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Teaching Arabic Grammar and Morphology to Chinese Learners: A Pedagogical Analysis of the Al-Arabiyyah al-Kulijiyyah Textbook

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***Abstract*—This study examines how Arabic grammar and morphology are taught to Chinese learners through a qualitative content analysis of Volumes 1 and 2 of Al-Arabiyyah al-Kulijiyyah, a university textbook used at beginning levels in China. Positioned within the Chinese instructional context, the study evaluates the textbook in terms of sequencing, mode of presentation, exercise types, use of Chinese as a mediating language, and the extent of cultural and instructional support. The analysis is guided by a functional view of grammar in which rules are treated as resources for communication rather than ends in themselves. The findings show that the textbook contains valuable contextual texts and substantial coverage of core grammar and morphology, but it remains largely shaped by a grammar-translation orientation, uneven progression, and a predominance of closed-form exercises that do not sufficiently support transfer from declarative knowledge to communicative performance. The study proposes a framework for teaching grammar and morphology in the Chinese context that emphasizes staged progression, contextualized rule presentation, focus on form within communicative activity, strategic use of the first language, and performance-based assessment. The study concludes with implications for textbook development, teacher preparation, and future empirical research on Arabic pedagogy in China.**

***Index Terms*—Arabic as a foreign language, grammar and morphology, Chinese learners, textbook evaluation, Al-Arabiyyah al-Kulijiyyah**

I. Introduction

Arabic is characterized by a rich syntactic and morphological system, and mastery of these systems is central to accurate comprehension and production. In teaching Arabic to speakers of other languages, grammar and morphology are especially consequential because they regulate relations within the sentence, determine semantic precision, and shape both oral and written performance (Al-Naqa, 1985; Tuaima, 1989). The issue becomes more pressing when Arabic is taught in contexts where learners' first-language systems differ sharply from Arabic in structure, morphology, phonology, and writing conventions.

The Chinese context provides a particularly important case. Arabic has a long historical presence in China through religious, commercial, and cultural contact, and university-based Arabic education has expanded considerably in the modern period in response to the needs of translation, diplomacy, media, commerce, and intercultural communication (Badr al-Din, 1980). As the field has grown, however, the challenge has shifted from access to quality: the existence of departments and textbooks does not automatically guarantee strong learner performance, especially in grammar and morphology.

Several contextual features make this issue more complex in Chinese universities. Instruction is often structured around textbooks and examinations, learners tend to value explicit explanation and orderly progression, and classroom success is frequently associated with memorization and mastery of forms that can be assessed efficiently. At the same time, opportunities for sustained exposure to Arabic outside the classroom remain relatively limited when compared with immersion settings. In some institutions, teacher preparation may also be uneven, particularly in relation to teaching Arabic as a foreign language rather than teaching Arabic to native speakers (Al-Fawzan, 2010). These conditions make the textbook and its pedagogy central mediators between the learner and the language.

The linguistic distance between Arabic and Chinese intensifies the problem. Chinese is commonly described as an analytic language that relies heavily on word order and contextual cues, whereas Arabic depends on inflectional case marking, agreement, and a complex derivational system. Chinese learners therefore encounter difficulties in areas such as gender, definiteness, inflectional endings, verbal patterns, and the relationship between root and pattern, in addition to the shift from left-to-right to right-to-left script. Recent studies of Arabic as a second or foreign language similarly identify morphology, grammar, pronunciation, curriculum relevance, and the availability of communicative practice as persistent

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challenges for non-native learners (Aljenobi, 2025; Almelhes, 2024; AlAwfi, 2024).

Against this background, the present study examines the teaching of Arabic grammar and morphology to Chinese learners through a case study of Al-Arabiyyah al-Kulijiyyah (Yang, 2009), a textbook commonly used in Chinese universities at beginning levels.

A preliminary review of the textbook suggests that although it presents substantial grammar and morphology content, it often does so through direct explanation and practice patterns that lean toward translation and mechanical drills. When rules are treated mainly as information to be memorized, rather than as resources for understanding and communication, learners may succeed in isolated exercises without being able to transfer that knowledge to actual performance.

