recommendations at the School Level

Schools are always the most involved in the teaching of Arabic. Although schools in the Saudi system have no power of decision making but simply implement the 'revealed' curriculum, there is some scope for enhancement of teaching. Some recommendations that can be directed towards the school are:

- a. Teachers are usually required both to teach and to perform some administrative duties within the school (see Section 8.4). It is recommended that Arabic language teachers' duties being reduced. **On the other hand, the administrative duties of Arabic teachers should be linked to their teaching, such as involvement in free-time activities and student broadcasting, so they may integrate them in the development of language.**
- b. It was noted that in some classes, teachers use dialect rather than standard Arabic (see Section 8.4). **It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that standard Arabic is used in the classroom,** most importantly by Arabic teachers but also by other teachers.
- c. Students are usually interested in free-time activities within the school. This can be exploited by **giving students some competition in the use of standard Arabic and teaching them its principles.**
- d. There is a library in each school but it is not used in the actual curriculum. **It is recommended that Arabic language lessons encourage the use of the library,** either for research or for reading to develop students' language.
- e. The educational literature offers a wide range of methods and techniques for teaching language, whether the mother tongue or a second language. **It is recommended that teachers should be encouraged to benefit from different techniques and explore their applicability and effect.** Teachers who did so would benefit themselves and might be able to pass on their experience or findings to other teachers.

- f. Translating policy into practice is always the most fundamental issue of educational reform. Schools, undoubtedly, play the key role in the implementation of the developed curriculum. **It is recommended, therefore, that a plan be set internally by each school to encourage willingness among teachers to implement the developed curriculum.** Indeed when teachers implement the new curriculum interestingly, the curriculum will be more likely to achieve its targets.

10.4.4. Suggestions for Further Studies and Research

Conducting this study has opened the view to the possibility or even the necessity of conducting some other studies to develop the work that has already taken place and extend it to other areas. The researcher suggests conducting the following studies.

- a. The integration of different aspects of language into one holistic course was supported by a high proportion of the research sample. However, some respondents had a conservative view towards integration, arguing that it can be achieved through linking of the separate subjects rather than total integration. Even though this is uncertain, it was claimed that an experiment of this kind was conducted in Saudi Arabia some time ago. Moreover, it is, as already mentioned, implemented in a small number of Arab countries. It is suggested, consequently, that a study be conducted in Saudi Arabia to clarify the effect of integration.
- b. The examination system in Saudi Arabia is so long established that those who are involved, especially practitioners, have not known and so cannot recognise any other system. Therefore, it is suggested that an extensive study be made, regarding the number of exams and the effect on education. Other studies in this area might consider the possibility of reducing the extreme centralisation of the educational system in the country,
- c. This study was restricted to developing the Arabic language curriculum in boys' Intermediate and Secondary schools. Similar studies can be conducted, such as

- The requirements for developing the Arabic language curriculum in Elementary schools.
 - The requirements for developing the Arabic language in Elementary, Intermediate and Secondary girls' schools.
 - The requirements for developing the educational and language environment in Elementary, Intermediate and Secondary girls' schools.
 - The requirements for developing other subjects such as Islamic Education, Social Sciences at all school levels.
- d. Since it is suggested that there is relationship between the motivation, attitude and achievement of students, it would be useful to conduct a study to investigate the factors affecting the attitudes and motivation of the students and find ways to overcome adverse factors.
- e. The classroom environment and teachers and staff have a strong effect on the level of achievement. It is suggested that an investigation be carried out to find recommendations for improvement of the classroom environment and the teachers and staff levels in relation to the teaching of Arabic.

Finally, it is hoped that this study would be of practical use for those involved in making decisions and those who are involved in teaching Arabic in Intermediate and Secondary schools. It is hoped that it will stimulate a review of the curriculum and a reform of AL education in Saudi Arabia or at least raise particular questions of the current situation and how to develop it.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Flow Chart of the Education in the Kingdom of Saudi

Arabia

Appendix 2: The Interview form

Appendix 3: Questionnaire Preparation

Appendix 4: The Actual Questionnaires

Appendix 5: The Administration of the Questionnaires

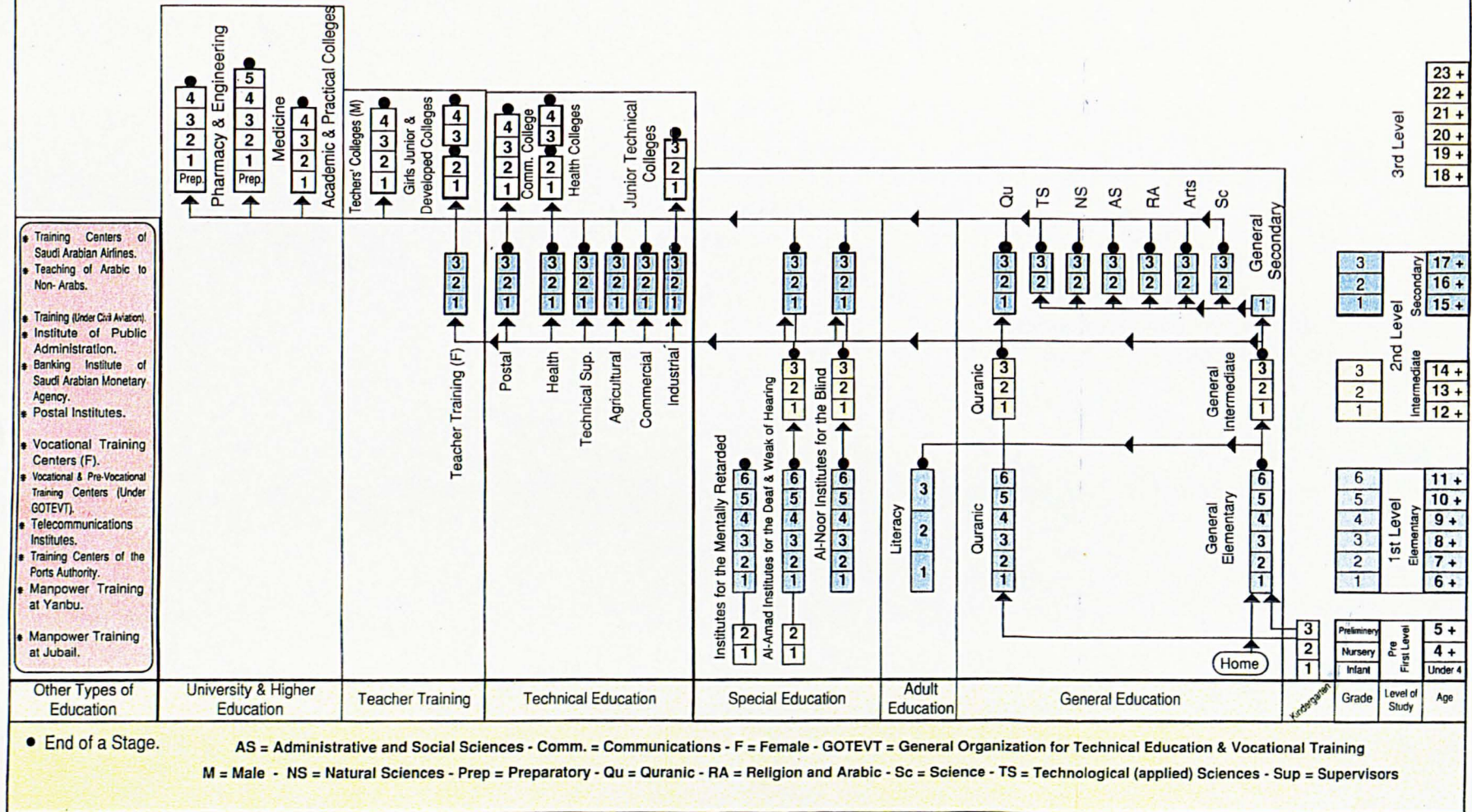
Appendix 6: The Use of the Term: Requirement in The National

