

The Representation of Communicative Competence in the Arabic Language Learning Outcomes of Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the representation of communicative competence in the Arabic Language Learning Outcomes (LO) of the Merdeka Curriculum. The research seeks to ensure a balance between linguistic accuracy and contextual communication skills in the national curriculum. Using a qualitative approach with a directed content analysis, the study adopts the frameworks of Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983), which encompass grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences. The corpus comprises the official Arabic Language Law issued through the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education No. 3302 of 2024. The analysis employed Mayring's (2000) six-step deductive category application, covering the definition of focus, formulation of analytical aspects, category development and revision, full coding with reliability checks, and interpretation of meaning patterns. The findings show that the LO presents a progressive yet uneven development of communicative competence. Grammatical and discourse competences are explicitly structured and systematically developed across all learning phases (A-F), while sociolinguistic and strategic competences remain implicit and underrepresented. In conclusion, the LO still prioritises linguistic accuracy and textual cohesion over adaptive and pragmatic skills required for authentic communication. The study emphasizes the importance of explicitly integrating sociolinguistic and strategic dimensions into curriculum design and teaching practices to enhance learners' ability to communicate effectively, contextually, and meaningfully.

Keywords

Arabic Language; Communicative Competence; Curriculum Analysis; Learning Outcomes; Merdeka Curriculum.



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INTRODUCTION

The paradigm of language learning has shifted from a structural focus on linguistic competence to a communicative approach. This transformation is characterised by the emergence of the concept of communicative competence, introduced by Dell Hymes as a critique of Noam Chomsky's theory, which prioritised linguistic competence while overlooking the social and contextual dimensions of language performance (Moore, 2020). According to Hymes (1972), the validity of an utterance is not solely determined by its grammatical correctness (possible), but also by its psychological and physiological feasibility (feasible), its appropriateness to social and cultural norms (appropriate), and its realisation in authentic communicative practice (done).

Hymes's concept was later expanded by Canale & Swain (1980), who formulated a conceptual framework of communicative competence consisting of three core components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence—which encompasses two sets of rules, namely sociocultural rules of use and rules of discourse—and strategic competence. Subsequently, Canale (1983) refined this framework into four components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. This model has become the foundation of modern language education, as it views language not merely as a system of signs but as a complex medium of interaction and social expression.

In the context of education in Indonesia, the communicative paradigm is reflected in curriculum reform through the introduction of the Merdeka Curriculum in 2022 (Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi [Kemendikbudristek], 2022). This curriculum promotes student-centred learning, emphasises flexibility, and focuses on the development of competencies and the character of Pancasila Students (Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan [BSKAP], 2024). Its implementation in the madrasah is regulated by Keputusan Menteri Agama Republik Indonesia Nomor 450 Tahun 2024 (Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia No. 450 of 2024) and Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Islam (Dirjen Pendis) Nomor 3302 Tahun 2024 (Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education No. 3302 of 2024), which specifically outline the Arabic Language Learning Outcomes (LO). These documents serve as the primary reference for determining the direction, content, and objectives of Arabic-language instruction across all madrasahs.

In the context of teaching Arabic as a foreign language, the learning paradigm has shifted toward a communicative approach. Arabic is now positioned not only as a means to deepen

religious understanding but also as a tool for global communication. Accordingly, Arabic language instruction is oriented toward developing communicative and intercultural competence, rather than solely linguistic proficiency (Dirjen Pendis, 2024).

Nevertheless, a more in-depth investigation is required to examine the extent to which the LO within the curriculum comprehensively encompasses aspects of communicative competence. It is crucial because the LO serves as a primary reference for curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation, and represents the competencies students are expected to achieve (BSKAP, 2025a). Furthermore, empirical evidence indicates a significant relationship between LO and students' perceptions of achievement, motivation, satisfaction, and engagement in the learning process (Kumpas-Lenk et al., 2018). Therefore, strengthening the communicative dimension within the LO has become increasingly important and should be examined systematically.

Over the past five years, studies on communicative competence in Arabic language learning have shown a significant developmental trend, both in its impact on learning outcomes and in the instructional models designed to enhance it. Research by Yani et al. (2025b) demonstrated that implementing a communicative competence-based approach effectively increased students' motivation and engagement. This finding underscores the positive influence of communicative competence on the dynamics and outcomes of Arabic language learning.

On the other hand, Hussein (2024) reported that a learning model grounded in pragmatic principles proved effective in enhancing the four dimensions of communicative competence—namely, grammatical, social, discourse, and strategic competence—meanwhile, Yani et al. (2025a) emphasised the importance of creating an active, interactive, and low-anxiety learning environment as a supportive component of communicative learning models aimed at strengthening the competence of non-native Arabic learners. These findings indicate the need for systematically designed instructional frameworks that support the development and attainment of communicative competence.

Although previous studies have analysed communicative competence in Arabic language learning, these investigations have primarily focused on the effects of implementing communicative competence and the instructional models developed to enhance it. However, they have not yet examined the extent to which communicative competence is integrated into the curriculum, particularly within the formulation of the Arabic Language LO in the Merdeka Curriculum as a representation of the national curriculum.

