

The Effectiveness of a Language Immersion Program in Acquiring Functional Language Skills among Learners of Arabic as a Second Language

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Abstract: The aim of this research was to gauge the efficacy of a language immersion program in fostering functional language skills among learners of Arabic as a second language. To achieve this, a quasi-experimental design was employed, comprising an experimental and a control group. Each group consisted of 35 third-level learners from Al-Misbah School for Arabic Language and Islamic Studies in Riyadh. The research materials and instruments included: a taxonomy of functional language skills, a functional language skills rubric, and a language immersion program. The results revealed statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the post-test of the functional language skills scale, favoring the learners in the experimental group. The program's effectiveness ratio in acquiring functional language skills among the experimental group learners was 1.31. Based on these findings, the research proffered several recommendations, including the imperative of focusing on leveraging language immersion programs as a means of augmenting the acquisition of functional language skills among learners of Arabic as a second language.

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of Arabic to non-native speakers has witnessed increasing demand since the beginning of the new millennium, particularly in many Western and Eastern countries, such as Russia, Turkey, China, the United States, and European countries. This is because Arabic is one of the languages of the world's great civilizations. The reasons behind choosing to learn it are diverse, ranging from scientific and political to religious and economic. This is confirmed by Boutiche (2022), who explained that Arabic is one of the oldest and most widely spoken languages in the world, with approximately 422 million speakers in the Arab world and nearly 540 million as a second language. This places it fifth globally in terms of usage. Harath (2024) points out that Arabic holds great importance for Arabs and Muslims as their mother tongue and the language of the Quran. For other nationalities, Arabic is the language of science and knowledge, leading to increased demand for its study and a surge in interest in learning it. Consequently, numerous specialized centers for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers have been established, both in Arab and foreign countries. Regarding the Arab states' commitment to teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, Al-Sayed (2024) indicates that these countries adopt various strategies to enhance Arabic language education for non-native speakers. These strategies include establishing specialized centers, developing high-quality curricula that consider cultural and functional aspects, utilizing technology, training teachers in the latest teaching strategies to improve their skills, and integrating the language with Arab and Islamic culture.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is among the leading Arab countries in its commitment to teaching Arabic to non-native speakers. This is confirmed by Al-Qadi (2024), who notes that Saudi Arabia is a pioneer in serving the Arabic language for non-native speakers. This commitment is manifested in the establishment of specialized institutions, educational initiatives and efforts, and the organization of conferences and seminars to exchange expertise, leveraging the Arabic language as a soft power and a means of global communication. These efforts are aligned with Saudi Vision 2030, which aims to strengthen Saudi and Arab national identity as an integral part of the Kingdom's global mission.

The Al-Misbah Program is one of Saudi Arabia's prominent efforts in teaching Arabic to non-native speakers. It targets students in international schools from non-Arabic-speaking communities, providing them with Arabic language and Islamic studies instruction. This program offers an educational curriculum that enhances students' ability to understand, write, and speak the language, and to utilize their multilingual skills in disseminating the teachings of the Quran and its related sciences (Al-Ghazal, 2025).

These educational institutions also play an important role in providing purposeful language programs, according to the learners' language levels (AFL). These levels vary, as Al-Fawzan and Abdul Khaliq (2016) indicate, based on global

reference frameworks and specialized educational curricula, usually divided into three main levels (beginner, intermediate, advanced) or six levels (A1-C2) according to the European framework (CEFR).

The objectives of teaching Arabic to non-native speakers progress through these levels, beginning, as Al-Sallabi (2023) indicates, with learning the alphabet and acquiring vocabulary, then moving to the functional use of language skills to achieve communicative, social, and psychological goals, such as expressing needs, engaging in social interaction, conveying information, and influencing others. This culminates in linguistic fluency and the ability to analyze and produce both oral and written texts, thereby connecting the language to its social environment.

From these objectives, the importance of developing functional language skills for learners of Arabic as a second language becomes evident. Functional language learning, as Al-Khalifa (2017) points out, is a crucial approach in teaching Arabic. It emphasizes that the focus should not be on teaching all language skills, but rather on the skills learners need in real-life situations that necessitate their use. In this way, language learning becomes functional, transcending mere certification or ornamentation.

This is underscored by Al-Abd and Issa (2023), who highlight that functional language skills are paramount for learners of Arabic as a second language. These skills are intricately tied to the learners' everyday linguistic contexts and are honed through practice in scenarios mirroring real-life situations. In oral expression, learners engage in discussions, storytelling, delivering news, public speaking, and mastering greetings, congratulatory messages, and commentary. In written expression, they hone their skills in crafting personal and formal letters, dispatching telegrams, creating advertisements, and designing invitation cards.

In light of the paramount importance of functional language skills, a plethora of educational research and studies have emerged, underscoring the significance of this domain. Notably, Mustafa's 2023 study sought to bolster functional reading skills among non-native Arabic speakers, tailoring its approach to their specific needs. Concurrently, Tai's 2024 research endeavored to augment functional oral proficiency among second language learners via intelligent personal assistants. Muhammad's 2024 study, meanwhile, crafted a technological program anchored in communicative and religious paradigms to enhance functional writing skills among non-native Arabic speakers. Al-Mansour's 2025 investigation leveraged Memrise to foster functional writing prowess, whereas Faraj's 2025 study harnessed electronic games to cultivate functional speaking abilities. Furthermore, Li & Zhao's 2025 research illuminated the pivotal role of functional listening skills in augmenting comprehension aptitudes among second language learners.