Curriculum and the Possibility of Benefiting from it in the Saudi Context

Appendix 1:

Flow Chart of the Education in the Kingdom
of Saudi Arabia

FLOW CHART OF EDUCATION IN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA



Appendix 2:

The Interview Form

1. Semi-structured interview form:

Date

Time:

Name of client

Position:

a). Could you tell me of your view of learning Arabic language today?

Could you tell me more about some points you have mentioned ? (the main points of his speech which should be clarified)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

b). What do you think about the role of the media in the learning of A.L? is it constructive or not?

Could you tell me more about some points you have mentioned ? (The main points of his speech which should be clarified)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

c). What do you think are the main problems, if any, of learning A.L today.?

Could you tell me more about some points you have mentioned? (The main points of his speech which should be clarified)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

d). If there are problems, how can we rectify them? Or if learning A.L is generally satisfactory how can we make it even better?

Could you tell me more about some points you have mentioned ? (The main points of his speech which should be clarified)

1. .

2. .

3. .

4. .

5. .

6.

f). What do you think are the main current requirements for developing the A.L?

Could you tell me more about some points you have mentioned? (The main points of his speech which should be clarified)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

2. Scaled-Questionnaire:

Learning Arabic Language's Status and problems

Some Saudi newspapers and magazine articles have stated that there are many problems with the learning of Arabic in Saudi Arabia. Do you think the following statements are true, or not? (Please tick in the column that reflect your level of agreement for each item)

statement	Strongly	Agree	Not sure	Disagree
1. Language maturity at general educational levels is less than it should be.				
2. There are noticeable weaknesses in students' abilities in writing specially in Dictation.				
3. There is observable weakness in students' abilities of language construction.				
4. There is observable weakness in students' abilities of practical language syntax (inflection).				
5. There is evident weakness in students' writing at the university.				
6. Current curriculum of Arabic needs to be developed and improved				
7. Current Arabic language teachers need more training.				
8. There is no clear curriculum (or written content) for Dictation, which is one of the problems of learning Arabic.				
9. There is no clear written curriculum for Composition, which is one of the problems of learning Arabic.				
10. Current Arabic language curriculum needs to be evaluated and developed from an integrated perspective.				
11. Current Arabic language curriculum does not focus on increasing students' abilities to read and their reading orientation and motivation.				
12. Some university students are not able to write simple words such as 'Tuesday' and 'The car' correctly.				
13. The current generation of students at university have more difficulties with Arabic than former ones.				
14. There has been a steadily decline in student's achievement in Arabic in the last fifteen years.				

Appendix 3:

Questionnaire Preparation

Appendix 3.1:

**English Version of a Letter Sent to Some Specialists to Evaluate
and Judge the Questionnaire.**

Appendix 3.2:

**Arabic Version of a Letter Sent to Some Specialists to Evaluate
and Judge the Questionnaire.**

Appendix 3.3:

**English Version of a Form Sent To Help With Translating the
Questionnaire (Only the letter and example of the layout).**

Appendix 3.4:

**Arabic Version Of a Form Sent To Help With Translating the
Questionnaire (Only the letter and example of the layout).**

The University of Hull
Centre for Educational Studies

December 1st 1997

Dear colleague,

Developing the learning procedure is a very important job for people involved with education. The aim of this survey is to clarify the current requirements for developing the learning of the Arabic language in S.A. in order to achieve a right round in the developing field.

The included statements and requirements have been collected from three sources. They are

- Historical study of learning Arabic language over its various ages.
- The current literature on the subject of learning Arabic and of Curriculum development.
- An exploratory study which was carried out by the researcher a few week ago, which involved interviewing more than twenty expert people.

I would very much appreciate your help in this enclosed questionnaire. Your views are needed on the following aspects:

1. Giving an opinion of each statement and requirement (you will find more explanation on the next page).
2. Evaluating validity and readability of the whole questionnaire. Your advice and comments would be highly valued regarding the following questions
 - a) Is the language of the questionnaire correct, clear and readable?
(If there are any mistakes, please correct them directly or if you have any comments, please write them either in the margins or in the space left on the last page).
 - b) Do you think all the aspects and requirements for developing the Arabic language curriculum have been included in the questionnaire?
(if you have any more requirements, please insert them in the spaces left in the tables and if you have any aspects you believe it have not been mentioned, please add them on the last page, with the relevant requirements).
 - c) Is this questionnaire a suitable instrument to clarify the current requirements for developing the Arabic language curriculum in Saudi Arabia?.
 - d) How long does this questionnaire take to answer?

All these four questions will be repeated on the attached form to ascertain your view about them

Thank you very much for your great help.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix 3.1 (page 2)

Evaluating the whole questionnaire form:

Please answer the following questions after you have finished filling in the Questionnaire and add any other advice and comments you consider to be important (the researcher will take any comments you make into account) .

a) Is the language of the questionnaire corrects, clear and readable?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Because.....

b) Do you think all the key requirements for developing the Arabic language curriculum have been included in the questionnaire?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Because.....

c) Is this questionnaire a suitable instrument to clarify the current requirements for developing the Arabic language curriculum in Saudi Arabia?.

Yes ☐

No ☐

Because.....

d) How long did this questionnaire take to be answered?

It took me minutes to be filled.

General comments and advice:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Thank you for your great help.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Appendix 3.2 (page 1)

مرعاه الله .

سعادة الأستاذ الفاضل

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته، وبعد

يقوم الباحث حالياً بإجراء دراسة علمية للمطالب الأساسية لتطوير تعليم اللغة العربية في المرحلتين المتوسطة والثانوية في المملكة العربية السعودية بهدف تحقيق خطوة إيجابية في مجال تطوير التربية اللغوية للطلاب في السعودية.

أخي الكريم:

إنني أشكر لكم جميل مساعدتكم سلفاً ، و أرجو التكرم بالإسهام في هذه الدراسة، وإعانتني في ذلك برأيك ، والذي أحتاج إليه

من زاويتين

. الإجابة على هذه الاستبانة ذاتها؛

. تحكيم صدق و وضوح و سهولة قراءة (انقرائية) عبارات و مجالات هذه الاستبانة . و فيما يتعلق بذلك

فإن وجهة نظرك و نصائحك مهمة جداً بشكل خاص في ما يتعلق بالأسئلة التالية:

أ. هل لغة الاستبانة صحيحة و واضحة و سهلة القراءة ؟

(أرجو التكرم بتصحيح أي خطأ وإذا كان لديك أي ملاحظة فأرجو كتابتها إما في الهامش أو في

المكان المتاح في الصفحة الأخيرة) .