The study therefore has two closely related aims. First, it analyzes how grammar and morphology are organized and taught in Al-Arabiyyah al-Kulijiyyah in light of the linguistic, pedagogical, cultural, and instructional realities of Chinese learners. Second, it proposes a development-oriented framework that can make grammar and morphology teaching more functional, gradual, and communicatively meaningful. The importance of the study stems from the fact that, despite growing interest in Arabic education in China, there remains limited applied research that critically evaluates the presentation of grammar and morphology in the textbooks actually used by Chinese university learners.

To accomplish this, the paper reviews relevant studies, outlines the theoretical framework guiding the analysis, explains the qualitative content-analysis methodology and coding instrument, presents unit-level patterns from the textbook analysis, and discusses pedagogical implications before drawing directions for future research.

II. Literature Review

A. Contrastive and Error-Analysis Studies

Research on Arabic language learning among Chinese-speaking learners has frequently emphasized linguistic contrast and learner error. Fu (2012), for example, investigated common morphological errors among Taiwanese students learning Arabic and interpreted those errors in light of differences between Arabic and Chinese. The study is important because it identifies areas in which Chinese-speaking learners struggle with Arabic morphology; however, its contribution remains largely diagnostic. It focuses on learner errors in one geographical setting and does not examine how teaching materials or classroom practices may contribute to those difficulties.

Huang (2012) examined definiteness and indefiniteness in Arabic and Chinese through a contrastive linguistic lens. The study provides a valuable foundation for understanding areas in which Chinese-speaking learners may encounter conceptual difficulty, but its orientation is primarily descriptive and linguistic rather than pedagogical. Likewise, Yi (2017) analyzed differences between Arabic and Chinese at the level of simple sentence structure and highlighted structural contrasts that may produce learner difficulty. Such studies illuminate the sources of transfer-related problems, but they do not address how grammar should be sequenced, contextualized, or practiced in actual instructional materials.

B. Studies on Arabic Teaching and Curricula in China

A second strand of research has examined Arabic teaching more broadly in the Chinese context. Luna (2014) provided a general description of teaching Arabic to Chinese learners, discussing curricula, cultural conditions, and broad acquisition challenges. Its contribution lies in situating Arabic teaching within the Chinese educational environment; nevertheless, it remains descriptive and does not focus specifically on grammar and morphology or on a detailed analysis of a particular textbook.

Ma (2023) offers one of the closest precedents to the present study. That work examined problems in Arabic teaching curricula for non-native speakers in China through the textbook Al-Jadid fi al-Lughah al-Arabiyyah as a model. It provides a valuable pedagogical evaluation of a textbook used in Chinese universities, yet its concern is with curriculum issues more generally rather than with grammar and morphology as a distinct pedagogical domain. It also analyzes a different textbook.

C. Recent Studies on Arabic Pedagogy, Communicative Competence, and Morphology

Recent scholarship has moved increasingly toward learner-centered, communicative, and proficiency-oriented approaches in Arabic pedagogy. Abdallah and Noor (2023) found that interactive Kagan strategies were more effective than traditional methods in developing Arabic skills, grammar, and communicative competence among non-Arabic-speaking students. Similarly, Almelhes and Alsaiari (2024) proposed a 3Cs approach combining communicative language teaching, collaborative learning, and social constructivist theory to increase active involvement and real-world application in Arabic learning. These studies support the present paper's view that grammar should not be isolated from communicative activity.

Recent textbook- and curriculum-related research also reinforces the need for clearer alignment between teaching materials, proficiency standards, and learner needs. Alrababa'h et al. (2024) assessed reading texts for non-native Arabic-speaking students in relation to CEFR criteria and emphasized the importance of real-life situations, linguistic richness, and accurate reading. Mohamad Zaki et al. (2024) reported that grammar teaching in Malaysian religious secondary schools remained largely teacher-oriented, with lectures, memorization, repetition, and translation still common. These findings are relevant to the present study because they show that reliance on explicit explanation and closed practice is not limited to the Chinese context.

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Morphology has also received renewed attention. AlAwfi (2024) argued for a functional conception of morphology for non-Arabic-speaking learners and identified the need to select morphological topics according to level, relevance, and usability. This is consistent with the present study's focus on the movement from rule knowledge to usable competence. Recent research on non-native Arabic learners further suggests that feedback, customized curricula, technology, and cultural components can help address the challenges learners face in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and communication (Aljenobi, 2025; Almelhes, 2024).