In light of the foregoing and the recommendations of research and studies, there is a compelling imperative to equip learners of Arabic as a second language with functional language skills, cognizing the inherent nature and exigencies of these skills. As Abu Ashma (2024) astutely observes, this necessitates deploying

language efficaciously in quotidian life and pragmatic situations, tethering the learning process to authentic contexts and the learner's requisites, undertaking rigorous training in specific scenarios, augmenting the capacity for fluent self-expression, and leveraging realistic learning materials to bolster comprehension and language production.

This aligns with the approach of language immersion, as indicated by Lord (2010), where the learner is fully immersed in the target language environment through daily communication situations, thereby enhancing the acquisition of language skills, grammar, and vocabulary through practical practice and social interaction. This approach is considered one of the best methods for promoting bilingualism and the ability to use language in natural contexts.

Omar and Amara (2024) note that foreign language teaching experts consider language immersion one of the best educational approaches that help learners acquire foreign languages and their functional skills with high efficiency. It is, therefore, one of the new trends that should be considered and adopted in second language teaching, as it provides learners with real opportunities to practice the language in natural, uncontrived situations.

Numerous studies and research have emphasized the importance of applying language immersion programs in second language teaching, including: Qarir (2013); Abu Al-Rous (2014); Al-Suhimi (2022); Liu & Tarone (2024), Franco (2025). A key recommendation of these studies was the necessity of using language immersion programs due to their diversity in language teaching, especially since the weakness of second language learners in functional language use is primarily attributed to the use of traditional teaching programs and methods.

In light of the above, the current research aimed to employ language immersion programs in acquiring functional language skills among learners of Arabic as a second language.

Awareness of the research problem:

The awareness of the current research problem was derived from several sources, most notably:

1- The results of previous research and studies (Al-Hadibi, 2019) (Al-Shebil and Dhiab, 2019) (Hariri, 2020) (Qadah, 2020) (Ahmad, 2024): which revealed a clear weakness in functional language skills among learners of Arabic as a second language. This weakness is evident in the following manifestations: weakness in the ability to employ linguistic meaning and formulate sentences and ideas clearly and correctly in daily life and educational contexts, weakness in understanding and using reading texts effectively, ambiguity of messages and inability to convey ideas accurately, weakness in expression and communication, and weakness in functional writing skills with frequent spelling and grammatical errors, lack of vocabulary diversity and weakness in sentence formulation, and unclear ideas. These manifestations are attributed to the scarcity of appropriate teaching materials, the use of stereotypical teaching methods, focusing on grammar rather than communication skills, and lack of real interaction with the Arab community.

Therefore, it is necessary to employ modern linguistic approaches and methods that activate the learner's role and equip them with functional language skills in communicative life situations.

2- The researcher's work in the field of teaching Arabic as a second language: The researcher observed a clear weakness among learners of Arabic as a second language in functional language skills in life situations that require listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This may be due to:

- The scarcity of a clear language curriculum with a lack of a clear vision of its philosophical, psychological, and cultural foundations; which leads to the adoption of traditional and grammatical teaching methods that are not suitable for functional language skills.

- A scarcity of educational materials provided to second language learners, coupled with a lack of utilization of modern strategies and approaches suitable for them, which focus on activating the learner's role and emphasizing language practice and functional use in various life situations.

3- Results of the personal interview: The researcher conducted an interview with some Arabic language teachers, and they indicated that there is a deficiency in functional language skills among learners of Arabic as a second language. This was evident in their weak interaction and social communication with native Arabic speakers, and consequently, their withdrawal from social participation. This has multiple reasons, such as the prevalence of colloquial dialects that they are not proficient in, their hesitation and anxiety about speaking in formal Arabic outside of classrooms, and the lack of modern language programs and teaching strategies to support their acquisition of functional language skills in both spoken and written forms in a systematic manner.

4- Recommendations of previous writings, research, and studies: (Abdullah, 2008) (Abu Al-Wafa et al., 2020) (Ismail, 2022) (Ibraikat, 2023) (Calero, 2024) (Noprival, 2025) which recommended the necessity of activating the use of the language immersion approach in teaching Arabic as a second language. This approach is considered one of the most effective and fastest methods for mastering a new language, as it provides learners with a rich environment that transforms their language learning from an academic process to a life experience, by relying on emulating the acquisition of the mother tongue by exposing the learner to it intensively and naturally in their daily life, which makes this approach a superior means to traditional teaching methods.

Identifying the Research Problem:

The current research problem is pinpointed as the deficiency in functional language skills among learners of Arabic as a second language. This shortfall is potentially attributable to the inadequacy of Arabic language teaching curricula, specifically in terms of exercises, activities, and the prevalent reliance on traditional methodologies for imparting these skills to learners. Consequently, the imperative has emerged to harness the language immersion approach to bolster the acquisition of functional language skills among Arabic-as-a-second-language learners. To tackle this issue, the research endeavored to address the overarching question: **How can a language immersion-based program be devised to**

facilitate the acquisition of functional language skills among learners of Arabic as a second language?

Answering this query necessitates addressing the following sub-questions:

1- What are the functional language skills that learners of Arabic as a second language should acquire?

2- What are the components of a program based on language immersion in acquiring functional language skills among learners of Arabic as a second language?