ب. هل تعتقد أن الاستبانة قد اشتملت على المطالب الأساسية لتطوير مناهج تعليم اللغة العربية؟

(إذا كنت ترى أن هناك مطالب إضافية فأرجو ذكرها في الصفحة الأخيرة)

ج. هل تعتقد أن الاستبانة وسيلة مناسبة لتحديد المطالب الأساسية لتطوير تعليم اللغة العربية ؟

(سوف تجدها هذه الأسئلة معادة في النموذج المرفق)

أرجو التكرم بإعادة الاستبانة ألي في أسرع وقت ممكن و استخدام الطرف المعد و المرفق مع الاستبانة .

شاكراً لكم سلفاً جميل تعاونكم و تلتفتكم بالإجابة،

و السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته .

نموذج تحكيم الاستبانة

Appendix 3.2 (page 2)

بعد إكمال الإجابة على الاستبانة أرجو التكرم بالإجابة على الأسئلة أدناه و إضافة أي نصائح أو ملاحظات ، علماً أن الملاحظات و التوصيات التي تفضلت بكتابتها في الاستبانة سوف تؤخذ بالحسبان .

أ. هل لغة الاستبانة صحيحة ؟ ☐ نعم ☐ لا ☐ بسبب

ب. هل لغة الاستبانة واضحة ؟ ☐ نعم ☐ لا ☐ بسبب

ج. هل الاستبانة سهلة القراءة ؟ ☐ نعم ☐ لا ☐ بسبب

د. هل تعتقد أن هذه الاستبانة قد اشتملت على المطالب الأساسية لتطوير اللغة العربية ؟

☐ نعم ☐ لا ☐ بسبب

هـ. هل تعتقد أن هذه الاستبانة وسيلة مناسبة لتحديد المطالب الأساسية لتطوير تعليم اللغة العربية ؟

☐ نعم ☐ لا ☐ بسبب

و. كم استغرقت من الوقت للإجابة على هذه الاستبانة ؟

استغرقت دقيقة لملء هذه الاستبانة

ملاحظات ونصائح عامة :

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

أشكر لكم جميل تعاونكم ومساعدتكم

Appendix 3.3

Dear Colleagues,

We all recognise the serious need for continuous efforts for developing our educational system and enhancing its quality to achieve successful education for our children and society. This study is a step in this direction. Its chief purpose is to identify the requirements for developing the Arabic language curriculum in Intermediate and Secondary schools in Saudi Arabia.

As one of those who can help in translation, your view is important for this study. I hope you will be generous in helping with the translation of the enclosed questionnaire to ensure accuracy. As the original version is in Arabic, this will help in achieving the strategy, which known as (translation-back-translation).

Thank you in advance for your help.

1. The Requirements Related to Curriculum Objectives -:

First, please read down the following list of the Requirements Related to Objectives for developing the Arabic language curriculum. Then, please tick **no more than six** requirements that you believe are very important by placing ✓ in the column **Most Important**. You are asked to give your opinion of the importance of the other requirements placing ✓ in the appropriate column: "Of some importance" or "Least Important".

الترجمة:

The Requirements	الترجمة:
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Considering Arabic language as training behaviour.	
2. <input type="checkbox"/> Concentrating on the theoretical knowledge about the Arabic language.	
3. <input type="checkbox"/> Providing a total review for developing the whole Arabic curriculum instead of piecemeal changes.	
4. <input type="checkbox"/> Considering Arabic as an integrated subject involving several different skills.	

Appendix 3.4

أخي الكريم:

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته، وبعد

كلنا جميعاً ندرك الحاجة الماسة إلى الجهود المتواصلة من أجل تطوير نظامنا التعليمي و الارتقاء به لتحقيق تربية ناجحة و مثمرة لأطفالنا و مجتمعنا. إن هذه الدراسة الحالية تأتي خطوة عملية في هذا الاتجاه فهي تهدف إلى تحديد مطالب تطوير تعليم اللغة العربية في المرحلتين المتوسطة و الثانوية في المملكة العربية السعودية .
ولأنك أحد المختصين و المقتردين على الترجمة فإن رأيك مهم جداً في هذه الدراسة ، ومن هنا فأرجو التكرم بالمساعدة في هذه و ترجمة العبارات وذلك لضمان دقة الترجمة التي قام به الباحث من اللغة الإنجليزية ؛ فالباحث يستخدم الاستراتيجية المعروفة بـ (Translation - back-translation) مع شكري و تقديري

1. مطالب تطوير تعليم اللغة العربية المتعلقة بأسس المنهج و أهدافه :

فضلاً أولاً أقرأ بدقة القائمة التالية من مطالب تطوير تعليم اللغة العربية في المرحلتين المتوسطة و الثانوية و المتعلقة بأسس المنهج و أهدافه ، ثم أشر المطالب التي ترى أنها مهمة جداً بوضع العلامة ✓ في العمود " مهم جداً " أمام كل مطلب بحيث لا تزيد على ستة مطالب في هذا العمود . بعد ذلك أعط وجهة نظرك في أهمية بقية المطالب بوضع الإشارة ✓ أمام المطلب في أحد العمودين " له بعض الأهمية " أو " غير مهم "

The translation :

المطالب	The translation :
1. اعتبار اللغة العربية سلوكاً تدريبياً وليس معلومات مجردة ؟	
2. التعمق في الجوانب النظرية للغة العربية بشكل أكبر.	
3. إجراء مراجعة كلية لتطوير المنهج بدلاً من التغييرات الجزئية في مكونات المنهج .	

Appendix 4

The Actual Questionnaires

Appendix 4.1:

The Arabic Version of the Questionnaires

Appendix 4.2:

The English Version of the Questionnaires

مطالب تطویر
مناهج اللغة العربیة فی المرحلتین
المتوسطة و الثانیة
فی المملكة العربیة السعودیة

— استبانة بحث —

المحاضر:
محبد الله العثیم

1418هـ

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

أخي الكريم:

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته، وبعد

كلنا جميعاً ندرك الحاجة الماسة إلى الجهود المتواصلة من أجل تطوير نظامنا التعليمي والارتقاء به لتحقيق تربية ناجحة و مثمرة لأطفالنا ومجتمعنا. إن هذه الدراسة الحالية تأتي خطوة عملية في هذا الاتجاه ، فهي تهدف إلى تحديد مطالب تطوير مناهج اللغة العربية في المرحلتين المتوسطة والثانوية في المملكة العربية السعودية . ولأنك أحد المختصين والمهتمين بتعليم اللغة العربية ؛ فإن رأيك مهم جداً في هذه الدراسة ، ومن هنا فأرجو التكرم بالمساعدة والإجابة على الاستبانة المرفقة.

