

## Design of CEFR-Based Arabic Language Proficiency Test Indicators In The Arabic Language Education Department

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### **Abstract**

This research aims to establish test indicators corresponding to CEFR-based Arabic language proficiency levels, especially for beginner levels (A1 and A2). This research uses content analysis methods to develop CEFR-based Arabic language proficiency test indicators. This research was also carried out by reviewing several sources, including the CEFR framework and several previous studies on the design of Arabic language proficiency tests. The CEFR-based Arabic language proficiency test indicators were created by considering descriptions of Arabic grammatical competence in nahwu (syntax), sharf (morphological), balaghah (rhetoric) science, and 'ilm dilalah (semantics). The design of CEFR-based Arabic language proficiency test indicators can help overcome difficulties in measuring Arabic language proficiency for students in Indonesia. Using the CEFR framework, this research offers an alternative solution for developing a curriculum and test design appropriate to the level of Arabic language proficiency. This research concludes that the design of CEFR-based Arabic language proficiency test indicators can help improve the quality of Arabic language learning and ensure that students have abilities that comply with international standards..

**Keywords:** Design; Proficiency; Test; Arabic; CEFR

### **INTRODUCTION**

Arabic language learners in Indonesia know their Arabic language skills by taking the Arabic language proficiency test organized by formal educational institutions and course places. The results of this competency test can be used in several local or regional purposes. The potential use of Arabic proficiency test results on a national scale is still an obstacle between several institutions that do not accept the results of students' Arabic proficiency tests from outside institutions(Muhajir & Madjid, 2021).

An Arabic language learner needs to know his Arabic language skills so that it adjusts to his learning level and teaching materials. Basic material for beginner students in learning, and intermediate material for students already have basic language skills and professional materials for advanced learners. As a result of the incompatibility of teaching materials with the level of learning ability, it is a major obstacle in learning and understanding Arabic(A. W. Ritonga et al., 2021).

The results of the Arabic language proficiency test are not used to adjust the learning level of students but for the sake of university entrance requirements, not for the placement of Arabic learning levels. Some universities in Indonesia do not require new students to submit a certificate of Arabic language proficiency so that there is a mixture of different students' abilities sitting in one class (Saydee, 2016). Between students who are just starting to learn Arabic and students who already have good Arabic language

skills learn the same teaching materials. This model is the reason why beginner students feel heavy with the teaching material and make the second student bored because they repeat the old teaching material and do not get anything new. Arabic language learning is also dominated by theoretical learning from communication applications. The impact of the absence of a structure in measuring students' Arabic language skills causes laziness and boredom in learning Arabic, which is more monotonous in theoretical learning than the use of Arabic in communication with speaking partners (Talqis Nurdianto, 2020a). Communication learning in the classroom needs supporting applications outside the classroom. Students will get new things and the development of learning materials so that they are not monotonous both in terms of teaching materials and a place to learn only in the classroom.

Various efforts in providing better Arabic language learning quality are improvements from upstream, namely mapping the Arabic language ability of each student to be adjusted to learning objectives, teaching materials and materials, learning methodologies, and types of evaluation to achieve success indicators. One of these efforts is by making an Arabic language proficiency test. This test is carried out to find out at what level the student's Arabic language ability is. The Arabic language proficiency test for non-Arab students in Indonesia is presented by several colleges or universities, both public universities and private universities, under different names as a characteristic of the institution that issued it (M. Ritonga et al., 2021). However, the difference is not only in the naming of the type of test but in the scope of the exam competency and the method of assessment. The main factor behind this difference is the absence of a common perception between the compilers of the Arabic language proficiency test from one institution to another.

The competency of Arabic language skills in the exam test is dominated by three aspects of competence, namely listening in the form of *fahmul masmu'* (listening understanding), reading in the form of *fahmul maqrū`* (reading understanding), and Arabic language rules in the form of *fahmut tarakib*. Meanwhile, Arabic language skills include listening, speaking, writing, and reading. In learning book of *al arabiyyah bainan yadaik* is coupled with communication competence and Arabic language rules, and in the CEFR there are 21 competencies used to measure students' Arabic language skills in the exam. Each competency has its own achievement indicator and is tied to other indicators, such as listening questions related to the rules of nahwu or Sharaf science, even if there are questions that stand on top of one competency indicator as well.

Identification of indicators of each competency is important to determine the ability of students to answer exam questions. Meanwhile, competency indicators are also made based on the level from beginner to advanced level, distinguished by the level of difficulty in answering questions from easy to difficult. Beginner learners can solve easy questions according to their level but cannot solve difficult questions. Meanwhile, proficient students can work on problems ranging from easy to difficult.