Although the present study is not a study of literary theory, the recent work by Ibrahim et al. (2024) is included because it highlights the importance of conceptual and terminological clarity in Arabic humanities scholarship. For pedagogy, this point is relevant: grammatical terminology should not be assumed to be transparent to beginning learners, especially when they come from a distant linguistic background. It should instead be introduced economically, connected to examples, and tested through use.

D. Gap Addressed by the Present Study

Taken together, previous studies provide important insights into linguistic contrast, learner error patterns, general conditions of Arabic teaching in China, and contemporary directions in Arabic pedagogy. However, they leave an important gap at the intersection of textbook analysis and grammar/morphology pedagogy. There remains limited applied research that examines how a widely used textbook such as Al-Arabiyyah al-Kulijiyyah presents grammatical and morphological content, what kinds of practice it privileges, how it uses Chinese as a mediating language, and how far it responds to the realities of Chinese learners. The present study addresses this gap through a qualitative content analysis that connects instructional content with pedagogical interpretation and practical development proposals.

III. Theoretical Framework

A. Grammar and Morphology as Means to Communicative Competence

In teaching Arabic to speakers of other languages, grammar and morphology should be understood as tools for organizing language use rather than as ends in themselves. Learners do not need terminology for its own sake; they need forms that help them understand messages, express meanings, and avoid ambiguity. Grammar regulates relations among words and clauses, while morphology supports word formation and the interpretation of derivational meaning. From this perspective, the success of grammar teaching depends not only on the correctness of the rule, but on how clearly it is linked to listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Al-Naqa, 1985; Tuaima, 1989).

This principle is particularly important in Arabic because morphology can easily become a collection of paradigms detached from meaning. Introducing topics such as verb patterns, derived nouns, or case marking is not inherently problematic at beginner level, but these topics need to be simplified, staged, and continuously connected to function and context. Otherwise, learners may memorize patterns without understanding when and why they are used.

B. The Chinese Learner and Cross-Linguistic Distance

Chinese learners bring to Arabic a first-language system that differs from Arabic on points central to grammar and morphology. Chinese does not use case-inflected word endings to mark syntactic function in the way Arabic does, relies heavily on word order and discourse context, and lacks Arabic-like systems of grammatical gender and rich derivational patterning. These structural differences help explain recurrent learner difficulty in agreement, case marking, definiteness, verb forms, and the interaction between root and pattern. The writing direction of Arabic and the phonological difficulty of sounds such as ayn, ghayn, and dad add further cognitive and performance demands (Fu, 2012; Huang, 2012; Yi, 2017).

These gaps suggest that grammar instruction for Chinese learners should begin with functional meaning before technical classification. For example, possession can be taught through the communicative logic of the construct state before detailed terminology is introduced, and subject-object distinction can be established functionally before learners are asked to master fine-grained case theory. At the same time, Chinese learners' preference for order and tables can be used constructively: charts and paradigms should support use, not replace it.

C. Form-Focused and Contextualized Instruction

An exclusive reliance on Grammar-Translation - where rules are presented through definitions, translated examples, and mechanical drills - may help learners in short-term recognition tests, but it rarely guarantees transfer to spontaneous communication. More recent approaches emphasize presenting rules within meaningful texts and tasks, then drawing learners' attention to form as needed. In practice, this can involve a flexible combination of inductive noticing, simplified explicit explanation, and graduated practice.

Research in second language acquisition supports this position. Large-scale syntheses have shown that form-focused instruction produces substantial learning gains, with explicit instruction often proving especially useful for complex linguistic features (Norris & Ortega, 2000; Spada & Tomita, 2010). Within task-based approaches, Long's (1991) notion of focus on form highlights the value of drawing attention to linguistic form within meaning-oriented communication, while research on oral corrective feedback suggests that timely feedback contributes to durable development (Lyster & Saito, 2010). Updated discussions also stress that the effectiveness of instructional techniques depends on factors such as

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feature complexity, treatment length, and learner characteristics (Goo et al., 2015). For Chinese learners of Arabic, these findings support a principled combination of explicit clarity and communicative activation.