Research on LO has also attracted considerable attention from scholars across various educational contexts. Jokić et al. (2024) examined the alignment between the LO of the Technique and Technology (TT) subject in Serbia and the Eight Key Competences for Lifelong Learning recommended by the Council of the European Union (2018), focusing particularly on Science, Technology, and Engineering (STE), Digital Competence (DC), and Entrepreneurship Competence (EC). Similarly, Kasap et al. (2024) evaluated the Learning Outcomes of high school Biology courses in Turkey by assessing their alignment with 21st-century skill requirements. Meanwhile, Ogün Çakır (2025) conducted a comparable analysis of the 2024 Curriculum Learning Outcomes for the subject Life Studies (Hayat Bilgisi), highlighting their integration with 21st-century competences.

In the Indonesian context, Raihani et al. (2025) investigated the implementation of multicultural education within the Merdeka Curriculum, emphasising how the curriculum seeks to balance cultural diversity with the formation of national identity, and evaluating the extent to which multicultural values are reflected in the LO, the Pancasila Student Profile, and classroom teaching practices. Although these studies have made significant contributions to understanding the structure and relevance of LO across various fields of study, no research has specifically examined the position and integration of communicative competence within the Arabic Language LO of the Merdeka Curriculum. Such an analysis is essential to ensure that the Arabic Language LO genuinely represents communicative learning objectives, rather than merely emphasising linguistic proficiency.

This research gap indicates that the analysis of the integration of communicative competence within curriculum frameworks remains underexplored, despite its crucial role in ensuring that the objectives of Arabic language education align with the communicative orientation that underpins modern language learning paradigms. Therefore, this study aims to examine the extent to which the Arabic Language LO in the Merdeka Curriculum accommodates the dimensions of communicative competence, encompassing grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies. The findings of this study are expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the alignment between curriculum policy and the needs of communication-oriented Arabic language learning, while also serving as a foundation for developing more communicative and contextually relevant instructional designs in the future.

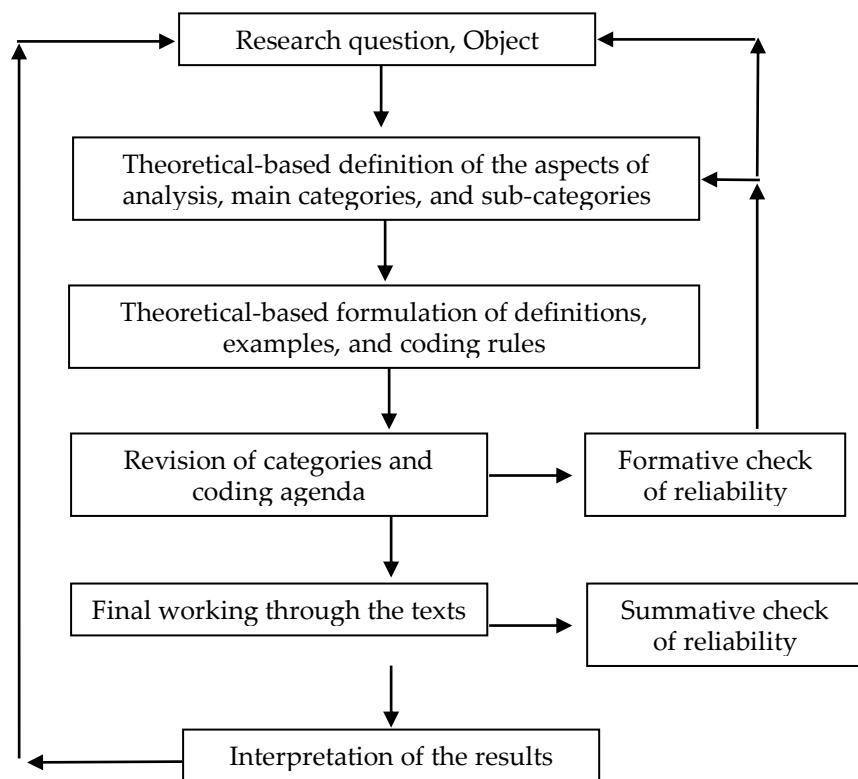
METHOD

This study employed a qualitative content analysis method using a directed content analysis approach, which begins with an established theoretical framework and aims to identify the extent to which theoretical categories are manifested within the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This approach was selected to examine the representation of the four components of communicative competence within the Arabic Language LO of the Merdeka Curriculum. The primary data consisted of the official Arabic Language LO document published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (Dirjen Pendis, 2024). The secondary data included the subject guidelines issued by BSKAP (2025a) and curriculum policy documents from both the Kemendikbudristek (2022) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama [Kemenag]) (2024). The research procedure followed Mayring, (2000), model of deductive category application, which involves six systematic stages: 1) defining the focus of analysis; 2) specifying analytical aspects based on the theories of Canale & Swain (1980) and Canale (1983); 3) constructing operational definitions and coding rules within a coding agenda; 4) revising categories through a formative check of reliability; 5) conducting complete coding along with a summative reliability check; and 6) interpreting the findings to identify patterns of meaning and the theoretical representations within the LO. These steps are visualised in Figure 1, which illustrates the logical flow of the research process. The results are presented in tabular form and narrative descriptions, providing an overview of the patterns of dominance and interrelations among competence components within each phase of the LO, thereby offering a comprehensive picture of the integration of communicative competence in the Merdeka Curriculum.