## METHOD

This research is intended to be a qualitative research with a descriptive analysis approach with the ADDIE method whose results will be presented in the form of descriptive analysis. The ADDIE model in five steps for the development of teaching materials (Cahyadi, 2019). Several stages will be carried out by researchers with the stages of analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation.

Analysis was carried out to find out the extent to which it is necessary to make CEFR-based TOAFL test questions in Arabic language learning in the Arabic Language Education study program of UMY by analyzing work, students, facts, and learning objectives. Meanwhile, the design stage is the stage of making a design development plan for the CEFR-based TOAFL test. Namely by determining the competencies that will be included in the TOEFL test questions, the depth of the material and questions in each question, and the assessment.

The third stage is the development stage. That is the realization stage of the previous two stages in the form of modification of the TOAFL test questions accompanied by the conceptual development of CEFR-based TOAFL. The purpose in this stage is to produce or revise test questions to suit the learning objectives and choose the appropriate form of test questions to achieve the learning objectives. In this development stage, validation of development products is also carried out by experts and necessary improvements are made.

The implementation stage is carried out in order to get responses and inputs for improvement. This stage involves students to use CEFR-based TOAFL test questions with the aim that this test question is a solution in this TOAFL question that is suitable for use. The last stage is to give a score to the results of the CEFR-based TOAFL test by conducting a validity and reliability test on the TOAFL test questions to be improved and improved to get the best results and be accountable (Hidayat & Muhamad, 2021).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Arabic learning method for non-native speakers is facilitated by the existence of Arabic learning based on the Common European Framework of References (CEFR) or the European Framework for Language learning which was developed in 2001 and continues to be improved in 2005 until now. This kerangan was originally designed for learning English in Europe and then translated into 40 other languages including Arabic (Talqis Nurdianto & bin Ismail, 2020). Arabic learning methods for non-Arabic speakers continue to develop from time to time. Many efforts have been made by Arabic researchers to provide ease of learning Arabic for non-Arabs, both research aimed at designing curriculum, teaching materials, learning methods, media, and evaluation(Talqis Nurdianto & bin Ismail, 2020). In addition, existing research on providing solutions to problems in learning Arabic includes internal or external. The characteristics of learning Arabic for Arabic speakers are different from those of non-native Arabs(Qodri, 2020).

Meanwhile, the research on the Arabic language integrative ability measurement tool is not as crowded as the previous types of research. Research on Arabic language proficiency is an important part of measuring students' Arabic language proficiency which includes four skills and abilities of Arabic language rules. The four skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Rohman & Rosyadi, 2021). Meanwhile, the skill of understanding the rules of Arabic is in the science of nahwu, sharf, and balaghah (T. Nurdianto, 2021). The integration of science in grammar skills into one part is not separate from the other that must be mastered and must be measurable and accountable (Ahsanuddin, 2016).

The results of this ability measurement value are the basis for educators or educational institutions in presenting a learning curriculum that is in accordance with the student's ability and in accordance with the textbook, as well as the learning outcomes. Measurable results are accounted for according to the student's ability. The advantage is

that students can find out skills with positive grades to maintain and low grades to improve. This effort can be done if there is a reference score by means of an Arabic language proficiency test. This effort has not been carried out by many researchers both at home and abroad.

There are several names used for Arabic language proficiency tests such as, TOAFL at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta (Wahab, 2015), IKLA at Mahad Ali bin Abi Talib Yogyakarta, SIMLA by the Islamic University of Indonesia and others. Until now, there has been no similarity and unity of reference in the preparation of the Arabic proficiency test because each educational institution that has an Arabic language test prioritizes its characteristics as a differentiator from other institutions.

The Arabic Language Education Study Program at the University of Muhamamdiyah Yogyakarta has been established for 10 years with the number of students always increasing, and does not have a test question device to measure the Arabic language ability of its students. So from this anxiety this research will be carried out. Meanwhile, the CEFR was chosen as the basis for the preparation model of this question because it includes a minimum of 4 Arabic language skills.

### **Arabic Language Competencies CEFR Perspective**

In the UMY Arabic Language Education Study Program, a study was conducted on TOAFL which was the result of the research design of one of the students related to the importance of the TOAFL test to develop Arabic language competencies for sixth semester students in the Arabic Language Education Study Program, University of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (Mujahir & Madjid, 2021). As well as research on the design of TOAFL test questions which includes only three skills, including listening, reading, and writing. Not many educational institutions design the TOAFL test with writing skills in mind. Writing skills are not widely presented in some test models that do not include a writing test in their TOEFL scheme.