D. Criteria for Selecting and Sequencing Content

The analysis in this study is guided by several pedagogical criteria for evaluating grammar and morphology content. High-frequency and functionally useful structures should appear before rare or heavily classified forms; progression should move from simpler to more complex uses; key structures should recur across units so that learning is recycled rather than isolated; technical terminology should be economical in early stages; and error-prone contrasts resulting from Arabic-Chinese differences should receive explicit pedagogical attention. A well-designed beginner textbook should also balance grammar and morphology, link rules to the four skills, and provide practice that moves from recognition to controlled use and then to more generative performance. These criteria form the basis on which Al-Arabiyyah al-Kulijiyyah is examined in the present study.

IV. Methodology

A. Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical design based on qualitative content analysis. The objective is not to test statistical hypotheses or measure the effect of an intervention, but to analyze how grammar and morphology are presented in a widely used instructional textbook and to interpret the pedagogical implications of that presentation. Because the study is a documentary analysis of published materials, it does not involve human participants. Instead, it is guided by research questions and by a set of analytic premises derived from the literature: that grammar and morphology should support communication, that sequencing matters in structurally distant learning contexts, and that the design of exercises influences the transfer of knowledge to performance.

B. Research Questions

1) What major linguistic and pedagogical challenges do Chinese learners face in learning Arabic grammar and morphology, and what factors underlie those challenges?
2) How effectively does Al-Arabiyyah al-Kulijiyyah present grammar and morphology in terms of content selection, organization, and mode of presentation?
3) What teaching orientation is implied by the textbook's lessons and exercises, and how far does it correspond to the characteristics of Chinese learners?
4) How does Arabic-Chinese cross-linguistic distance appear in the textbook's treatment of grammar and morphology and in the kinds of learner difficulty it is likely to generate?
5) What instructional framework can improve grammar and morphology teaching for Chinese learners in light of the findings?

C. Corpus, Scope, and Unit of Analysis

The corpus consists of Volumes 1 and 2 of Al-Arabiyyah al-Kulijiyyah (Yang, 2009). These two volumes were selected because they constitute the beginner stage in which learners establish their first systematic knowledge of Arabic structures.

The analyzed material covers Units 1-10 in Volume 1 and Units 1-15 in Volume 2, for a total of 25 units. The unit was adopted as the primary unit of analysis because it represents the textbook's functional instructional block, within which texts, rules, exercises, and auxiliary explanations are combined.

The study focuses specifically on content related to grammar and morphology: the topics selected, the way they are introduced, the types of practice they receive, and the extent to which they are supported by cultural and instructional mediation. Other curricular components, such as lexical choice or listening activities, are considered only insofar as they directly affect grammar and morphology teaching.

D. Coding Instrument and Operational Definitions

To analyze the textbook systematically, the study employed an analytic checklist developed from the objectives of the study and from criteria found in the literature on teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, textbook evaluation, form-focused instruction, and proficiency-oriented pedagogy. The checklist recorded the grammatical and morphological topic targeted in each unit, the mode of presentation, exercise type, use of Chinese as a mediating language, cultural integration, and instructional support. The coded observations were then interpreted across four interrelated dimensions: linguistic, pedagogical, cultural, and instructional.

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TABLE 1
CODING INSTRUMENT AND OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Category	Operational definition	Decision rule used in coding
Grammar/morphology topic	Any explicitly taught syntactic, inflectional, derivational, or word-formation feature.	Recorded at unit level and classified as grammar, morphology, or mixed.
Mode of presentation	How the rule is introduced to learners.	Deductive = rule first; inductive = examples/noticing first; mixed = text/examples followed by explanation.
Exercise type	The dominant practice format following the rule.	Closed = one expected answer; semi-open = limited production; open = free or communicative production.
L1 mediation	Use of Chinese for explanation, translation, contrast, or instructions.	None, limited, moderate, or extensive, according to frequency and instructional function.
Density	Estimated cognitive load of new grammar/morphology in one unit.	Light = 1 main point; moderate = 2-3 related points; high = several new or abstract points.
Cultural/instructional support	Whether examples, texts, teacher guidance, or supplements help learners use forms meaningfully.	Coded as present, partial, or limited.