خيارات الإجابة على الاستبانة:

- . أكثر أهمية : ويعني ذلك أن المطلب مهم جداً لتطوير تعليم اللغة العربية في المملكة ، و لا يمكن أن يتم التطوير دون الأخذ بذلك المطلب .
- . له أهمية : وهذا يعني أن المطلب له قدر من الأهمية ، ويسهم الأخذ به في تطوير تعليم اللغة العربية في المملكة .
- . أقل أهمية : وهذا يعني أن أهمية المطلب قليلة ، ويمكن تطوير تعليم اللغة العربية بشكل كلي دون الأخذ به.
- . سوف تجد في أسفل كل صفحة عدداً من المربعات □ ، والمرجو أن تضع فيها -بعدد المربعات المتاحة- أرقام المطالب الأكثر أهمية ، من التي سبق و أن اخترتها في الحقل "أكثر أهمية"

المرجو ملاحظة التالي:

- * المطلوب إعطاء وجهة نظرك في كل مطلب من المطالب المقترحة .
- * أرجو التكرم بالإجابة على جميع العبارات والأسئلة .
- * التعليمات المدونة في أعلى كل صفحة تشير إلى الحد الأعلى للمطالب المختارة في الحقل: "أكثر أهمية" ، والمرجو الاقتصار على ذلك .
- * الإجابات المعطاة سوف تستخدم لأغراض البحث العلمي فقط ، وسيتم التعامل معها بسرية ، ولن تظهر أي أسماء في الدراسة .
- * في الصفحة الأخيرة من الاستبانة تم ترك مساحة لإضافة أي مطالب مقترحة أو ملاحظات تراها .
- * أرجو التكرم بالإجابة على هذه الاستبانة في أسرع وقت ممكن .


أشكر لكم تعاونكم، وفقكم الله .

والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته .

1. مطالب تطوير تعليم اللغة العربية المتعلقة بأسس المنهج وأهدافه :

فضلا أولا اقرأ بدقة القائمة التالية من مطالب تطوير تعليم اللغة العربية في المرحلتين المتوسطة والثانوية ، والمتعلقة بأسس المنهج وأهدافه ، ثم أشر المطالب التي ترى أنها مهمة جدا بوضع الإشارة ✓ في الحقل " أكثر أهمية" أمام كل مطلب بحيث لا تزيد على ستة مطالب في هذا الحقل . بعد ذلك أعط وجهة نظرك في مدى أهمية المطالب الأخرى بوضع الإشارة ✓ أمام المطلب في أحد الحقدين " له أهمية " أو " أقل أهمية "


المطلب	(حد أقصى 6)	أكثر أهمية	له أهمية	أقل أهمية
اعتبار اللغة العربية سلوكا تدريبيا.				
التعمق في الجوانب النظرية للغة العربية وإعطاؤها قدرا كبيرا من الأهمية.				
إجراء مراجعة كلية لتطوير المنهج بدلا من التغييرات الجزئية في مكونات المنهج .				
اعتبار اللغة العربية مادة موحدة تحوي عددا من المهارات المتنوعة .				
إشراك المشتغلين في تعليم اللغة العربية في جميع إجراءات تطوير المنهج .				
إيجاد ارتباط أقوى بين تعلم الدين الإسلامي واللغة العربية .				
بناء الأهداف اعتمادا على اهتمام الطلاب ورغباتهم.				
بناء الأهداف اعتمادا على تطوير ثقة الطلاب بأنفسهم واستقلاليتهم وقدرتهم على التعليم الذاتي .				
بناء الأهداف على أساس تنمية قدرة الطالب على التواصل و التخاطب بلهجته العامية المحلية.				
الربط بين أهداف تعليم اللغة العربية و أهداف تعليم المواد الأخرى .				
بناء الأهداف في صياغات سلوكية بحيث تشير بوضوح إلى مستوى التحصيل المطلوب.				
بناء الأهداف اعتمادا على تنمية استخدام اللغة العربية الفصيحة فقط .				
تزويد المعلمين والطلاب وأولياء الأمور بقوائم مفصلة بأهداف تعليم اللغة العربية.				

في هذه المربعات  أرجو التكرم بوضع أرقام المطالب الثلاثة الأكثر أهمية من ضمن المطالب التي أشرت إليها في الحقل : " أكثر أهمية".

2. مطالب تطوير تعليم اللغة العربية المتعلقة بمحتوى المنهج و المهارات التعليمية :

فضلا أولا اقرأ بدقة القائمة التالية من مطالب تطوير تعليم اللغة العربية في المرحلتين المتوسطة والثانوية ، والمتعلقة بمحتوى المنهج والخبرات التعليمية ، ثم أشر الطالب التي ترى أنها مهمة جدا بوضع الإشارة ✓ في الحقل " أكثر أهمية" أمام كل مطلب بحيث لا تزيد على ستة مطالب في هذا الحقل . بعد ذلك أعط وجهة نظرك في مدى أهمية المطالب الأخرى بوضع الإشارة ✓ أمام المطلب في أحد الحقليين " له أهمية " أو " أقل أهمية "

المطلب	أقل أهمية	له أهمية	أكثر أهمية	جدد قضي (6)
التركيز في الكتاب المدرسي على الموضوعات التطبيقية والوظيفية .				
اختيار الموضوعات والنصوص والوحدات الدراسية التي تعكس حياة الطلاب اليومية وبينتهم الجغرافية والاجتماعية .				
تجنب ازدحام المنهج بالموضوعات التعليمية التي يجب تدريسها.				
التأكيد على المهارات الشفوية باللغة العربية الفصحى مثل الخطابة ، وإدارة الحوارات ، والمشاركة في النقاشات .				
اختيار المحتوى الذي يطور تذوق التلاميذ لآرائهم الأدبي الفصيح وينمي قدراتهم اللفظية.				
تضمين المنهج المهارات الكتابية اللغوية مثل تنظيم النص ، واختيار العنوانات ، وكتابة الملاحظات والتعليقات .				
تضمين المنهج أساليب استخدام الوسائط الإلكترونية في الكتابة والتواصل مثل البريد الإلكتروني ، و معالجة الكلمات في الحاسوب ، و "الإنترنت" .				
تضمين المنهج الأساليب والمهارات القرآنية مثل القراءة المسحية ، والمتعمقة ، والموسعة ، وقراءة التصفح ، و القراءة الجاهرة .				
تجريب الكتب الدراسية الجديدة فوزه كافية لتقومها تقويعا شاملا قبل تعميمها في كل دورة تطويرية .				
إعطاء المعلم الحرية في تخطيط واختيار مفردات (موضوعات) المنهج اعتمادا على الأهداف المحددة للمنهج .				
زيادة الوزن المخصص لمهارات الاستماع ومهارات الفهم .				
دراسة النحو والصرف في سياقاتها اللغوية وليس من خلال القواعد والخلاصات النظرية .				
تزويد الكتاب المدرسي بالصور والرسومات التوضيحية .				


في هذه المربعات  أرجو التكرم بوضع أرقام الثلاثة مطالب الأكثر أهمية من ضمن المطالب التي

أشرت إليها في الحقل : " أكثر أهمية: " .