In contrast to the TOAFL test at Unhasy Tebu Ireng which presents 164 test questions, with 160 multiple-choice qualifications and 4 questions in the form of essays. This shows that the institution that organizes this exam includes writing skills as an important part of this exam. This test is provided for new students at the undergraduate to doctoral levels. Along the way, there are efforts to improve and evaluate the design of TOAFL test questions (Qomariyah & Isniyatun Niswah, 2021).

Meanwhile, this study is a CEFR-Based Arabic Listening Proficiency Test Achievement Indicator Design which is different from previous studies in the presentation of TOAFL test questions, none of which are based on the CEFR framework. The CEFR framework for learning Arabic was only introduced between 2000 and 2001. Meanwhile, in learning English, it has often been used. This is the newness of the research on the preparation of TOAFL test questions based on the CEFR framework which has learning levels from A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2 levels. Competence in listening to Arabic from levels A1 to C2 as follows (Talqis Nurdianto, 2020b).

The following are part of the A1 competencies for Arabic listening skills (Cefr, 2008).

1. Able to understand the sound of letters well and clearly
2. Able to understand the sound of words composed of one, two, three letters either in the form of isim, fiil, or letters.
3. Understand the sound of words and phrases that are commonly used in everyday topics and delivered slowly.

4. Able to listen to the voice of a theme that is familiar with the activity is conveyed in a short letter that is delivered slowly and in a clear voice.

In implementing this standardization, it is necessary to have measurement limits agreed upon in international standards. The assessment according to the standards of Arabic adapted to English is as follows:

### **Level A1 in CEFR**

The competence of students at the A1 level of Arabic is sufficient for very simple interactions, for example as tourists in Arabic-speaking countries. A1 level will not be sufficient for any other academic or professional purpose. According to CEFR guidelines, a person at A1 level in Arabic(Cefr, 2008):

1. Being able to understand and use everyday expressions (a-ibarat al-yaumiyyah) and phrases (al-idhafah) are very basic aimed at fulfilling the need for concrete types.
2. Be able to introduce yourself (al-ta'aruf) and others and be able to ask and answer questions about personal information, such as where you live (al-sakan), known people, and items you own.
3. Be able to interact with others in a simple way as long as the interlocutor speaks (al-mukhatab) slowly and clearly and is ready to help.

#### A1 level Arabic proficiency in detail

1. Introduce yourself simply including your name, origin, nationality and current residence and say the greetings or greetings that are commonly used.
2. Tell where he (origin) and others come from and provide a basic description of the city where he lives.
3. Telling about family and relatives in a simple way, describing their appearance and personality.
4. Discuss clothing at a basic level (color and type of clothing) and ask the seller simple questions related to price.
5. Talk about your favorite food and drink and order food to take home.
6. Talk about daily activities that have become a habit and arrange meetings with friends and others.
7. Describe the current weather conditions (four seasons in the middle east or two seasons in Indonesia) and suggest activities that match the weather forecast.
8. Talk in general terms about his health and describe general medical symptoms to a doctor.
9. Explain the location of the house and provide a simple direction (direction) straight, turn right, left, side and across the road.
10. Talk about hobbies and interests and make plans to do activities with friends or colleagues.
11. Complete basic transactions at the hotel for the stay, including check-in and check-out.
12. Discuss common products, make simple purchases, and returning damaged items.

### **Level A2 in CEFR**

An A2 level of Arabic is sufficient for tourism in an Arabic-speaking country and socializing with Arabic speakers, but an A2 level is not enough to develop deeper friendships. The A2 level of Arabic also allows you to interact with Arabic-speaking colleagues, but working in Arabic is limited to topics already known at the A2 level. A2

levels of Arabic are not sufficient for academic study or for listening to and reading most Arabic-language media (television, film, radio, magazines, etc.).

According to CEFR guidelines, a person at A2 level in Arabic:

1. Be able to understand frequently used sentences and phrases related to directly related areas (e.g., basic information about personal and family, shopping, local geography, and work).
2. Able to communicate in routine tasks that require a simple and direct exchange of information on common matters.
3. Can explain in simple terms aspects of the background, the surrounding environment, and things in the field of immediate needs.