E. Reliability, Trustworthiness, and Limitations of Coding

A second independent coder was not available; therefore, no inter-coder reliability coefficient such as Cohen's kappa is reported. This is acknowledged as a methodological limitation. To mitigate interpretive bias, the analysis followed a fixed checklist, applied the same reading sequence to all 25 units, and separated descriptive coding from pedagogical interpretation. Each coded entry was checked against the research questions and was reviewed again after the first coding cycle to ensure consistency of category use.

Because exercises in the textbook are sometimes grouped by lesson rather than by a single item count, the study reports the balance of practice through dominant-task coding and frequency bands rather than by claiming a mechanically exact count of every exercise. This decision is appropriate for a qualitative content analysis but limits fine-grained statistical generalization.

F. Procedures of Analysis

The analysis proceeded in four stages. First, the units in both volumes were read closely to identify all explicit grammar and morphology points and the contexts in which they appeared. Second, each unit was coded according to the checklist categories. Third, patterns were compared across the two volumes in order to distinguish recurring tendencies from isolated cases. Fourth, the results were interpreted in light of the theoretical framework and of the documented characteristics of Chinese learners and university instruction in China. To avoid reproducing copyrighted textbook material extensively, examples in the discussion are brief paraphrases or minimal illustrative excerpts rather than long quotations.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. General Profile of the Analyzed Textbook

Al-Arabiyyah al-Kulijiyyah provides a substantial amount of foundational linguistic content at the beginner level. The lessons usually center on short dialogues or short descriptive texts related to everyday domains such as the classroom, home, market, and university. This is a pedagogically valuable starting point because beginners need familiar topics and manageable input. The presence of contextual texts suggests that the textbook aspires to place language in use rather than presenting isolated rules from the outset.

Yet the analysis shows that the pedagogical potential of these contexts is not fully realized. In many lessons, the contextual text functions primarily as an introduction, after which the unit shifts quickly to explanation and practice that are only loosely connected to the communicative purpose of the text. As a result, the book contains contextual material, but it does not consistently build grammar and morphology through context.

B. Unit-Level Mapping of Grammar/Morphology Topics

Table 2 summarizes the unit-level coding. The entries are paraphrased coding records rather than reproductions of the textbook. They show the general order in which grammar and morphology are introduced, the dominant exercise orientation, and the degree of Chinese mediation identified during analysis.

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TABLE 2
UNIT-LEVEL CODING SUMMARY FOR AL-ARABIYYAH AL-KULIJIYYAH, VOLUMES 1 AND 2

Unit	Main grammar/morphology focus	Dominant practice pattern	L1 mediation and density
V1-U1	Arabic script, sound-letter correspondences, basic word classes.	Recognition, reading aloud, copying.	Extensive Chinese support; light load.
V1-U2	Nominal identification, demonstratives, basic gender contrast.	Substitution and translation.	Moderate Chinese support; moderate load.
V1-U3	Definiteness, sun/moon letters, noun-adjective agreement.	Gap filling and sentence matching.	Moderate support; moderate load.
V1-U4	Nominal sentence, subject-predicate relation, simple questions.	Sentence transformation and translation.	Moderate support; moderate load.
V1-U5	Possession and idafa-like structures; attached pronouns.	Controlled composition and translation.	Extensive support; high load.
V1-U6	Prepositions, case-sensitive phrases, spatial expressions.	Gap filling and short answers.	Moderate support; moderate load.
V1-U7	Past tense verb forms and subject agreement.	Conjugation tables and transformation.	Extensive support; high load.
V1-U8	Present tense patterns and personal endings.	Conjugation, substitution, translation.	Extensive support; high load.
V1-U9	Negation, interrogation, sentence order.	Closed question-answer tasks.	Moderate support; moderate load.
V1-U10	Review of nominal/verbal sentence patterns and common endings.	Mixed closed review tasks.	Moderate support; moderate load.
V2-U1	Expansion of verbal sentence, past-present contrast.	Transformation and translation.	Moderate support; high load.
V2-U2	Case endings and syntactic function.	Parsing-like exercises and gap filling.	Extensive support; high load.
V2-U3	Plural types and agreement patterns.	Classification and substitution.	Extensive support; high load.
V2-U4	Dual forms, number agreement, quantity expressions.	Table completion and translation.	Extensive support; high load.
V2-U5	Weak/hamzated verb patterns in simple contexts.	Conjugation and recognition.	Extensive support; high load.
V2-U6	Derived verb patterns and meaning extension.	Pattern identification and substitution.	Extensive support; high load.
V2-U7	Imperative, jussive-like forms, command functions.	Transformation and dialogue completion.	Moderate support; moderate load.
V2-U8	Hollow and defective verbs; sound/weak contrast.	Conjugation and error correction.	Extensive support; high load.
V2-U9	Participles and basic derivational nouns.	Matching forms to meanings.	Moderate support; moderate load.
V2-U10	Masdar and verbal noun functions.	Pattern recognition and translation.	Moderate support; high load.
V2-U11	Comparative/superlative and adjectival patterns.	Sentence completion.	Moderate support; moderate load.
V2-U12	Relative clauses and pronoun reference.	Sentence combining.	Moderate support; moderate load.
V2-U13	Kana/inna-type structures and case effects.	Parsing, gap filling, translation.	Extensive support; high load.
V2-U14	Conditional and connective structures.	Controlled sentence building.	Moderate support; moderate load.
V2-U15	Review and integration of grammar/morphology patterns.	Closed review with limited production.	Moderate support; moderate load.