3- What is the effectiveness of the program based on language immersion in acquiring functional language skills among learners of Arabic as a second language?

Research Objectives:

The current research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1- Identify the functional language skills that learners of Arabic as a second language should acquire.

2- Develop a program based on language immersion to equip learners of Arabic as a second language with functional language skills.

3- Determine the effectiveness of the program based on language immersion in acquiring functional language skills among learners of Arabic as a second language.

Significance of the Research :

The current research is significant in the following ways:

1- Enriching the educational heritage with theoretical frameworks related to the functional language skills required for learners of Arabic as a second language, as well as the language immersion approach in terms of its importance, objectives, and the procedural steps necessary for its implementation and practice inside and outside the classroom.

2- Utilizing the list of functional language skills arrived at when developing programs and curricula for learners of Arabic as a second language.

3 -Providing those working in the field of teaching Arabic to non-native speakers with a scientific measure to assess the level of functional language skills among learners of Arabic as a second language.

4 -Presenting a program based on language immersion to help learners of Arabic as a second language acquire functional language skills.

5 -Responding to the calls and recommendations of previous research, studies, and conferences that see the need to employ modern language approaches and methods in teaching Arabic as a second language, including language immersion.

5- The research may open the door for researchers to conduct other educational research and studies that focus on the language immersion approach and activate its role in achieving the objectives of teaching Arabic as a second language.

Research Hypotheses:

To achieve the objective of the current research, the researcher formulated the following two hypotheses:

1 -There is no statistically significant difference at the level (0.05) between the mean scores of the experimental group learners and the control group learners in the pre-application of the functional language skills scale.

2- There is a statistically significant difference at the level (0.05) between the mean scores of the experimental group learners and the control group learners in the post-application of the functional language skills scale.

Research Tools and Materials:

1 -A questionnaire to identify the functional language skills that should be acquired by learners of Arabic as a second language at the third level.

2 -A scale to measure the functional language skills of Arabic as a second language learners at the third level.

3- A language immersion-based program, which includes: (Learner's book, and Teacher's guide).

Research Boundaries:

The current research is limited to the following boundaries:

-**Human boundaries:** A group of learners of Arabic as a second language at the third level, divided into two groups; one experimental group taught using the language immersion-based program, and one control group taught using the standard curriculum in the usual way.

-**Spatial boundaries:** Al-Misbah School for Teaching Arabic and Islamic Studies in Riyadh.

-**Temporal boundaries:** The academic year (2025/2026).

- **Subject boundaries:** The language immersion-based program and the required preparation of research tools and materials, and the functional language skills required for learners of Arabic as a second language at the third level in light of expert opinions.

Operational Definitions:

- **Functional Language Skills:** Operationally defined as the ability of a learner of Arabic as a second language to use Arabic effectively in social contexts to achieve specific communicative goals, such as expressing needs and wants, requesting information, interacting with others, understanding instructions, and employing basic communication skills in a suitable and meaningful way, adapting to the environment and contributing to social interaction and communication with others. It is measured by the total score obtained on the Functional

-**Language Immersion:** Operationally defined as the educational procedures that involve immersing learners of Arabic as a second language in all language learning activities using Arabic, through communicative situations and tasks in an

integrated language environment that simulates or approaches the real environment, according to the procedures of the current research program.

- **Language Immersion-Based Program:** Operationally defined as a proposed systematic plan that includes objectives, educational content, teaching and learning methods, evaluation, activities, and applications, and is based on immersing learners of Arabic as a second language in real-life language situations and tasks.

- **Learners of Arabic as a Second Language:** Operationally defined as learners enrolled in Al-Misbah program for teaching Arabic and Islamic studies to international school students from non-Arabic speaking communities, with the goal of understanding the linguistic system, cultural and Islamic meanings of Arabic, acquiring, organizing, and storing it.

- **Effectiveness:** Operationally defined as the magnitude of the effect of the experimental treatment (independent variable: language immersion-based program) on the dependent variable (functional language skills) among learners of Arabic as a second language, measured using Black's modified gain ratio.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework:

In light of the current research objectives, the theoretical framework addresses two main axes: Functional Language Skills and Language Immersion, detailed as follows:

The first focus: acquiring functional language skills

Teaching Arabic as a second language starts from the premise that it comprises four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. These skills are further divided into receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing). The relationship between these skills is organic, as mastery of one skill is reflected in the others. Genuine learning of these skills yields results for learners of Arabic as a second language only when they are used in real communicative situations within practical contexts (academic, professional and everyday) that meet their communicative and social needs. This can be described as the functional approach to language, or functional language skills, which turns language from a theoretical subject into a life skill grounded in practical application and continual practice.

Functional language skills

Functional language skills are defined by Venesky as a series of interconnected language skills that students learn with the intention of using and applying them within and outside the learning environment. Patricia defines them as an individual's possession of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills at a level that enables them to interact with their community through these skills (Al-Zahrani et al., 2019). Qassab (2020) defines them as the linguistic abilities of a speaker to use language in different situations, viewing language as having a social

function. Ghwairiq and Abiza (2022) define them as the learner's ability to use language correctly in its natural functions in situations requiring listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Al-Badri (2024) defines them as the learner's ability to apply acquired language skills, vocabulary, and grammar in real-life situations to communicate and interact with others.

The foregoing definitions make it clear that functional language refers to the integration of language skills, their connection to real-life situations, and their use to achieve effective communication across a variety of social contexts.