At this level the student is able to state what is done (*astathi'u*) means 'I can' which is formally broken down into smaller parts for teaching purposes. This more detailed proficiency description can help you assess your own level of proficiency in Arabic, or help a teacher assess a student's level of proficiency. For example, a person at level A2 in Arabic will be able to do all the things that students do at level A1, in addition, students will also be able to:

1. Evaluate or comment on the activities of classmates or colleagues both at school and at work.
2. Recounting events from the past, including weekend activities and interesting stories he did.
3. Recounting past lives, providing details about important events.
4. Entertaining someone at home or visiting a friend or colleague at their home.
5. Discuss vacation plans (al-uthlah) and tell friends and colleagues about the vacation afterwards.
6. Talking about nature, the beauty of natural charm and traveling to see animals (in zoos) and natural areas in your home country.
7. Talk about the movies you like and choose a movie to watch with friends like the al-Fatih movie.
8. Discuss what you like to wear and what kind of clothes you like.
9. Engage in simple communication at school, campus or work, including attending meetings on familiar topics.
10. Describe an accident or injury, seek medical help from a doctor, and ask for a prescription for medication.
11. Engage in simple business socialization, welcome guests, and attend social events.
12. Understand and create simple business proposals in your area of expertise.
13. Talking about and explaining the rules of a game.

### Level B1 in the CEFR

A B1 level of Arabic is sufficient to interact with Arabic speakers on common topics. In the workplace of study, work, students and employees with a B1 level of Arabic can read simple reports on familiar topics as well as write simple emails on matters in their field. However, the B1 level is not enough to function fully in the workplace using Arabic. Someone at level B1 in Arabic:

1. Be able to understand the main points of clear standard input regarding things that are commonly encountered at work, at school, during leisure, etc.
2. Can handle most of the situations that are most likely to occur when traveling in an area where the language is spoken.

3. Can generate simple connected text on topics that are prevalent or related to personal interests.
4. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes, and ambitions, and briefly provide reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

### B1 level Arabic Proficiency in Detail

At this level the student is able to state what is done (as-tathi'u) means 'I can' which is formally broken down into smaller parts for teaching purposes. This more detailed proficiency description can help you assess your own level of proficiency in Arabic, or help a teacher assess a student's level of proficiency. For example, a person at level B1 in Arabic will be able to do all the things that students do at level A2, in addition, students will also be able to:

1. Discuss personal and professional hopes and dreams for the future.
2. Conduct job interviews and attend job interviews in your area of expertise.
3. Talk about your favorite television and show viewing habits.
4. Explain your education and your plans for future training.
5. Talk about your favorite music, music or entertainment trends and plan to go to an Arabic drama art show.
6. Talk about living a healthy lifestyle as well as giving and receiving advice on healthy habits, diet and lifestyle.
7. Talking about relationships and dating, including getting to know people on social media.
8. Go to a restaurant (al-math'am), order food, engage in conversation at dinner, and pay for your food.
9. Participate in negotiations in your area of expertise, if you have help understanding some points.
10. Discuss work safety issues, report accidents, and explain rules and regulations.
11. Discuss polite behavior and respond appropriately to disrespectful behavior.

### Level B2 in CEFR

A B2 level of Arabic will allow you to function in the workplace by using Arabic, and in fact, many non-native Arabic speakers in the international workforce have this level of Arabic proficiency. However, a person who works using Arabic at the B2 level, has not mastered the nuances, especially regarding matters outside his own field. He may also not be able to grasp some subtle differences and implied meanings in a conversation.

According to the official CEFR guidelines, a person at the B2 level in Arabic:

1. Able to understand the main ideas of complex texts, both in concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in their areas of expertise.
2. Being able to interact with a level of fluency and spontaneity makes general interaction with native speakers very possible without any constraints for either party.
3. It can produce detailed texts on a variety of subjects and explain viewpoints on topical issues, explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

At this level the student is able to state what is done (as-tathi'u) means 'I can' which is formally broken down into smaller parts for teaching purposes. This more detailed proficiency description can help you assess your own level of proficiency in Arabic, or help a teacher assess a student's level of proficiency. For example, a student at level B2

in Arabic will be able to do all the things that students do at level B1, in addition, students will also be able to:

1. Participate in meetings in your area of expertise, if you have help understanding some points.
2. Discuss gender issues related to perceptions of impropriety and cultural norms.
3. Talk about personal finances as well as give advice to friends and colleagues about their finances.
4. Talk about your personal and professional lifestyle, including a picture of your life at study or work.
5. Explain your education, experience, strengths and weaknesses, and discuss your career path.
6. Talk about mental processes as well as how you use them to increase your work effectiveness.
7. Talk about your favorite readings and give good reading recommendations to read either books or magazines.
8. Use appropriate language in social situations, including giving compliments and expressing sympathy.
9. Discuss leadership qualities and talk about leaders you admire in your workplace.
10. Dealing with awkward situations that are quite complicated in social and business contexts.
11. Discuss the general political situation and the behavior of politicians both on a local, national and international scale.