3. مطالب تطوير تعليم اللغة العربية المتعلقة بطرق التدريس و الوسائل التعليمية :

فضلا أولا اقرأ بدقة القائمة التالية من مطالب تطوير تعليم اللغة العربية في المرحلتين المتوسطة والثانوية ، والمتعلقة بطرق التدريس والموارد التعليمية ، ثم أشر المطالب التي ترى أنها مهمة جدا بوضع الإشارة ✓ في الحقل " أكثر أهمية " أمام كل مطلب بحيث لا تزيد على ستة مطالب في هذا الحقل . بعد ذلك أعط وجهة نظرك في مدى أهمية المطالب الأخرى بوضع الإشارة ✓ أمام المطلب في أحد الحقلين " له أهمية " أو " أقل أهمية " .


المطالب	جد أقصى (6)	أكثر أهمية	له أهمية	أقل أهمية
تدريس اللغة العربية من خلال قراءة القرآن والنصوص اللغوية الجيدة .				
تبني مفهوم التعلم الفردي من أجل إتقان مهارات اللغة العربية .				
تدريس اللغة العربية بمهاراتها المختلفة كموضوع دراسي مترابط .				
تدريس كل مهارة أو جانب من جوانب اللغة العربية على أنه مادة دراسية منفصلة .				
ترك الحرية للطلاب في اختيار الموضوعات القرآنية والكتابية التي يريد ، والمتفقة مع هواياته ورغباته .				
بناء علاقات و صلات جيدة مع الطلاب من أجل جعل اللغة العربية محبة إليهم .				
تشجيع الطلاب على استخدام القراءة و الكتابة كمصادر للمتعة و المعلومات معا .				
تزويد معلم اللغة العربية بالوسائل والمعينات السمعية والبصرية الكافية .				
التأكيد على النشاطات التعليمية خارج الفصل مثل جمعيات اللغة العربية ، لتشجيع الطلاب على النشاطات اللغوية المختلفة .				
استخدام النشاطات المسرحية وطريقة لعب الأدوار لتطبيق استعمال اللغة الفصحى .				
توسيع مصادر التعلم باستخدام مقاطع لغوية فصيحة من الجرائد والمجلات والبرامج الإذاعية والتلفزيونية .				
تأسيس قناة تربوية و برامج إذاعية و تلفزيونية بالتعاون بين التربويين و الإعلاميين .				
استخدام الكمبيوتر والألعاب التعليمية في تعليم اللغة العربية .				
الاستفادة من الطرق و الأساليب المستخدمة في تدريس اللغات الأم في الأقطار الأخرى ، أو في مجال تدريس اللغة العربية لغير الناطقين بها .				
تزويد معلم اللغة العربية بـ " مرشد المعلم " المرتبط بكتاب الطالب .				

في هذه المربعات  أرجو التكرم بوضع أرقام المطالب الثلاثة الأكثر أهمية من ضمن المطالب التي أشرت إليها في الحقل : " أكثر أهمية " .

4. مطالب تطوير تعليم اللغة العربية المتعلقة بالتقويم :

فضلا أولا اقرأ بدقة القائمة التالية من مطالب تطوير تعليم اللغة العربية في المرحلتين المتوسطة والثانوية والمتعلقة بالتقويم ، ثم أشر الطالب التي ترى أنها مهمة جدا بوضع الإشارة ✓ في الحقل أكثر أهمية "أكثر أهمية" أمام كل مطلب بحيث لا تزيد على أربعة مطالب في هذا الحقل . بعد ذلك أعط وجهة نظرك في مدى أهمية الطالب الأخرى بوضع الإشارة ✓ أمام المطلب في أحد الحقليين "له أهمية" أو "أقل أهمية" .

المطلب	أكثر أهمية (حد أقصى 4)	له أهمية	أقل أهمية
التركيز على قياس المهارات أكثر من قياس المعلومات .			
إعطاء وزن كاف في التقويم للمهارات الشفوية للطلاب مثل القراءة الجاهرة ، والتحدث باللغة العربية الفصحى .			
استخدام وسائل مختلفة مثل إعداد المقالات والبحوث والاختبارات المنزلية في تقويم قدرات الطلاب اللغوية.			
استخدام السجل اليومي للمعلم كوسيلة رئيسة لتقويم الطلاب .			
تحديد معايير دقيقة للقبول في التخصصات المختلفة تعتمد على قياس قدرات الطلاب واهتماماتهم معا .			
إجراء اختبار شامل في مهارات اللغة العربية في نهاية المرحلتين المتوسطة والثانوية للتأهيل للمرحلة التالية أو للجامعة .			
إجراء تقويم دوري تشخيصي لمناهج اللغة العربية لمراجعة المناهج وتطويرها .			
إنشاء بنك للأسئلة عن طريق الوزارة لتوفير الاختبارات والمناسبة في مجال اللغة .			
تحديد معايير موحدة وشاملة عن طريق الوزارة لتسهيل تقويم الطلاب في كل سنة دراسية .			
إجراء المقارنات الواسعة بين مستويات الطلاب في الأعوام والمراحل الدراسية المختلفة .			

في هذين المربعين  أرجو التكرم بوضع أرقام المطلبين الأكثر أهمية من ضمن الطالب التي أشرت إليها في الحقل : "أكثر أهمية" .

معلومات عامة :

(هذه الصفحة تم تقسيمها إلى ثلاث

صفحات لتوائم عينات الدراسة)

لمساعدة الباحث في تصنيف إجاباتكم على هذه الاستبانة و القيام ببعض المقارنات الإحصائية ، أرجو التكرم

بوضع الإشارة ✓ أو الكتابة بوضوح في المكان المناسب فيما يلي :

مكان العمل : جامعة قسم

مكان العمل : مدرسة

مكتب الإشراف التربوي الذي تتبع له المدرسة :

الوسط: ☐ الشمال: ☐ الجنوب: ☐ الغرب: ☐ النسيم: ☐ الروضة: ☐

المؤهل العلمي الأخير :

بكالوريوس: ☐ ماجستير: ☐ دكتوراه: ☐

الدرجة العلمية :

محاضر: ☐ أستاذ مساعد: ☐ أستاذ مشارك: ☐ أستاذ: ☐

التخصص: العام الدقيق:

الخبرة بعد الحصول على الشهادة الجامعية :

أقل من 5 سنوات: ☐ 5-9 سنوات: ☐ 10-15 سنة: ☐ أكثر من 15 سنة: ☐

الخبرة في الإشراف التربوي :

أقل من 5 سنوات: ☐ 5-9 سنوات: ☐ 10-15 سنة: ☐ أكثر من 15 سنة: ☐

هل اشتركت في دورة تدريبية خلال السنوات الخمس الماضية :

نعم: ☐ مدتها: يوما لا: ☐

موضوعها:

في الأسطر التالية أرجو التكرم بإضافة أي تعليقات أو ملاحظات فيما يتعلق بهذه الاستبانة أو أي موضوع آخر ترى أنه يمكن أن يفيد الباحث .

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(أرجو الكتابة في الخلف عند الحاجة)

أشكرك شكرا جزيلا على جميل تعاونك بالإجابة على هذه الاستبانة . إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على نسخة من ملخص نتائج البحث فأرجو كتابة الاسم والعنوان أدناه .