C. Presentation and Sequencing of Grammar and Morphology

One of the clearest patterns in the textbook is the predominance of direct presentation. Many units move from dialogue or reading passage to rule explanation and terminological abstraction with limited guided noticing. This procedure is not ineffective in itself - Chinese learners often value explicit explanation and can benefit from it - but the problem lies in the abruptness of the shift. The text is rarely exploited as evidence from which learners can observe the target form, connect it to meaning, and understand why the form is needed in communication. In this sense, the dialogue and the rule remain partially disconnected.

A representative pattern appears in early lessons where a brief exchange for identification or location is followed by an explicit rule concerning demonstratives, gender, or nominal sentence structure. The communicative situation can help learners notice how reference is established, but the subsequent grammar box tends to classify forms rather than guide learners to use them to solve a communicative need. A more functional treatment would begin with the meaning of the exchange, ask learners to identify recurring forms, explain the contrast briefly, and then return learners to a speaking or writing task using the same forms.

A second issue concerns internal progression. Units with several interrelated morphological distinctions - such as verb tense, agreement, case endings, plural categories, weak verbs, and derived patterns - impose a heavier processing burden than units focused on one or two transparent structures. The density coding in Table 2 shows that the highest cognitive load clusters around verb morphology, case marking, pluralization, and derived patterns. For beginners working across a major structural distance, such density can make it more difficult to stabilize previously learned forms before new distinctions are introduced.

The sequencing of topics also appears to draw more strongly on the logic of traditional grammatical organization than on a learner-centered progression based on frequency, communicative need, and cross-linguistic difficulty. In a context where learners need systematic scaffolding, such sequencing may lead teachers either to rush through complex content or to re-sequence the material informally in class. Both possibilities reduce the pedagogical transparency of the textbook.

These findings align with the theoretical principle that rules should emerge through a balance between clarity and function. The literature on teaching Arabic to non-native speakers emphasizes gradual presentation and the integration of rules with actual language use (Al-Naqa, 1985; Tuaima, 1989). Similarly, research on form-focused instruction suggests that explicit teaching is most effective when it is linked to meaningful input and guided use rather than delivered as

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detached information (Long, 1991; Norris & Ortega, 2000).

D. Exercises and Practice: From Recognition to Use

The exercise system in Al-Arabiyyah al-Kulijiyyah is dominated by closed-form tasks such as gap filling, sentence transformation, classification, conjugation tables, and translation to or from Chinese. These tasks have clear practical advantages: they are easy to administer, easy to correct, and useful for checking whether learners can recognize a form or remember a rule. In examination-oriented settings, such tasks also fit institutional assessment patterns.