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in the communicative competence model proposed by Canale & Swain (1980) and Canale (1983), which categorises language ability into four core components: 1) grammatical competence, which pertains to mastery of the linguistic system, including vocabulary, morphology, syntax, phonology, orthography, and semantic meaning; 2) sociolinguistic competence, which emphasises the ability to use language appropriately within social and cultural contexts, encompassing both appropriateness of meaning and appropriateness of form; 3) discourse competence, which involves the ability to organise forms and meanings to produce cohesive and coherent texts in both spoken and written communication; and 4) strategic competence, which refers to the ability to employ a range of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to overcome linguistic barriers and enhance communicative effectiveness.

These four components served as the primary analytical categories for examining the extent to which the principles of communicative competence are represented—either explicitly or implicitly—in the Arabic Language LO of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Figure 1. Step-by-Step Model of Deductive Category Application (Mayring, 2000)



FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The primary data in this study consist of the Arabic Language Learning Outcomes (LO) document of the Merdeka Curriculum, as stipulated in the Surat Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Nomor 3302 Tahun 2024 (Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education No. 3302 of 2024). This document encompasses six developmental phases (A–F) that represent the progressive stages of Arabic language competence among learners, from the imitative to the extensive level. Each phase contains three specific LOs corresponding to the main linguistic elements: listening–speaking, reading–viewing, and writing–presenting. In addition, the researcher referred to the Learning Outcomes Roadmap as a supporting reference for the analysis. The detailed list of the LOs is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Learning Outcomes of the Arabic Language Subject in the Merdeka Curriculum

Phase	Element: Listening – Speaking	Element: Reading – Viewing	Element: Writing – Presenting
A (Class 1-2)	Understanding the components of the Arabic language—such as phonemes, words, intonation, and discourse markers—related to the topics of self-introduction, my family, my house, my school, my hobbies, names of fruits, colours, means of transportation, and natural scenery, using the sentence patterns: <i>man hāzā?</i> , <i>man hāzīhi?</i> , <i>mā hāzā?</i> , <i>mā hāzīhi?</i> , <i>hāzā</i> , and <i>hāzīhi</i> .	Understanding words and punctuation marks in written or visual texts related to the topics of self-introduction, my family, my house, my school, my hobbies, names of fruits, colours, means of transportation, and natural scenery, by using the sentence patterns: <i>man hāzā?</i> , <i>man hāzīhi?</i> , <i>mā hāzā?</i> , <i>mā hāzīhi?</i> , <i>hāzā</i> , and <i>hāzīhi</i> .	Understanding letters, words, punctuation marks, and straightforward sentences accurately on the topics of self-introduction, my family, my house, my school, my hobbies, names of fruits, colours, means of transportation, and natural scenery, by using the sentence patterns: <i>man hāzā?</i> , <i>man hāzīhi?</i> , <i>mā hāzā?</i> , <i>mā hāzīhi?</i> , <i>hāzā</i> , and <i>hāzīhi</i> .
B (Class 3-4)	Understanding vocabulary, commands, greetings, and questions related to lesson materials, names of animals, illnesses, sports, my friends, the garden, addresses, professions, my aspirations, family members, home life, and love for Indonesia, using the sentence patterns of <i>al-damīr al-munfaṣil</i> (independent pronoun), <i>al-damīr al-muttaṣil</i> (attached pronoun), <i>al-ism al-mufrad</i> (singular noun), and <i>ism al-‘alam</i> (proper noun).	Reading and understanding explicit information in very simple discourses, either in written or visual texts, on topics such as lesson materials, names of animals, illnesses, sports, my friends, the garden, addresses, professions, my aspirations, family members, home life, and love for Indonesia, by using the sentence patterns of <i>al-damīr al-munfaṣil</i> (independent pronoun), <i>al-damīr al-muttaṣil</i> (attached pronoun), <i>al-ism al-mufrad</i> (singular noun), and <i>ism al-‘alam</i> (proper noun).	Presenting vocabulary in written and oral forms appropriately within the context of topics such as lesson materials, names of animals, illnesses, sports, my friends, the garden, addresses, professions, my aspirations, family members, home life, and love for Indonesia, by using the sentence patterns of <i>al-damīr al-munfaṣil</i> (independent pronoun), <i>al-damīr al-muttaṣil</i> (attached pronoun), <i>al-ism al-mufrad</i> (singular noun), and <i>ism al-‘alam</i> (proper noun).
C (Class 5-6)	Understanding simple information and responses related to the themes of body parts, the zoo, the living room and the study room, the library, the canteen, time, “I like Arabic,” and “I like holiday and picnic activities,” by using the sentence patterns of <i>al-isyārah li al-mufrad + al-ism + al-na’t</i> (demonstrative for singular + noun + adjective), <i>al-mubtada’ wa al-khabar</i> (subject and predicate), <i>al-khabar al-</i>	Recognising and understanding explicit information in short discourses presented in written or visual texts about body parts, the zoo, the living room and the study room, the library, the canteen, time, “I like Arabic,” and “I like holiday and picnic activities,” by using the sentence patterns of <i>al-isyārah li al-mufrad + al-ism + al-na’t</i> (demonstrative for singular + noun + adjective), <i>al-mubtada’</i>	Presenting vocabulary in written and oral forms accurately according to grammatical rules and contextual relevance on the themes of body parts, the zoo, the living room and the study room, the library, the canteen, time, “I like Arabic,” and “I like holiday and picnic activities,” by using the sentence patterns of <i>al-isyārah li al-mufrad + al-ism + al-na’t</i> (demonstrative for singular + noun + adjective), <i>al-mubtada’</i>