الاسم العنوان:

*The University of Hull
Centre for Educational Studies*

Requirements for Developing

*the Arabic Language Curriculum
in Intermediate and Secondary Schools in Saudi Arabia*

-Research Questionnaire-

*By
Abdullah Al-Othaim*

February 1998

The University of Hull
Centre for Educational Studies

February 1st 1998

Dear colleague,

As we all believe, hard work and much effort is needed to achieve successful education for our children and our society. This survey, with your help, may be a good step for finding the right way of best facilitate the teaching and learning of Arabic language. It is investigating the "Requirements of Developing the Arabic Language Curriculum in Intermediate and Secondary Schools in Saudi Arabia".

As you are one of the experts in this field, I would appreciate your views and ask you to spend a few minutes to complete this questionnaire.

Completing the Questionnaire:

To complete the questionnaire the following choices are available:

1. **Most Important** : which means this requirement is needful and essential for developing the learning of the Arabic and it cannot be done without it;
2. **Of some Importance**: which means this requirement helps in developing the Arabic language curriculum;
3. **Least Important**: which means this requirement is of little help or does not help in developing the learning of the Arabic and it can be done perfectly well without it.
4. You will find in the bottom of each page a number of boxes, and you are asked to put the number of **The Most Important** requirements from those you have listed in the column 'Most Important'.

Please note that:

- You are asked to give your opinion of the level of importance of each suggested requirement.
- Please ***consider all statements*** carefully.
- The instructions with each table indicate the ***maximum*** number of permitted replies. ***Please do not exceed this.***
- All information gathered will be ***strictly confidential and no name will appear*** in any publication or report.
- Please reply as soon as possible.


Thank you very much for your great help.

Yours sincerely,

1. The Requirements Related to Curriculum Objectives -:

First, please read down the following list of the Requirements Related to Objectives for developing the Arabic language curriculum. Then, please tick **no more than six** requirements that you believe are very important by placing ✓ in the column **Most Important**. You are asked to give your opinion of the importance of the other requirements placing ✓ in the appropriate column: "Of some importance" or "Least Important".


The Requirements	Most Important (Max 6)	Of some Importance	Least Important
1. Considering Arabic language as training behaviour.			
2. Concentrating on the theoretical knowledge about the Arabic language.			
3. Providing a total review for developing the whole Arabic curriculum instead of piecemeal changes.			
4. Considering Arabic as an integrated subject involving several different skills.			
5. Involving those engaged in teaching Arabic in developing the curriculum			
6. Establishing a link between religion and the study of Arabic.			
7. Constructing objectives based on the students' interests and abilities.			
8. Structuring objectives on the basis of students' developing confidence, independence and self-learning.			
9. Structuring objectives based on effective communication in local dialect Arabic.			
10. Linking Arabic language objectives with those of other curriculum subjects.			
11. Stating objectives in behavioural terms indicating clear attainment targets and levels.			
12. Setting objectives for the effective use of Standard Arabic only.			
13. Providing teachers, students and parents with a detailed list of the objectives for Arabic learning.			

In these boxes  Please put the number of **the three Most Important** requirements you have listed in the column "Most Important"

2. The Requirements Related to the Curriculum Content and Learning Skills:

The following list comprises some of the requirements related to the Curriculum Content and Skills for developing the learning of the Arabic language. Please read the list carefully first, then, tick **no more than six** requirements that you believe are very important by placing ✓ in the column **Most Important**. You are asked to give your opinion of the importance of the other requirements placing ✓ in the appropriate column: "Of some importance" or "Least Important".


The Requirements	Most Important (Max 6)	Of some Importance	Least Important
1. Placing the emphasis of the textbook on practical and functional syllabuses.			
2. Selecting texts and units that reflect students' lives and their social and geographical environment.			
3. Avoid over-crowding of material to be covered in the curriculum.			
4. Emphasising oral skills in standard Arabic such as making a speech, lead debates and participate in discussions.			
5. Choosing content that develops students' sense of their literary heritage and increase the range of their vocabulary.			
6. Including professional writing skills such as organising content, headings, captions and taking notes.			
7. Incorporating in the curriculum the skills of electronic communication devices such Email, word processor and the internet.			
8. Including reading skills and strategies such as skimming, reading aloud, scanning, intensive and extensive reading.			
9. Trying new textbooks for sufficient time to be properly evaluated before implementing them.			
10. Giving teachers opportunities to plan and select the appropriate syllabus based on the curriculum objectives.			
11. Increasing the weight given to listening and comprehension skills.			
12. Inserting Syntax and Morphology in their natural linguistic contexts and not as theoretical grammar.			
13. Providing textbooks with stimulating illustrations.			

In these boxes  Please put the number of **the three Most Important** requirements you have listed in the column "Most Important"

3. The Requirements Related to Teaching Methods and Resources :

The following list comprises some Requirements Related to Teaching Methods and Resources for Developing the learning of the Arabic. Please read the list carefully first, than tick **no more than six** requirements that you believe are very important by placing **✓** in the column **Most Important**. You are asked to give your opinion of the importance of the other requirements placing **✓** in the appropriate column: "Of some importance" or "Least Important".


The Requirements	Most Important (Max 6)	Of some Importance	Least Important
1. Teaching Arabic through reading the Qur♠n and other high quality texts.			
2. Adopting the principle of learning for language proficiency.			
3. Teaching Arabic as an integrated subject.			
4. Teaching the various linguistic skills as separate subjects areas.			
5. Allowing students to choose topics for reading and writing which are related to their favourite pursuits and hobbies.			
6. Building a warm relationship with students to make Arabic enjoyable to them.			
7. Encouraging students to use reading and writing as sources of enjoyment and information.			
8. Providing teachers with sufficient visual and audio aids and equipment.			
9. Providing out-of-class activities such as Arabic language societies to encourage varied language activities.			
10. Using drama and role-play to practise language use.			
11. Diversifying learning resources using standard language from newspapers, radio and T.V programmes			
12. Establishing an educational broadcasting channel and programmes through co-operation between the educational institutions and the media.			
13. Using computer and instructional games for teaching and learning Arabic.			
14. Profiting from the strategies used in teaching the mother tongue in other countries and in teaching Arabic as a foreign language.			
15. Supplying teachers with a Teacher Guide linked with the student textbook.			

In these boxes  Please put the number of the **three Most Important** requirements you have listed in the column "Most Important".

4. The Requirements Related to Evaluation:

Please read down the following list of the Requirements related to the Evaluation for Developing the learning of the Arabic first. Then, please tick **no more than four** requirements that you believe are very important by placing ✓ in the column **Most Important**. You are asked to give your opinion of the importance of the other requirements placing ✓ in the appropriate column: "Of some importance" or "Least Important".

The Requirements	Most Important (Max 4)	Of some Importance	Least Important
1. Concentrating on measuring skills rather than knowledge.			
2. Giving sufficient weight in assessment, to students' oral skills such as reading aloud and conversation in standard Arabic.			
3. Using a variety of assessment instruments such as preparing essays and taking-home exams.			
4. Using teachers' records of class work as a major instrument of students' assessment			
5. Setting criteria for acceptance of students into the various fields of study, according to their abilities and interests.			
6. Conducting comprehensive exams at the end of each stage for progression to Secondary school or university.			
7. Carrying out regular diagnostic assessment to guide curriculum appraisal and development.			
8. Establishing a question bank for Arabic by the Minister of Education.			
9. Establishing national criteria to facilitate evaluating students' achievement in each academic year.			
10. Conducting a wide comparison between students in different years and stages.			