### **Level C1 in CEFR**

The C1 level of Arabic will allow you to function in a variety of fields in the workplace or in an academic setting. A person at level C1 in Arabic:

1. Be able to understand a variety of more difficult and longer texts, and recognize the implied meaning.
2. Able to express ideas eloquently and spontaneously without difficulty finding expressions.
3. Be able to use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, and professional purposes.
4. Can produce clear, structured, and detailed text on complex subjects, demonstrating the controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors, and cohesive devices.

This more detailed proficiency description can help you assess your own level of proficiency in Arabic, or help a teacher assess a student's level of proficiency. For example, a person at level C1 in Arabic will be able to do all the things that students do at level B2, in addition, students will also be able to:

1. Discuss in detail about success, including building a successful and motivated team.
2. Talk in detail about your favorite paintings and the architecture of the building you like.
3. Discuss social issues, solutions to problems, and roles that can be played by the company.
4. Participate in discussions on conservation, sustainability, and habitat protection.
5. Talking about events and issues in the news and how they affect society and companies.
6. Talking about risks in life, including changing jobs and doing dangerous sports.

7. Compare and contrast different forms of education and schools.
8. Discuss different types of humor, including subtle forms such as sarcasm.
9. Understand various communication styles, including direct, indirect, formal, and informal.
10. Discuss issues related to your quality of life, including work-life balance, and home environment.
11. Understand and discuss issues related to ethics, such as civil disobedience.

### Level C2 in CEFR

The C2 level of Arabic is basically the level of a native speaker. This level allows one to read and write anything on any subject, understand nuanced expressions of emotions and opinions, and actively participate in any academic or professional environment. According to the official CEFR guidelines, a person at the C2 level in Arabic:

1. Can easily understand almost anything that is heard or read.
2. Able to summarize information from a variety of oral and written sources, retelling arguments and stories in relevant presentations.
3. Able to express himself spontaneously, very eloquently, and accurately, understanding subtle differences in meaning even in the most complex situations.

This more detailed proficiency description can help you assess your own level of proficiency in Arabic, or help a teacher assess a student's level of proficiency. For example, a student at level C2 in Arabic will be able to do all the things that students do at level C1, in addition, students will also be able to:

1. Discuss issues related to science and technology, including robots and new inventions.
2. Talking about social, education, politics, intermediation, and the latest news that is currently being discussed.
3. Using various techniques to develop creativity in speaking and writing.
4. Discuss financial planning as well as provide and understand advice on personal finance.
5. Talk about stress in your life and the life of a friend or colleague.
6. Discuss research techniques on various topics.

The Indonesian government, in this case, neither the Ministry of Religion nor the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education has yet to have an integrated Arabic curriculum from start to finish like English. Therefore, it is also necessary to be serious from professional organizations, the Arabic language education study program in Indonesia provides the formulation of the Arabic language learning curriculum referred to above, CEFR (Nurdianto, 2020).

Analysis of the description of level achievement in the form of achievement focus to determine the topic of discussion of events or events around and be familiar with what students often hear (Nuraini et al., 2022). Furthermore, the exam topic is developed in detailed competencies (Ahmad, 2006) with the form of the measurement field so that it ends in the form of question questions as below. Each indicator includes a variety of skills in Arabic which include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Meanwhile, the competence to understand Arabic rules in the form of grammar, morphology, and *balagah* (retorik) are included in the four skills mentioned above.

## CONCLUSION

The absence of a unity of the institution organizing the Arabic language proficiency test has an impact on the content of questions that contain different competencies, namely listening, understanding the structure, and reading. There is no speaking and writing competency test on the exam. So that the scores obtained by students are still lacking two main competencies, namely speaking and writing. In the design of the preparation of CEFR-based Arabic language proficiency test questions, it is considered mandatory to pay attention to the achievement indicators described in the exam questions. There are four competency indicators that must be met and each skill indicator includes the rules of language included in it, namely (1) listening to Arabic sounds in the form of words, phrases, dialogues, and story narratives. (2) Speak, in the form of self-introduction, narrate an event, and describe a picture or table of events. (3) reading, in the form of dialogue texts and medium and long text manuscripts in the form of stories or information. (4) Writing, in a certain number to find out the accuracy in the use of written language rules for events that must be answered. The participation of the four skills can describe the student's Arabic ability.

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