The Importance of Functional Language Skills for Learners of Arabic as a Second Language:

Arabic may be described as a functional language in the sense that it comprises a wide range of skills and a rich vocabulary that enable its users to employ it accurately across diverse real-life contexts, closely tying it to practical and communicative domains of life.

For learners of Arabic as a second language, these functional dimensions can be summarized as follows:

The instrumental function: This helps the learner express his/her needs, desires, inner feelings, emotions, and attitudes, and present them experiences, circumstances, motives, and goals, as well as what they wish to obtain from their surrounding environment and the facts and perceptions he/she seeks to highlight (Alulaiyan, 2018).

The organizational function: This involves using language skills to make requests or commands, prohibit actions, and regulate others' behavior.

The interactive function: This refers to the learner's use of language skills for social interaction, exchanging language in various social situations and demonstrating interest, respect, and politeness toward others (Eva, 2025).

Personal function: This function helps the learner express their feelings, attitudes, and opinions about various topics and people, enabling them to present their ideas and affirm their identity and personal self.

The exploratory function: This function helps the learner explore and understand the social environment around them by asking questions about unfamiliar aspects to fill gaps in their knowledge (Almutawakkil, 2010).

The imaginative function: Helps the learner entertain themselves, compose poetry and prose, and escape into a self-created world mirroring their emotions, experiences, and feelings.

The informative function: Helps the learner convey and exchange news and various information with others.

The symbolic function: Certain Arabic words operate as symbols for entities in the external world, so language performs a symbolic role (Jing, 2025).

In light of these functions' breadth and diversity, the present study underscores developing functional language skills for Arabic as a second language learners. Such skills are effective tools for everyday communication and meeting needs, exchanging information clearly across contexts, achieving mutual understanding, transferring experiences, and expressing feelings, focusing on direct language use without unnecessary complexity and performing specific tasks.

Theories Explaining Functional Language Skills:

Numerous theories explain language acquisition and development, focusing on specific dimensions. Key theories include (Alkhouli, 2014; Qalati, 2022; Aktan-Erciyes, 2024; Qasim et al., 2025):

Behavioral Theory of Language: Language is a learned behavior from operant conditioning, imitation, and environmental reinforcement, not innate. Acquisition through stimulus-response (S-R) associations. Correct utterances reinforced, becoming a habit. Grounded in repetition and practice for communication.

Linguistic theory: Focuses on language study and skill development from a psychological standpoint, proposing an innate language acquisition device (LAD) for language acquisition.

Cognitive theory: Explains language as a direct outcome of cognitive development and mental capacities, not mere imitation or isolated innate faculty. Acquisition occurs through successive mental growth stages and interaction with the environment.

Environmental theory: Holds language is acquired from the environment and surroundings, shaped by social, cultural, and psychological factors.

These theories highlight that functional language skills are learned abilities that develop through systematic training and repeated practice in authentic communicative situations, enabling learners to use language appropriately across diverse contexts. Moreover, such skills provide a robust indicator of an individual's overall linguistic proficiency and are closely associated with broader cognitive development processes.

Foundations for Acquiring Functional Language Skills in Arabic as a Second Language:

The functional approach to language posits that acquiring functional language skills in Arabic as a second language rests on the following foundations and principles:

- Language learning is grounded in comprehension and understanding of meaning, supported by careful planning for the construction of meanings, perceptions, and concepts.
- Placing language in the context of everyday use, that is, in vital daily situations that firmly connect language to life.

- Focusing on training learners to produce expressions and communicative patterns that are appropriate to a range of real-life situations.
- Directing language learning toward linguistic facts whose meanings learners understand and whose relevance to their future they clearly perceive.
- Ensuring that linguistic material is simple, graded, and explicitly linked to learners' practical life experiences.
- Selecting linguistic content that has direct psychological and functional value in preparing the individual for effective participation in life.
- Emphasizing the practical application of linguistic concepts and engagement with social issues through meaningful communicative tasks.
- Focusing on quality: what matters is not the linguistic information per se, but how it is operationalized and applied in authentic situations.
- Implementing language education in light of the real-life functions of language, as a means of achieving communication between people and managing diverse aspects of life (Abdo, 2011; Shehata, 2016; Qassab, 2020).

In light of these principles, acquiring functional language skills depends primarily on adopting methods and approaches that present language to learners as a means of social communication, aiming to develop pragmatic, syntactic, and semantic competences while maintaining a strong focus on the context of actual use. These skills are learned gradually and in an integrated fashion, enabling learners to express themselves, influence others, and interact effectively in real-life situations. To a large extent, such outcomes can be fostered through well-designed language immersion programs that maximize authentic contact with the target language and promote meaningful communicative practice.

The second focus: Language immersion

For learners of Arabic as a second language to master the language, acquire its linguistic skills, and use it functionally in diverse real-life situations, they need to immerse themselves in the language. Such immersion facilitates the shift from theoretical instruction to the practical, spontaneous use of Arabic in authentic communicative contexts. Consequently, many linguists emphasize the importance of adopting language immersion programs as an effective educational approach that closely simulates natural language acquisition and supports sustained, meaningful exposure to the target language.

The meaning of language immersion

Linguistically, the triliteral root (gh-m-s) revolves around the notions of immersion and covering; it is said “the star immersed itself” to mean that it disappeared, “the stab penetrated” to indicate that it pierced deeply, and “he immersed the thing in water” to mean that he submerged it completely (Arabic Language Academy, 2011). In Ibn Manzur's *Lisan al-Arab* (2016), immersion is defined as the submergence of something in a liquid, such as water or dye, until it is entirely covered.