In these boxes  Please put the number of **the two Most Important** requirements you have listed in the column "Most Important"

Appendix 5

The Administration of the Questionnaires

Appendix 5.1:

The Letter Given to the Researcher by his University Asking to Facilitate the Conduct of the Study

Appendix 5.2:

The Letter Given to the Researcher by Riyadh Education District, Al-Imam University and King Saud University Asking Schools and Departments to Co-operate in Administering the Study

Appendix 5.3:

An Example of the Letters Sent by the Researcher to Respondents Asking them to Complete the Questionnaire

Appendix 5.4:

An Example of the Letters Sent by Schools, Attached to the Returned Questionnaires



رسم :

التاريخ : ١٤١٨/٤/٢١ هـ

المشروعات :

الموضوع :

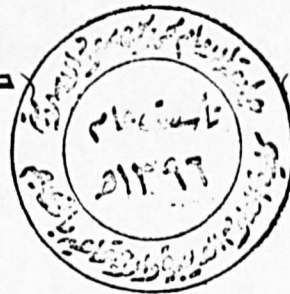
المقدمة

تفيد كلية العلوم العربية والاجتماعية بالقصيم بأن المحاضر / عبد الله بن عبد الكريم العثيم أحد طلاب الدراسات العليا بالكلية ولديه بحث بعنوان " مطالب تعليم اللغة العربية في المملكة العربية السعودية " ويرغب في استطلاع آراء عدد من الخبراء والأساتذة الاختصاصيين حول مناهج بعض مقررات اللغة العربية . وبناءً على طلبه أعطي هذه الإفادة فنأمل تسهيل مهمته والتكرم بمساعدته في جمع المعلومات اللازمة لبحثه .

وفقكم الله وبارك فيكم . ،،،

عميد كلية
العلوم العربية والاجتماعية في القصيم

محمد بن سليمان الراجحي



(أ. الشيمري)

٤/٣٤

سعادة عميد كلية اللغة العربية بجامعة الإمام محمد بن سعود الإسلامية بالرياض رعاه الله

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

أفيد سعادتك بأنني أحد المحاضرين في جامعة الإمام ، وأحضرُ للدكتوراه في مجال تصميم
مناهج اللغة العربية ، وعنوان البحث هو : (مطالب تطوير تعليم اللغة العربية في المرحلتين
المتوسطة والثانوية في المملكة) .

أمل التكرم بالإذن لي بتطبيق الاستبانة المرفقة واستطلاع آراء الأساتذة في أقسام اللغة
العربية في الكلية .

كما أرجو التكرم بتزويدي بأعداد ووظائف الأساتذة والمحاضرين في أقسام اللغة العربية في
الكلية .

هذا وتجدون برفقه خطاباً تعريفياً من الجامعة .

شاكراً لكم جهودكم ، رعاكم الله

والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

مقدمه الباحث

عبدالله بن عبدالكريم العثيم

فضيلة مدير الشؤون الإدارية مع إحية
لمساعدة الأخ المحاضر وفقكم الله


١٤١٨/١٠/١٠ هـ

السنة عبده
سيد ملاءة على البيانات الخاص
بالدساترة في النظام العام

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

هذا وتجدون برفقه خطاباً تعريفيّاً من الجامعة .

شاكرا لكم جهودكم ، رعاكم الله

والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

مقدمه الباحث

عبد الله بن عبد الكريم العثيم

[illegible]

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

١٤١٨/١٠/١٤ هـ

رعاه الله

المكرم مدير

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

تجد برفقه - وفقكم الله - خطاباً من مدير عام التعليم بمنطقة الرياض وعدد () نسخة من الاستبانة المعنونة : مطالب تطوير تعليم اللغة العربية في المرحلتين المتوسطة والثانوية في المملكة العربية السعودية لملئها من قبل الأخوة الأكادم معلمي اللغة العربية في المدرسة .

أشكر لكم سلفاً جميل تعاونكم وتشجيعكم للبحث العلمي وحثكم معلمي اللغة العربية على المشاركة في هذا البحث والإسراع في الإجابة على الاستبانة ، كما أرجو التكرم بإعادتها بعد ملئها إلى العنوان التالي :

الإدارة العامة للتعليم بمنطقة الرياض

إدارة التطوير التربوي

قسم البحوث التربوية

راجياً منكم التكرم بتبليغ شكري لهيئتكم الإدارية ولمعلمي اللغة العربية في المدرسة . سائلاً الله تعالى أن يوفقكم ويجزيكم أحسن الجزاء .

والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

أخوكم / عبدالله بن عبدالكريم العثيم

١٧/١٠/١٤١٨ هـ

وفقه الله**عمادة الأستاذ الفاضل**

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته .. وبعد:

تجد برفقه - رعاكم الله - استبانة بحث يهدف إلى تحديد مطالب تطوير تعليم اللغة العربية في المرحلتين المتوسطة والثانوية في المملكة العربية السعودية.

ولأنكم أحد المتخصصين في مجال اللغة العربية فالمرجو الاستفادة من آرائكم من خلال تفضلكم بالإجابة على الاستبانة والإسهام في هذا البحث العلمي.

أشكر لكم سلفاً تفضلكم بالإجابة، وأرجو التكرم بإعادتها في أسرع وقت ممكن

إلى

هذا وأحب إحاطتكم أنه جرى التنسيق مع عمادة الكلية حول تطبيق الاستبانة.

وفقكم الله وسدد على طريق الخير خطاكم..

الباحث

عبدالله بن عبدالكريم العثيم

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

التاريخ : ١٢ / ١١ / ١٤١٨ هـ

رعاه الله

سعادة الأستاذ الفاضل /

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته و بعد:

سبق وأن أرسلتُ إلى سعادتكم استبانة بحث علمي برجاء التكرم بالإجابة عنها، وهي بعنوان: «مطالب تطوير تعليم اللغة العربية في المرحلتين المتوسطة والثانوية في المملكة العربية السعودية».

وحيث لم تصل إلى الباحث حتى الآن، أرجو منكم التعاون بإكمال الإجابة عنها ثم تسليمها في أسرع وقت ممكن إلى سعادة

في حالة كونكم قد أرسلتم الاستبانة قبل وصول هذا الخطاب التذكيري، فأرجو التكرم بقبول اعتذاري على إزعاجكم به.

وتقبلوا فائق شكري وتقديري على تعاونكم، رعاكم الله

والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته ، ، ،

أخوكم الباحث

عبد الله بن عبد الكريم العثيم

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الرقم : ٤٤
التاريخ : ١٨/٥/١٤١٨ هـ
الشفوع :

المملكة العربية السعودية
وزارة المعارف
الإدارة العامة للتعليم بالرياض
المتوسطة الثانية بالرياض

الموضوع : تسهيل مهبة باحث .

سعادة مدير عام التعليم بمنطقة الرياض - ادارة التطوير التربوي / البحوث المعتمد
السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته وبعد :-

تنفيذا لعماديتكم رقم ٤/١١٠٢١ وتاريخ ١٤/١٠/١٤١٨ هـ ، بشأن تسهيل
مهبة الباحث / عبد الله بن عبد الكريم بن عبد الله العثيم .
تجدون بهرفقه الاستيفانه حيث تم تعميتهما من قبل مدرستي اللغة العربية
بالمدرسة .