	<p><i>muqaddam wa al-mubtada' al-mu'akhkhar</i> (fronted predicate and postponed subject), <i>al-fi'l al-mudāri'</i> (present tense verb), and <i>al-fi'l al-mādī</i> (past tense verb).</p>	<p><i>wa al-khabar</i> (subject and predicate), <i>al-khabar al-muqaddam wa al-mubtada' al-mu'akhkhar</i> (fronted predicate and postponed subject), <i>al-fi'l al-mudāri'</i> (present tense verb), and <i>al-fi'l al-mādī</i> (past tense verb).</p>	<p><i>wa al-khabar</i> (subject and predicate), <i>al-khabar al-muqaddam wa al-mubtada' al-mu'akhkhar</i> (fronted predicate and postponed subject), <i>al-fi'l al-mudāri'</i> (present tense verb), and <i>al-fi'l al-mādī</i> (past tense verb).</p>
D (Class 7-9)	<p>Understanding both implicit and explicit information, as well as interactions, related to the themes of school (<i>madrasah</i>), home, hobbies, occupations, health, Islamic holidays, tourism, nature, and the environment, through the use of grammatical structures such as <i>al-jumlah al-ismiyyah</i> (nominal sentence), <i>al-'adad</i> (number), <i>al-taṣrif al-lughawī</i> (morphological inflection), <i>fi'l al-amr</i> (imperative verb), <i>al-jumlah al-fi'liyyah</i> (verbal sentence), ('an - <i>lan</i> - <i>lā al-nāhiyah</i> / <i>lam</i>) + <i>al-fi'l al-mudāri'</i> ("an," "lan," prohibitive "lā," or "lam" followed by the present tense verb), <i>al-maṣdar al-ṣariḥ</i> (verbal noun), <i>al-fi'l al-mādī</i> (past tense verb), <i>kāna wa ismuḥā wa khabaruhā</i> ("kāna" with its subject and predicate), <i>al-fi'l al-mazīd</i> (augmented verb), <i>ism al-mawṣūl</i> (relative pronoun), and <i>ism al-taṣdīl</i> (comparative or superlative adjective).</p>	<p>Understanding both explicit and implicit information from various types of visual or multimodal texts on the themes of school (<i>madrasah</i>), home, hobbies, occupations, health, Islamic holidays, tourism, nature, and the environment, through the use of grammatical structures such as <i>al-jumlah al-ismiyyah</i> (nominal sentence), <i>al-'adad</i> (number), <i>al-taṣrif al-lughawī</i> (morphological inflection), <i>fi'l al-amr</i> (imperative verb), <i>al-jumlah al-fi'liyyah</i> (verbal sentence), ('an - <i>lan</i> - <i>lā al-nāhiyah</i> / <i>lam</i>) + <i>al-fi'l al-mudāri'</i> ("an," "lan," prohibitive "lā," or "lam" followed by the present tense verb), <i>al-maṣdar al-ṣariḥ</i> (verbal noun), <i>al-fi'l al-mādī</i> (past tense verb), <i>kāna wa ismuḥā wa khabaruhā</i> ("kāna" with its subject and predicate), <i>al-fi'l al-mazīd</i> (augmented verb), <i>ism al-mawṣūl</i> (relative pronoun), and <i>ism al-taṣdīl</i> (comparative or superlative adjective).</p>	<p>Communicating ideas in both written and oral forms through simple and structured paragraphs across various types of texts on the themes of school (<i>madrasah</i>), home, hobbies, occupations, health, Islamic holidays, tourism, nature, and the environment, by employing grammatical structures such as <i>al-jumlah al-ismiyyah</i> (nominal sentence), <i>al-'adad</i> (number), <i>al-taṣrif al-lughawī</i> (morphological inflection), <i>fi'l al-amr</i> (imperative verb), <i>al-jumlah al-fi'liyyah</i> (verbal sentence), ('an - <i>lan</i> - <i>lā al-nāhiyah</i> / <i>lam</i>) + <i>al-fi'l al-mudāri'</i> ("an," "lan," prohibitive "lā," or "lam" followed by the present tense verb), <i>al-maṣdar al-ṣariḥ</i> (verbal noun), <i>al-fi'l al-mādī</i> (past tense verb), <i>kāna wa ismuḥā wa khabaruhā</i> ("kāna" with its subject and predicate), <i>al-fi'l al-mazīd</i> (augmented verb), <i>ism al-mawṣūl</i> (relative pronoun), and <i>ism al-taṣdīl</i> (comparative or superlative adjective).</p>
E (Class 10)	<p>Understanding both implicit and explicit information, as well as interactions, on the themes of self-introduction, family, school (<i>madrasah</i>), hobbies, professions, and daily life, by applying grammatical structures such as <i>al-ḍamā'ir</i> (pronouns), <i>adawāt al-istifhām</i> (interrogative particles), <i>al-</i></p>	<p>Understanding both explicit and implicit information in visual or multimodal texts interactively on the themes of self-introduction, family, school (<i>madrasah</i>), hobbies, professions, and daily life, by applying grammatical structures such as <i>al-ḍamā'ir</i> (pronouns), <i>adawāt al-istifhām</i> (interrogative particles), <i>al-</i></p>	<p>Communicating ideas in both written and oral forms within limited discourse logically on the themes of self-introduction, family, school (<i>madrasah</i>), hobbies, professions, and daily life, by applying grammatical structures such as <i>al-ḍamā'ir</i> (pronouns), <i>adawāt al-istifhām</i> (interrogative particles), <i>al-</i></p>