Technically, Muqabala and Ismail (2016) define language immersion as the complete or partial separation of the target language from the learner's native

language, combined with sustained practice through standard texts or by placing the learner in an environment where the target language is naturally used. Abdul Qadir and Muhammad (2021) describe it as a teaching method designed to develop second language learners' skills by relying exclusively on the target language, without recourse to any mediating language. Ibrikat (2023) further defines immersion as a process for enhancing and developing linguistic competence in a given language or at a specific level of that language.

From these definitions, it is clear that language immersion rests on two core elements: sustained, preferential focus on the target language itself and continuous, intensive linguistic practice until the characteristic patterns of the language become deeply ingrained in the learner's production.

The Importance and Objectives of Language Immersion

Drawing on a range of writings, research papers, and studies on language immersion, its importance and key objectives in second language teaching can be summarized as follows (Cummins, 2010; Ismail, 2022; Omar & Amara, 2024; Franco, 2025).

- Immersion enables second language learners to listen to the language in its natural environment and to comprehend it across diverse communicative contexts.
- It helps learners connect what they hear and learn to their own real-life situations, thereby strengthening their confidence in using the language.
- Immersion provides learners with ongoing feedback when they make errors or use language inappropriately, allowing them to adjust their usage in context.
- It accelerates second language teaching and learning, achieving higher proficiency in a comparatively shorter time and with greater efficiency than traditional approaches.
- Immersion equips learners with accurate vocabulary and grammatical structures through continuous exposure, repetition, and meaningful practice.
- It enriches learners' various language skills and increases their motivation to persist in learning the second language.
- Immersion helps learners understand and acquire the culture associated with the target language and society, fostering deeper intercultural awareness.
- It supports learners in grasping the cultural background, history, and social customs of the target language community.
- Immersion familiarizes learners with idiomatic expressions and culturally embedded ways of speaking in the target language.
- It places learners in realistic communicative situations, enabling them to use the language appropriately and accurately in its proper contexts.

Given the importance of language immersion and the breadth of its objectives, this educational approach can surround second language learners with the target language in authentic life situations, thereby accelerating their acquisition of language skills, enhancing their fluency, deepening their

understanding of cultural and social contexts, and facilitating the shift from theoretical language study to practical, real-world use.

Types and Strategies of Language Immersion

Researchers have categorized language immersion according to several key criteria aimed at assessing the efficiency of second language acquisition in comparison with the mother tongue. Among the most important of these categories is the following: environmental immersion.

1. Environmental immersion

This type is divided into two main forms (Al-Shawai, 2017):

- **Natural:** In this form of immersion, learners interact directly with members of the target language community, acquiring the language and its culture spontaneously and naturally on a daily basis, such as by living with an Arabic-speaking family.

- **Artificial or virtual:** This form of immersion is created through structured strategies designed by the educational institution to immerse students in a language-rich environment, whether inside or outside the classroom, for example through simulated communicative tasks, language camps, or technology-supported environments.

2. Age-based immersion

This type is divided into several forms (Yahya, 2016):

- **Early:** This begins in kindergarten, where the mother tongue is not taught until around the age of three, after which it is introduced as the first language twice a week for about half an hour each time.

- **Partial early:** This involves the use of both the first and second languages as mediums of instruction from the beginning of schooling.

- **Late:** This occurs at the secondary school stage, where linguistic knowledge and skills become more specialized and cognitively demanding.

3. Immersion according to teacher performance

This type is divided into two forms (Abd-ALRahim et al., 2019):

- **Effective:** The teacher uses the target language from the outset, speaking at a pace appropriate to learners' proficiency level and employing strategies that maximize comprehension, such as simplification, repetition, and visual support.

- **Ineffective:** The teacher relies on their usual communicative pace and style without accommodating learners' linguistic level, backgrounds, or cultures, which leads to reduced motivation, enthusiasm, and attention among students.

4. Immersion based on time frame

This type is divided into several models (Mann'a, 2017):

- **Total:** Communication is conducted in the target language across all subjects and throughout the entire school day.

- **Partial:** At least 50% of the curriculum is delivered in the target language, with the remaining portion taught in another language.

- **Bilingual:** Instruction takes place in two or more languages for two groups, with each group using a different language of instruction, while the content and program remain the same for both.

The present research draws on these classifications of immersion programs, relying heavily on the classroom environment and adopting effective immersion for intermediate-level learners, while introducing them to Arabic through content, teaching methods, exercises, and activities tailored to their needs.

Foundations and Standards of Language Immersion

The foundations and standards of language immersion can be outlined as follows:

- **Listening:** Learners develop familiarity with vocabulary, phonological patterns, their meanings, and appropriate communicative contexts.

- **Repetition and recall:** Words and structures are consolidated in learners' memories through repeated use across different situations until they become entrenched and can be transferred to new contexts (Sughaier & Waheeb, 2018).

- **Practice and application:** Implementing mechanisms that guarantee the continuity of language practice and its frequent, purposeful repetition.

- **Comprehensiveness of skills:** Providing comprehensive and integrated coverage of language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—within immersion experiences.

- **Authentic and natural communication:** Using the language in real, interactive communicative situations rather than limiting learning to memorization and mechanical repetition, so as to solidify linguistic competence.