ولكم اطيب تحياتي ،،

مدير المتوسطة الثانية

علي بن مبارك المرعبي



مركز الإشراف التربوي شرق الرياض

ثانوية الملك فهد

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم



المملكة العربية السعودية
وزارة المعارف
الإدارة العامة للتعليم بمنطقة الرياض

الرقم : ٢٠٨

التاريخ : ٣ / ١١ / ١٤١٨ هـ

المرفقات : ٦

حفظه الله

سعادة مدير عام التعليم بمنطقة الرياض
(إدارة التطوير التربوي قسم البحوث التربوية)

وبعد السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

ببناءً على تعميمكم رقم ٤/١١٠٢١ وتاريخ ١٤/١٠/١٤١٨ هـ بشأن
الدراسة التي يقوم بها الباحث / عبد الله بن عبد الكريم العثيم ، عليه نبعث لكم
بالطلب .

وفقكم الله وسدد خطاكم ،،،
والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته .

Appendix 5.4



مدير ثانوية الملك فهد

بندر بن عبد الرحمن السليمان

Appendix 6:

The Use of the Term: Requirement

in The National Curriculum in England and Wales and the

Possibility of Benefiting from it in the Saudi Context

Appendix 6

The Use of the Term: Requirement in The National Curriculum in England and Wales and the possibility of Benefiting from it in the Saudi context

The National Curriculum forms an important part of the Education Reform Act that became law in the summer of 1988. Prior to 1988 the major piece of educational legislation in England and Wales had been the 1944 Education Act which made secondary education free and compulsory, and established a system which was centrally governed but locally administered by local education authorities (Lawton and Gordon, 1993). A detailed discussion of the National Curriculum is beyond the scope of the study. Only a very few points need to be clarified, mainly for non-English readers to give some idea about one of the most successful innovations and also to facilitate understanding of some relevant terms used in the current study.

For many years before the 1988 Education Act, many English educationalists such as Lawton,

(1973), Stenhouse (1975) and Skilbeck,(1985) and many others had argued in favour of some kind of national curriculum or common curriculum. They believed that there would be considerable professional advantages in having clearer ideas about what should be done for children in schools. They anticipated that such planned national policy would enhance the level of education across the country and provide parents with a clear picture of what is going on in school and provide children with 'better education'. However, it was not until 1987 that a reforming Secretary of State, Kenneth Baker, began to prepare the 'Great Education Reform Bill' (GERBILL) which after much debate in both Houses of Parliament and elsewhere, became the Education Reform Act (1988) (Lawton and Gordon, 1993).

The National Curriculum represents one of the most significant educational reforms this century. It received political support across all major political parties. So, it was said that the National Curriculum

"will be one of the corner-stones of school development in the 1990s and through to the twenty-first century" (Moon, 1996, p2).

The National Curriculum was introduced through its various requirements which were presented in four separate but inter-related elements:

- i. The foundation subjects (a strong emphasis on traditional content: the three 'core subjects' English, mathematics and science, plus technology, history, geography, art, music and physical education).
- ii. Attainment targets for each subject.
- iii. Programmes of Study for each subject; these refer mostly to content, with a little process.
- iv. Assessment at the ages of 7, 11, 14 and 16 .(Lawton, 1996)

The use of the term: 'requirements' is widespread in the documents, instructional materials and various publications. The DES (the Department of Education and Science, 1990,1991 and 1993) published a Series titled: "*The Implementation of the Curriculum Requirements of the Education Reform*" which dealt with many subjects of the National Curriculum such as "*English: key Stage 1,2 and 3*" (DES, 1992) and some other issues like "*In service training for the introduction of The National Curriculum*" (DES, 1992). Another publication after the 1995 revision was: "*Information technology: the new requirements*" (SCAA, 1995).

An example of the National Curriculum requirements will make the use of the term more clear. In the "*English in the National Curriculum*" publication, "*General Requirements For English: Key Stage 1-4*" were presented. The first requirement was :

English should develop pupils' abilities to communicate effectively in speech and writing and to listen with understating. It should also enable them to be enthusiastic, responsive and knowledgeable readers" (DFE, 1995,p.2)

Regarding standard English, the requirement was:

Pupils should be given opportunities to develop their understanding and use of standard English" (DFE, 1995,P.3)

In the National Curriculum, the requirements are considered as "legal requirements" but only because of being associated with the Education Reform Act; they are not considered as law in themselves.

Although the National Curriculum was widely welcomed and the view was expressed that

the significant majority of parents and teachers were, and are, in favour of the principle of a National Curriculum. And many other countries are looking with interest at the way it develops (Moon, 1996, p113);

it has also been subject to criticism . Three points of criticism will be reviewed, to help us in understanding the term “requirements” and formulate a conclusion for the utilisation of the term and method for developing the Arabic language curriculum in Saudi Arabia.

First, Lawton (1996) claimed that it was never clear whether the planning was based on the content or objectives model . It seemed to be an uneasy mixture of four models (the content model, the process model, the objectives model, and the assessment-based curriculum model).

Second, when the national curriculum as part of the Education Reform Act (ERA) was put out for consultation, some educationalists were very critical of the proposal, according to Lawton (1996), partly because schools in England, unlike many other European countries, have enjoyed a tradition of curricular freedom since 1944; they have avoided central control over the curriculum. On the other hand, schools were left with, as Lawton goes to argue,

a top-down, political-bureaucratic programme ...which was deliberately anti-professional in several ways. It appealed to market forces rather than planning, and to parental choice rather than the professionalism of teachers whose status was reduced to that of employees required to carry out orders(p.13).

In sum, teachers were handed down a curriculum that was planned in great haste, with no clear aims and values, and without a coherent design, and were expected to teach and assess it after minimal opportunities to prepare for it.

A third point was made by Protherough and King (1995, p.1) who criticised the instability of the National Curriculum requirements, saying:

It is now impossible to talk of the National Curriculum as something definitive. Within five years, four irreconcilable versions of a National Curriculum for English have been promulgated (together with an additional variant for Wales)

and five committees or working parties have been charged with drafting or revising these documents without ever reaching consensus ...

These three points of criticism, in fact provide support for the utilisation of the “requirements” for developing the Arabic language Curriculum in Saudi Arabia.

First, the requirements does not rely on a particular curriculum model or design , it is a “development approach” which uses the most suitable model in each distinctive circumstances. The chief feature of this approach is not to produce an entirely new curriculum or programme but to build on the existing curriculum through a comprehensive review to keep the strengths and suggest new conditions and recommended solutions to be met and achieved in order to develop and improve the curriculum.

Secondly, the nature of the existing Saudi educational context is a top-down hierarchical system which means that the development process should start from high-level authority. This, too, suggests that the “requirements” is most appropriate for developing the Arabic language curriculum in the country.

Thirdly, the researcher believes that the educational development should be a continuous process and that the requirements for developing the curriculum must be modified in respect of educational circumstances which are always changing .Changes are not to be carried out for their own sake, but when there is consistent evidence of the need for change, it should be initiated.