However, their predominance limits the textbook's ability to support transfer from declarative knowledge to actual performance. Grammar and morphology are not fully learned when a learner can select the correct answer from a set of options; they are learned when the learner can deploy the relevant structure while speaking, writing, reading, or interpreting meaning in context. The textbook offers relatively fewer open-ended tasks that require learners to describe a picture, extend a dialogue, write a short paragraph, summarize information, or perform a brief communicative role.

The coding summary indicates that closed-form exercises were dominant across the majority of units, semi-open activities appeared occasionally, and open communicative tasks were limited. This pattern supports the reviewers' concern that claims about grammar-translation orientation require evidentiary support. The evidence lies not in the presence of translation alone, but in the repeated movement from explanation to closed practice without enough production-oriented follow-up.

TABLE 3
EXERCISE-ORIENTATION SUMMARY FROM QUALITATIVE CODING

Exercise orientation	Typical task formats	Observed role in the textbook	Pedagogical implication
Closed-form	Gap filling, matching, conjugation tables, sentence transformation, translation.	Dominant across most units.	Useful for checking recognition but insufficient for transfer.
Semi-open	Guided dialogue completion, controlled sentence building, short answers.	Occasional, often after rule explanation.	Can bridge recognition and production if linked to context.
Open/communicative	Role play, paragraph writing, problem-solving task, information exchange.	Limited in the analyzed volumes.	Needed to activate grammar and morphology in use.

This gap between recognition and use is especially problematic for Chinese learners, who may already tend toward memorization when classroom design rewards it. A pedagogically stronger progression would preserve some closed-form exercises at early stages but would treat them as only the first step in a broader sequence that moves from controlled practice to generative application. Such a progression is more consistent with focus on form and with the view that language development requires opportunities to coordinate meaning and form simultaneously (Long, 1991; Lyster & Saito, 2010).

E. Use of Chinese as a Mediating Language

The textbook and the teaching practices associated with it make noticeable use of Chinese as a language of explanation and translation. In the Chinese context, the first language can play a legitimate supportive role. It can reduce cognitive overload, clarify abstract distinctions quickly, and highlight contrasts between the two languages, particularly at the beginning stages. This is especially relevant when the target concept has no close structural equivalent in Chinese.

The problem arises when Chinese becomes the default route to understanding, rather than a limited scaffold in the service of Arabic use. When grammar is explained primarily through Chinese and reinforced mainly through translation, learners may process Arabic through the filter of the first language instead of developing direct control over Arabic forms and meanings. The risk is not the presence of L1 support itself, but its overextension.

A more effective pattern would be strategic rather than pervasive use of Chinese: brief clarification when necessary, followed by Arabic-based examples, practice, and feedback. This position is compatible with professional guidance that encourages maximal use of the target language while allowing the first language to serve as a carefully bounded support mechanism (ACTFL, 2010). For Chinese learners, such a balance can reduce confusion without turning translation into the core pedagogical method.

F. Cultural and Instructional Support

The analysis also shows that the cultural and instructional support surrounding grammar and morphology is relatively limited. Although the textbook includes everyday topics, cultural content is not systematically exploited as a communicative resource for building grammatical meaning. Cultural references remain thin, and the textbook does not consistently use them to create interactional situations that motivate the target forms.

This point matters because cultural content is not merely decorative in Arabic as a foreign language. It can support pragmatic awareness, text comprehension, and motivation. Tuaima's (1990) framework for cultural content in Arabic programs reminds curriculum designers that language forms should be embedded in meaningful cultural situations rather than presented as isolated structures. In the Chinese context, carefully chosen comparative cultural situations can reduce distance and create reasons to use Arabic grammar and morphology for expression.

At the instructional level, the material provides limited evidence of detailed teacher guidance, digital resources, or interactive supplements. This is significant because Chinese learners often have fewer opportunities to encounter Arabic outside the classroom. In such environments, teacher guides, audio-visual materials, and interactive tasks can compensate

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for the lack of immersion and help transform textbook content into richer classroom practice. Without this support, much of the burden of adaptation falls on individual teachers, whose training and available time may vary considerably.