- **Integrating culture and language:** Presenting the language within its cultural context to enhance accurate understanding of expressions, norms, and sociocultural meanings (Manna, 2017).

In light of these principles, language immersion programs should be grounded in using the target language as the primary medium of communication and instruction within a linguistically rich environment, allowing it to be acquired naturally through practice and context rather than through traditional, decontextualized study, with particular emphasis on listening, repetition, and genuine interaction.

Requirements for Implementing Language Immersion Programs

For language immersion programs to achieve their intended goals, several requirements need to be met:

- Excluding or minimizing the use of the mother tongue and relying predominantly on the target language as the medium of communication and instruction.

- Teaching course content through the target language so that it functions as both a means of communication and a vehicle for learning subject matter (Cummins, 2010).

- Ensuring the presence of qualified teachers who possess high proficiency in the target language and can create an authentic, linguistically rich environment.
- Organizing varied interactive activities—including listening, oral interaction, and structured repetition—that reinforce language learning and promote active engagement.
- Designing the program to develop the four language skills in an integrated and functional manner (Abdul Rahim et al., 2019).
- Preparing learners both culturally and linguistically prior to the program, introducing them to everyday expressions, structures, and communicative norms of the target language community.
- Implementing the program in a systematic and comprehensive way, accompanied by periodic assessment to monitor the development of learners' language skills.
- Providing adequate learning resources and materials in the target language to facilitate skill acquisition and support curriculum implementation (Ibrikat, 2023).

The present research acknowledges the importance of these requirements and the need to incorporate them into the design of the program for learners of Arabic as a second language, with particular emphasis on interactive language activities, intensive functional use of Arabic, the creation of a rich language environment, and the use of appropriate instructional tools and materials.

The preceding section presented the theoretical framework of the research, which is organized around two main axes: the first addresses the functional language skills required by learners of Arabic as a second language, and the second examines language immersion and its role in developing these skills. In preparing this framework, the researcher consulted a wide range of Arabic and foreign writings, research studies, and scholarly works related to the topic, which were then used in constructing the research instruments and materials and, subsequently, in the analysis and interpretation of the results.

1. Research Methodology and Procedures

The research adopted a quasi-experimental design with an experimental and a control group. This design was used to select learners, administer pre- and post-tests, and implement a language immersion program for the experimental group.

2. Experimental Design

The researcher employed a quasi-experimental design with two equivalent groups:

- **Experimental group:** learners using the language immersion program.
- **Control group:** learners using the traditional program.

The following figure illustrates this design.

Group	Pre-test	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Post-test
Experimental	Functional Language Skills Test	Language Immersion Program	Functional language skills	Functional Language Skills Test
Control		Traditional Program		

Figure (1) Experimental design of the research

3. Research Population

The research population must be clearly defined, as selecting a sample is challenging without a precise population. The population consists of Arabic learners at Al-Misbah School for Arabic Language and Islamic Studies, Riyadh.

4. Research Sample

A representative sample was divided into two groups: experimental and control, each with 35 learners at the third level.

Looks good! Here's a minor tweak for clarity:

5. Research Materials and Tools

A. Questionnaire for Identifying Functional Language Skills

This questionnaire identified functional language skills for Arabic learners. Procedures included:

- Consulting relevant literature on functional language
- Drawing on educational research and studies
- Basing items on the theoretical framework and objectives of teaching Arabic
- Administering an open-ended questionnaire to specialists
- Compiling responses and eliminating duplicates or unsuitable skills
- Preparing a list of 37 skills under 3 dimensions:
 1. Social communication
 2. Self-expression and personal needs
 3. Use of language in routine situations
- Submitting to expert reviewers
- Retaining skills with $\geq 80\%$ agreement

The table below shows the final skills and weights.

Table (1) Functional Language Skills and Their Relative Weights

No.	Main dimensions	Sub-skills	Percentage
1	Social communication	13	39.40
2	Self-expression and personal needs	11	33.33
3	Using language in routine situations	9	27.27
Total		33	100%

In light of the foregoing, the first research question has thus been addressed, namely: What functional language skills should learners of Arabic as a second language acquire?

B. Functional Language Skills Assessment:

Assessment Objective: To evaluate the learner's use of functional language skills in diverse situations.

Includes the assessment of language behaviors in:

- Social situations.
- Personal situations.
- Non-routine situations.

Steps for Preparing the Scale:

1. Reviewing the literature on functional language skills.
2. Reviewing the compiled list of functional language skills.
3. Examining existing tests and measurement scales related to functional language skills.
4. Defining the sub-dimensions of functional language skills.
5. Formulating simple and clear statements for each dimension, resulting in a total of 33 items.
6. Developing the instructions and specifying the response format.
7. Determining the scoring system: each item is rated on a three-point scale (Rarely = 1, Sometimes = 2, Always = 3), yielding a minimum total score of 33 and a maximum of 99.
8. Setting the time required for completing the scale at 45 minutes.
9. Submitting the scale to experts in Arabic language teaching and in educational measurement for validation of its content and clarity.

Scale validity:

- **Expert validity:** reviewed by specialists in Arabic language teaching and educational measurement.

- **Internal consistency:** Pearson correlation coefficients between dimensions and total score.

- **Pilot administration:** tested with 10 learners for clarity and procedures.