	<p><i>mužakkar wa al-mu'annas</i> (masculine and feminine), <i>al-mufrad wa al-mušannā wa al-jam'</i> (singular, dual, and plural), <i>hurūf al-jarr wa hurūf al-'atf wa al-żarf</i> (prepositions, conjunctions, and adverbs), <i>taqṣīm al-kalimah</i> (word classification), <i>aqsām al-fi'l</i> (verb types), <i>al-jumlah al-iṣmiyyah wa al-jumlah al-fi'liyyah</i> (nominal and verbal sentences), <i>al-arqām</i> (numbers), and <i>al-'adad wa al-ma'dūd</i> (numeral-noun agreement).</p>	<p><i>mužakkar wa al-mu'annas</i> (masculine and feminine), <i>al-mufrad wa al-mušannā wa al-jam'</i> (singular, dual, and plural), <i>hurūf al-jarr wa hurūf al-'atf wa al-żarf</i> (prepositions, conjunctions, and adverbs), <i>taqṣīm al-kalimah</i> (word classification), <i>aqsām al-fi'l</i> (verb types), <i>al-jumlah al-iṣmiyyah wa al-jumlah al-fi'liyyah</i> (nominal and verbal sentences), <i>al-arqām</i> (numbers), and <i>al-'adad wa al-ma'dūd</i> (numeral-noun agreement).</p>	<p><i>mužakkar wa al-mu'annas</i> (masculine and feminine), <i>al-mufrad wa al-mušannā wa al-jam'</i> (singular, dual, and plural), <i>hurūf al-jarr wa hurūf al-'atf wa al-żarf</i> (prepositions, conjunctions, and adverbs), <i>taqṣīm al-kalimah</i> (word classification), <i>aqsām al-fi'l</i> (verb types), <i>al-jumlah al-iṣmiyyah wa al-jumlah al-fi'liyyah</i> (nominal and verbal sentences), <i>al-arqām</i> (numbers), and <i>al-'adad wa al-ma'dūd</i> (numeral-noun agreement).</p>
F (Class 11-12)	<p>Understanding both implicit and explicit information and constructing oral language on the themes of tourism, health, hajj and 'umrah, religions in Indonesia, information and communication technology, prominent Islamic figures, and university studies, by applying grammatical structures such as <i>al-taṣrīf al-lughawī li al-fi'l al-mādī</i> (morphological conjugation of the past verb), <i>al-taṣrīf al-lughawī li al-fi'l al-muḍārī'</i> (morphological conjugation of the present verb), <i>al-taṣrīf al-lughawī li fi'l al-amr</i> (morphological conjugation of the imperative verb), <i>al-na't</i> (adjective), <i>al-idāfah</i> (genitive construction), <i>ism al-taṣdīl</i> (comparative or superlative adjective), <i>al-fi'l al-mabnī li al-ma'lūm wa al-fi'l al-mabnī li al-majhūl</i> (active and passive verbs), and <i>al-fi'l al-muḍārī' al-marfū' wa al-maṣūb wa al-majzūm</i> (indicative, subjunctive, and jussive forms of the present verb).</p>	<p>Understanding both explicit and implicit meanings in various visual or multimodal texts such as short stories, articles, essays, reports, or books on the themes of tourism, health, hajj and 'umrah, religions in Indonesia, information and communication technology, prominent Islamic figures, and university studies, by applying grammatical structures such as <i>al-taṣrīf al-lughawī li al-fi'l al-mādī</i> (morphological conjugation of the past verb), <i>al-taṣrīf al-lughawī li al-fi'l al-muḍārī'</i> (morphological conjugation of the present verb), <i>al-taṣrīf al-lughawī li al-fi'l al-amr</i> (morphological conjugation of the imperative verb), <i>al-na't</i> (adjective), <i>al-idāfah</i> (genitive construction), <i>ism al-taṣdīl</i> (comparative or superlative adjective), <i>al-fi'l al-mabnī li al-ma'lūm wa al-fi'l al-mabnī li al-majhūl</i> (active and passive verbs), and <i>al-fi'l al-muḍārī' al-marfū' wa al-maṣūb wa al-majzūm</i> (indicative, subjunctive, and jussive forms of the present verb).</p>	<p>Understanding the ideas of texts, both written and spoken, freely and contextually on the themes of tourism, health, hajj and 'umrah, religions in Indonesia, information and communication technology, prominent Islamic figures, and university studies, by applying grammatical structures such as <i>al-taṣrīf al-lughawī li al-fi'l al-mādī</i> (morphological conjugation of the past verb), <i>al-taṣrīf al-lughawī li al-fi'l al-muḍārī'</i> (morphological conjugation of the present verb), <i>al-taṣrīf al-lughawī li fi'l al-amr</i> (morphological conjugation of the imperative verb), <i>al-na't</i> (adjective), <i>al-idāfah</i> (genitive construction), <i>ism al-taṣdīl</i> (comparative or superlative adjective), <i>al-fi'l al-mabnī li al-ma'lūm wa al-fi'l al-mabnī li al-majhūl</i> (active and passive verbs), and <i>al-fi'l al-muḍārī' al-marfū' wa al-maṣūb wa al-majzūm</i> (indicative, subjunctive, and jussive forms of the present verb).</p>