The following table shows those results:

Table (2) Correlation coefficients between scale dimensions and total score

No.	Dimensions	Correlation Coefficients
1	Social communication	0.92 **
2	Self-expression and personal needs	0.89 **
3	Using language in routine situations	0.90 **

The results in the previous table show that all correlation coefficients between the dimensions and the total score ranged from 0.89 to 0.92, and all of them are statistically significant at the 0.05 level. These high and statistically significant correlations indicate that the scale possesses satisfactory construct validity.

The reliability of the functional language skills scale was estimated using Cronbach's alpha based on the pilot sample, and the resulting coefficients are presented in Table below.

Table (3) Reliability coefficients for the Functional Language Skills Scale using Cronbach's Alpha equation

No.	Scale dimensions	Reliability coefficients
1	Social communication	0.82
2	Self-expression and personal needs	0.79
3	Using language in routine situations	0.84
Scale as a whole		0.81

It is evident from the preceding table that the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the subscales ranged from 0.79 to 0.84, all of which are statistically significant at the 0.05-0.01 levels. The alpha coefficient for the overall scale was 0.81, which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that the scale has satisfactory reliability and is suitable for application.

Final form of the scale: After making the necessary revisions to the scale items in light of the experts' feedback and the findings of the pilot study, and after verifying its validity and reliability, the scale in its final form became ready for actual administration to the experimental and control groups of the study.

C. A language-immersion-based program

Program objective:

The overarching objective of the program was to develop functional language skills among learners of Arabic as a second language. The specific objectives for each session of the program were embedded in the content of the learner's book.

Program development sources: The program was developed based on the following sources:

The philosophy and principles of both functional language and the language immersion approach in language teaching; previous literature, including books, research, and studies that addressed functional language skills and language immersion; the characteristics and linguistic and developmental needs of level-three learners of Arabic as a second language; and the views of experienced specialists in language education.

Program Content and Organization: In light of the program's objectives, the learning materials were prepared in the form of worksheets tailored to the nature of language immersion practices and the variables targeted in the current research. These worksheets included a range of activities and practices such as dialogue and discussion, questioning, presentations, modeling and simulation, field trips, language games, role-playing, and analysis of spoken and written Arabic language models.

Teaching and Learning Strategies:

The proposed program is based on a variety of instructional strategies, including:

- Discussion and dialogue.
- Oral practical presentations.
- Cooperative work groups.
- Modeling and simulation.
- Field visits.
- Language games.
- Role-playing.

Learning Techniques and Tools:

The program employs both traditional and digital/technological tools, such as:

- Boards of various types.
- Presentation software.
- Audio recordings in Arabic.
- Educational language videos.

- Smart applications.
- E-learning websites.

Program Evaluation Methods:

The program is evaluated through:

- Initial assessment activities.
- Formative assessment activities.
- Summative assessment (the functional language skills scale).

Teacher's Guide:

A guiding manual has been prepared for implementing the program, and it includes:

- An introduction.
- The objectives of the guide.
- An explanation of concepts related to language immersion.
- The targeted functional language skills.
- The proposed instructional strategies and tools.
- The learner's role.
- The timeline for implementing the program.
- The steps and procedures for implementing the program.

Program Validation:

The proposed language immersion program, along with its teacher's guide, was presented to a panel of expert reviewers specializing in Arabic language teaching methodologies. The aim was to gather their feedback on:

- Clarity of the program's general and specific objectives.
- Suitability of the proposed timeline for program implementation.
- Appropriateness of the academic content and worksheets for learners.
- Suitability of the immersion activities.
- Suitability of the teaching and learning methods and tools.
- Suitability of the assessment methods.
- Suitability of the program's implementation guide.

Based on the reviewers' feedback, the program was finalized and deemed ready for implementation. This addressed the second research question: **What are the components of a language immersion program for acquiring functional language skills among learners of Arabic as a second language?**

6. Research Variables:

- **Independent variable:** The language immersion program.
- **Dependent variable:** Functional language skills.

7. Research Procedures and Experiment:

To determine the effectiveness of the language immersion program in acquiring functional language skills among learners of Arabic as a second language, the following was done:

- A pre-test of functional language skills was administered to learners in both research groups to ensure comparable levels and equivalence in functional language skills before the experiment.

Table (4) Results of the pre-application of the functional language skills scale for the experimental and control groups

Functional Language Skills Assessment	Control group (N=45)		Experimental group (N=45)		T-value	Significance level
	M1	SD1	M2	SD2		
	24.20	4.62	22.91	2.27		

The table showed no statistically significant differences between learners in the experimental and control groups on the Functional Language Skills Scale; the t-value (1.49) was not statistically significant, indicating equivalence of the groups before the experiment. The first hypothesis was accepted: **No statistically significant difference at 0.05 level between the mean scores of the two groups on the pre-test.**

Teaching the Two Research Groups:

An agreement was reached with the teacher of the experimental group to implement the proposed program after clarifying the objective of the experiment and the importance of functional language skills. The teacher was provided with the learner's guide, the learner's book, and the Functional Language Skills Assessment, while the control group studied the regular school program in the usual manner.

Post-test Administration of the Functional Language Skills Assessment:

After completion of the program, the assessment was administered to both groups. The data were then collected, statistically analyzed, and the results were recorded.

8- Statistical Methods Used:

SPSS software was used to analyze the data, employing:

- Frequencies and percentages.

- Arithmetic mean and standard deviation.
- Pearson correlation coefficient.
- Cronbach's alpha test.
- Independent samples t-test.