Source: Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Nomor 3302 Tahun 2024

The data in table 1 indicate that students' Arabic language competence develops gradually and progressively from Phase A to Phase F. In the initial phases (A–C), instruction focuses on mastering the basic linguistic elements sounds, vocabulary, and simple sentence patterns (such as *hāžā*, *mā hāžihi*, and *al-ism al-mufrad*) within everyday life themes. This stage emphasises receptive skills (listening and reading) and basic productive skills (speaking and writing) as the foundation for developing students' phonological and morphological abilities. In the intermediate phases (D–E), the LO demonstrate a shift in orientation toward the comprehension of meaning and more authentic communicative contexts through the use of increasingly complex grammatical structures, such as *al-jumlah al-ismiyyah*, *fi'l al-amr*, and *al-mufrad wa al-jam'*. The inclusion of more diverse themes such as professions, the environment, and health—strengthens the communicative and functional orientation of language learning.

Subsequently, in the advanced phase (F), students exhibit the ability to construct meaning independently in both spoken and written forms by applying more complex grammatical structures (e.g., *taṣrīf al-fi'l*, *al-iḍāfah*, *al-fi'l al-majhūl*). These achievements indicate the development of comprehensive communicative competence, where mastery of linguistic aspects is harmoniously integrated with an understanding of social context. Theoretically, this developmental pattern aligns with Bruner's (1977) spiral curriculum principle and Krashen's (1984) Second Language Acquisition theory, both of which emphasise the importance of providing meaningful, incremental input to support natural and communicative language acquisition. A detailed analysis of the representation of each component of communicative competence is presented in table 2.

Table 2. Description of the Analysis Results of Communicative Competence in the Arabic Language Learning Outcomes

Phase	Grammatical Competence	Sociolinguistic Competence	Discourse Competence	Strategic Competence
A (Class 1-2)	Explicit and dominant in this phase, with a focus on the recognition of sounds, words, and basic nominal sentence patterns.	Not evident. Activities are imitative in nature, without social context or interlocutor.	Not yet present. Sentences stand alone, without cohesion or coherence.	Absent. Students merely imitate; no clarification or repair strategies are required.
B (Class 3-4)	Explicit beginning to be functional. The LO requires the use of basic structures	Implicit. Social themes such as "my friends," "professions," and "my family," as well	Beginning to emerge. The phrases "listening" "professionally" and "very simple	Not explicit, but with potential to emerge. The "responsive" activity opens the door to the

		(<i>damīr, ism mufrad, ism 'alam</i>) for simple communication.	as speech acts like "commands," "greetings," and "questions," are present as contexts of social interaction; however, the LO do not yet emphasise the understanding of appropriateness in meaning or form across different speech acts.	discourse" indicate question-answer and command-response relationships (fundamental coherence). However, the texts remain very simple.	introduction of strategic competence.
C (Class 5-6)	Explicit; it has expanded syntactic and morphological structures (<i>al-mubtada' wa al-khabar, al-fi'l al-mudāri', al-fi'l al-mādī</i>).	As they begin to emerge more strongly, social themes such as daily activities, locations, time, and interpersonal relationships are introduced.	Explicitly, the LO requires the ability to understand and respond to main ideas, indicating the development of cohesion and coherence in simple texts.	Implicitly, the potential for strategic competence to emerge increases as learners begin to produce responses, yet communication strategies have not become a curricular objective within the LO.	
D (Class 7-9)	Highly explicit; complex grammatical structures are introduced (<i>al-jumlah al-ismiyyah, al-jumlah al-fi'liyyah, al-maṣdar, kāna wa akhawātuhā</i>).	Implicit but with strong potential; socio-religious and environmental themes are connected to the context of Islamic culture. However, the LO still does not explicitly emphasise the understanding of appropriateness in meaning or form across different speech acts.	Explicitly, the LO guides students to understand both explicit and implicit information and to construct simple, logical paragraphs.	As they become functionally implicit, the activities of "building interaction" and "understanding implicit and explicit meanings" provide opportunities for the use of strategic competence.	
E (Class 10)	Explicit and in-depth, a wider variety of language structures is introduced, and the understanding of	Implicit yet with strong potential, the themes of professions, family, and daily life strengthen	Explicitly, the LO includes comprehension of interactive and reflective texts and the ability to	Strongly implicit; the active communication strategies are required in the interactive activities	

	previously learned structures is further reinforced.	understanding of the sociocultural context and appropriateness of communication. However, the LO still does not explicitly emphasise the understanding of appropriateness in meaning or form across different speech acts.	construct limited discourse logically.	embedded in the LO, although strategic competence is not explicitly stated.
F (Class 11-12)	Explicit and productive; mastery of complex structures is used freely. The LO promotes a deep understanding of syntactic and morphological aspects.	Implicit but with strong potential, the themes of religion, technology, and society demonstrate cross-cultural awareness and universal Islamic values. However, the forms of speech acts and the appropriateness of form and meaning for each speech act are still not explicitly stated in the LO.	Highly explicit; the LO requires the production of complete discourse (articles, reports, essays) with a high level of cohesion and coherence.	Implicit but functional, the activities of "producing language freely" and "responding to information" require strategic competence.

Source: Author's analysis

Theoretically, these results suggest that the Arabic Language LO still focuses on grammatical competence and discourse competence as defined by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983), while sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence have not received equivalent attention. However, these latter two components play a crucial role in bridging linguistic accuracy with social acceptability in authentic communication (Canale, 1983). The lack of explicit inclusion of strategic competence such as the ability to use paraphrasing, clarify meaning, or adapt to different communicative situations may limit learners' ability to interact effectively.

Discussion

Grammatical Competence

The analysis of the Arabic Language LO shows that grammatical competence is consistently strong across all phases. The LO from Phases A to F explicitly includes linguistic form elements such as phonemes, vocabulary, word formation, sentence structure, and morphosyntactic variations at each stage of development. It indicates a strong curricular emphasis on linguistic form and structural

aspects of the language. The LO also emphasises mastery of sentence structure variations, including both jumlah ismiyyah (nominal sentences) and jumlah fi'liyyah (verbal sentences), as well as their derivative forms. Such an approach aligns with the principles of structural linguistics, which highlight the importance of consistent repetition drills of Arabic utterances and the practice of structural patterns as means of developing habitual language use (Rohman & Wijaya, 2023).

The linguistic form aspect is an essential element that cannot be disregarded in language learning. Several studies have shown that approaches emphasising linguistic form, such as Form-Focused Instruction (FFI), make a significant contribution to language competence when integrated with communicative approaches. Woymo et al. (2024) demonstrated that implementing FFI in a communicative context enhances speaking fluency and fosters positive student attitudes toward language learning. Similar findings were reported by Mujtaba et al. (2023), who found that integrating FFI with a sociocognitive-transformative approach significantly improves writing accuracy and fluency.

Nevertheless, an excessive focus on linguistic form, without integration into communicative learning, may lead the learning process toward an overly theoretical, grammar-oriented approach. Such an abstract understanding can reduce learning motivation and lead to superficial grammatical mastery. Consequently, the integration between form mastery and communicative competence in Arabic language learning becomes hindered (Khitam, 2025). Meanwhile, Arabic language learning in the Merdeka Curriculum, as reflected in the LO, does not separate linguistic form as an independent component. This aspect has been explicitly integrated into communicative learning, as evident in the LO formulation: "Memahami informasi yang diterima secara tersurat dan tersirat serta berinteraksi dengan tema . . . dengan menggunakan susunan gramatikal . . ." ("Understanding both explicit and implicit information and interacting on specific themes . . . by using grammatical structures . . .").

Sociolinguistic Competence

The analysis of the Arabic Language LO reveals that sociolinguistic competence is represented only implicitly through themes involving social interactions across various contexts. This element does not appear in Phase A, as learning at this stage remains imitative, whereas in Phase B, simple speech acts such as "commands," "greetings," and "questions" begin to emerge. However, there is no explicit explanation of the appropriateness of these speech acts within diverse social contexts across all phases.