RESEARCH FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, AND INTERPRETATION

This section presents the findings derived from statistical analysis to answer research questions and discusses them in light of theory and previous research.

To answer the third question: Effectiveness of the language immersion program in acquiring functional language skills among learners of Arabic as a second language?

Hypothesis 2: Statistically significant difference (0.05 level) between experimental and control groups' post-test scores, favoring the experimental group.

Independent samples t-test calculated means, standard deviations, and t-value. Data processed using SPSS. The results are shown in the following table:

Table (5): Means, Standard Deviations, T-value, and Statistical Significance of Learners' Scores in the Experimental and Control Groups in the Post-

Application of the Functional Language Skills Scale as a Whole

Group	Number of Learners	Mean	SD	T-value	Significance level
Control	35	30.25	8.79	28.65	0.05
Experimental	35	81.34	6.08		

The table shows:

- Experimental group mean: 34.81 (SD 6.08)
- Control group mean: 25.30 (SD 8.79)
- t-value: 28.65 (significant at 0.05 level)

Result: Statistically significant difference favoring the experimental group. Hypothesis accepted: Significant difference (0.05 level) between groups' post-test scores, favoring experimental group.

As for the results of each dimension of the functional language skills scale, they can be explained as follows:

Table (6): Means, Standard Deviations, T-value, and Statistical Significance of Learners' Scores in the Experimental and Control Groups in the Post-Application of the Functional Language Skills Scale by Dimension

Scale Dimensions	Group	Number of Learners	Mean	SD	T-value	Significance level
Social communication Self-expression and personal needs	Control	35	11.45	2.76	25.81	0.05
	Experimental	35	30.88	2.53		
Using language in routine situations Social communication	Control	35	9.94	1.62	28.42	0.05
	Experimental	35	28.26	3.98		
Self-expression and personal needs	Control	35	9.02	1.13	23.47	0.05
	Experimental	35	23.22	3.63		

The table shows statistically significant differences favoring the experimental group in each dimension of functional language skills (0.05 level). This indicates improved performance by the experimental group, suggesting the language immersion program positively impacts developing these skills.

The adjusted gain ratio was calculated using Blake's equation. A ratio >1 indicates the program is effective in developing skills. Results are in the following table:

Table (7): Significance of the adjusted gain ratio of the language immersion-based program in acquiring functional language skills among learners of Arabic as a second language

Experimental Group	Max Score	Pre-test Mean (X)	Post-test Mean (Y)	Adjusted Gain Ratio	Significance
	99	22.91	81.34	1.31	Effective since it's greater than 1

Based on the adjusted gain ratio calculation, the table shows the ratio is greater than 1, indicating the language immersion program is highly efficient and effective in developing functional language skills among Arabic language learners (experimental group).

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

- Pre-test: No statistically significant differences between groups (t-value = 1.49, not significant), indicating equivalence in functional language skills.

- Post-test: Statistically significant differences favoring the experimental group (t-value = 28.65, significant), showing the positive impact of the language immersion program.

- The program proved effective in developing functional language skills (adjusted gain ratio $1.31 > 1$).

The researcher attributes these results to:

- The program focused on direct teaching strategies like oral presentations, modeling, and workgroups.

- Language immersion programs enhanced learner engagement and practice in real-life situations.

- Immersion programs reflected the target language culture, impacting learners' linguistic behavior.

- Life topics encouraged dialogue and effective communication.

- Exercises in standard Arabic improved language use.

- Activities focused on spoken and written expression.

- The program was built on suitable educational foundations.

The results align with previous studies on language immersion effectiveness.

Research Recommendations:

In light of the findings of this research, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Focus on utilizing language immersion programs to enhance the acquisition of functional language skills among learners of Arabic as a second language.

- Carefully select language immersion programs, prioritizing those most effective in developing functional language skills.

- Organize targeted training courses for teachers to effectively integrate language immersion programs into Arabic language instruction.

- Develop language curricula based on language immersion programs and allocate necessary resources for implementation.

- Leverage the research materials and tools, proven effective in enhancing functional language skills, in educational institutions.

- Train learners to practice Arabic orally with native speakers, promoting correct pronunciation and usage.

- Incorporate procedural objectives for functional language skills into Arabic language curricula.

- Emphasize linguistic simulation, providing accurate language models for learners.
- Harness technological and digital applications to provide specialized language resources and environments.

Research Proposals:

As a continuation of the current research, the researcher proposes the following future studies:

- Investigating the effectiveness of language immersion in acquiring functional vocabulary among Arabic language learners.
- Developing a framework for Arabic language teachers to integrate language immersion programs, aligning with the functional language approach.
- Examining the impact of immersive language learning on verbal and conceptual fluency among Arabic language learners.
- Designing a language immersion program to develop functional grammar skills among Arabic language learners.
- Exploring the effects of interactive simulation strategies on acquiring functional speaking skills among Arabic language learners.
- Assessing the effectiveness of language partners in acquiring linguistic and cultural concepts among Arabic language learners.
- Investigating the combined effectiveness of language immersion and constructivist learning theories in enhancing functional language performance among Arabic language learners.

CONCLUSION

The findings suggest that language immersion is a valuable approach, yielding positive results in language education. Its applications have shown promise in developing functional language skills and fostering communication among learners in authentic social contexts. The effectiveness of language immersion programs is evident in the growth and development of second language learners, making it a worthwhile method for language education.

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