In contrast to the English Language LO in the Merdeka Curriculum, which explicitly requires the ability to use language formally and informally according to context (BSKAP, 2025b), the Arabic Language LO does not yet demonstrate similar attention to the sociolinguistic aspect. Given that the CP serves as a general framework and functions as a foundational guide for instruction, teachers need to develop it into more concrete operational documents, such as learning progression maps and lesson plans (BSKAP, 2025b). Therefore, the presence of sociolinguistic competence in Arabic language teaching practice largely depends on teachers' initiative and capacity. Without sufficient explicitness, the opportunity for the development of sociolinguistic competence remains limited.

Within the framework of communicative competence, sociolinguistic competence plays a highly crucial role. According to Canale (1983, citing Blum-Kulka), the absence of sociolinguistic competence in learners results in failure to achieve communicative goals effectively. However, many Arabic learners still exhibit weaknesses in this area, regardless of their level of linguistic proficiency (Osmanovic, 2024). This condition underscores the urgency of explicitly integrating sociolinguistic competence into Arabic language-learning outcomes. As Ibrahim (2022) explains, sociolinguistic competence should be taught explicitly, just like other components of communicative competence.

Discourse Competence

The analysis of the Arabic Language LO indicates that discourse competence develops progressively. Phase A does not yet demonstrate achievement in this aspect; however, beginning in Phase B, there are indications of functional cohesion, reflected through question-answer and command-response patterns. From Phase C onward, students are required to comprehend main ideas and construct thematically related sentences or paragraphs, culminating in Phases E–F, where learners are expected to produce complete and logically coherent discourse. The Arabic Language LO positions discourse competence as the most prominent element after grammatical competence. This emphasis indicates that Arabic language learning is directed not only toward mastering linguistic structures and rules but also toward developing the ability to use the language holistically and contextually. As emphasised by Faisal (2025), discourse competence is a fundamental component of communicative competence, as practical language ability cannot be developed solely through grammatical mastery but through the capacity to connect linguistic forms into cohesive and coherent units of meaning.

In addition, discourse competence integrates learners' language skills into meaningful oral and written communication (Faisal, 2025). Thus, discourse learning plays a strategic role in

transforming isolated linguistic knowledge into functional communicative ability. Accordingly, the development of discourse competence in the LO—ranging from sentence formation, the construction of simple paragraphs, and the development of limited discourse to the creation of complete discourse reflects the continuity between the mastery of linguistic forms and the ability to use them in authentic communicative contexts. It indicates that the LO design has implicitly established a progressive pathway from grammatical competence toward an integrated communicative competence.

Thus, the Arabic Language LO has demonstrated a systematic effort to develop discourse competence from the basic to the productive level. However, further reinforcement is needed through teaching materials and instructional models that explicitly address the use of cohesion markers and text development patterns. This recommendation aligns with the findings of Khalil & Abu-Ayyash (2023), who emphasised the importance of explicit instruction on cohesion markers within the context of discourse construction, rather than teaching them separately as in vocabulary acquisition. Empirical support is also provided by Alawerdy & Alalwi (2022), who found that explicit instruction on the use of conjunctions as cohesive devices can significantly improve students' writing skills.

Strategic Competence

The analysis of the Arabic Language LO reveals that strategic competence is the weakest and least explicitly explored aspect across all phases. In Phase A, there is no evidence of achievement in communication strategies, and it only begins to appear implicitly from Phase B onward, through the ability to respond to and express simple meanings. Phases C–F demonstrate increasing ability to convey ideas, refine meaning, and construct extended texts; however, strategic competence remains implicit and is not formulated as an independent learning outcome.

According to Canale (1983), strategic competence encompasses both verbal and nonverbal strategies used to overcome communication limitations and enhance message effectiveness. In other words, this competence functions as a compensatory mechanism for grammatical, discourse, and sociolinguistic competences. However, the Arabic Language LO does not explicitly guide learners to develop this competence, such as through paraphrasing, alternative expressions, or gestures when encountering communication barriers. Razikova (2025) recommends integrating strategic competence into language-learning curricula. She emphasises that strategic competence is not merely a supplementary skill but a fundamental ability essential for enhancing communicative

proficiency, particularly within multicultural contexts. This competence enables learners to adapt spontaneously, select appropriate communication strategies, and interact effectively in authentic communicative situations. This aspect should be reflected in the Arabic Language LO.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the Arabic Language LO in the Merdeka Curriculum reveals a progressive yet imbalanced development of communicative competence. Grammatical and discourse competences are explicitly formulated and systematically developed from the imitative to the productive stage. In contrast, sociolinguistic and strategic competences remain implicit and receive relatively limited attention. This imbalance indicates that the curriculum still places greater emphasis on linguistic accuracy and textual cohesion than on adaptive and pragmatic communicative abilities relevant to authentic social contexts. To achieve comprehensive mastery of communicative competence, explicit reinforcement of the sociolinguistic and strategic components is required—both in curriculum design and in instructional implementation. Teachers play a crucial role in operationalising these aspects by developing contextual learning materials, interactive classroom activities, and communicative, performance-oriented assessments. Such reinforcement is expected to produce learners of Arabic who are not only proficient in structural and textual aspects but also capable of communicating effectively, appropriately, and meaningfully across diverse communicative situations.

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