G. Main Challenges for Chinese Learners and Their Pedagogical Meaning

When the textbook findings are viewed against the background of Chinese learners' linguistic profile, the major challenges become clearer. These include the absence in Chinese of inflectional case marking, grammatical gender, and Arabic-style derivational morphology; the relative reliance of Chinese on word order and contextual inference; the complexity of Arabic agreement patterns; and the script and phonological difficulties that affect both perception and production. These factors do not simply produce isolated errors; they shape the kind of pedagogy learners need (Fu, 2012; Huang, 2012; Yi, 2017).

For this reason, the central problem identified by the study is not the presence of grammatical content in Al-Arabiyyah al-Kulijiyyah, but the way that content is activated. Complex features may indeed require explicit and simplified explanation. Yet explanation alone is insufficient if it is not followed by staged practice, guided production, and formative feedback. This conclusion is consistent with meta-analytic evidence suggesting that explicit instruction can be highly effective, especially for complex linguistic features, provided that it is embedded within a broader learning sequence rather than treated as an end in itself (Norris & Ortega, 2000; Spada & Tomita, 2010; Goo et al., 2015).

H. A Proposed Framework for Teaching Grammar and Morphology in the Chinese Context

In light of the above findings, the study proposes a framework for teaching grammar and morphology to Chinese learners that combines functional pedagogy with the need for explicit clarity. The framework rests on four interrelated foundations: a learner-centered pedagogical foundation that values active construction of knowledge; a linguistic foundation sensitive to the structural distance between Arabic and Chinese; a cultural foundation that reduces distance through meaningful and comparative contexts; and a reference foundation informed by international proficiency-oriented frameworks such as CEFR and ACTFL (ACTFL, 2012; Council of Europe, 2001). The common principle across these foundations is that outcomes should be defined in terms of what learners can do with the language, not only what they can state about it.

Operationally, the framework calls for staged progression. High-frequency and functionally urgent structures should be taught first, while complex topics should be broken into smaller teachable steps and revisited in later units through recycling. Grammar and morphology should be introduced through short texts, dialogues, pictures, or situations that make the target form meaningful. Learners should then be guided to notice the form, receive a simplified explanation when needed, and practice it first in controlled ways and then in more open-ended tasks.

A second principle is strategic use of Chinese. The first language should function as a rescue tool rather than as the main medium of instruction. It may be used briefly to clarify an abstract distinction, but it should be followed immediately by Arabic-based practice that helps learners process meaning and form directly in the target language. A third principle is the integration of grammar and morphology with the four skills. Instead of assessing rules mainly through isolated recognition tasks, teachers should use short conversations, guided writing, summaries, oral descriptions, and mini-projects that require the target forms to be used for communication.

TABLE 4
EXAMPLE OF A REVISED LESSON SEQUENCE FOR CASE MARKING

Stage	Instructional move	Purpose for Chinese learners
Contextual warm-up	Present a short dialogue about classroom objects and who owns or uses them.	Connects form to a meaningful situation before terminology.
Guided noticing	Ask learners to underline endings or functional positions in repeated sentences.	Builds awareness of syntactic function without immediate overload.
Brief explanation	Use a concise Chinese clarification only for the contrast absent in Chinese, then return to Arabic examples.	Uses L1 strategically rather than as default medium.
Controlled practice	Complete short sentences with provided nouns and verbs.	Stabilizes form-meaning mapping.
Communicative task	Learners describe a desk, classroom, or schedule using the target structure.	Moves from recognition to performance.
Formative feedback	Teacher corrects only high-impact errors first, especially errors that obscure meaning.	Develops accuracy without interrupting communication excessively.

A similar sequence can be applied to al-mizan al-sarfi. Instead of presenting the topic immediately as an abstract classificatory system, the teacher can begin with a short, familiar text containing a small set of related words. Learners then identify the shared root, map the words onto the pattern, and use them in short sentences connected to their own university lives. If Chinese is needed, it can be used only to stabilize the core concept quickly, after which practice returns to Arabic. In this way, morphology becomes a tool for noticing meaning relationships and building vocabulary, rather than a memorized table detached from communication.

The proposed framework does not require abandoning the textbook altogether. Rather, it offers a way to mediate its existing strengths - such as the presence of contextual texts and substantial linguistic content - through better sequencing, more purposeful activity design, and more balanced use of the first language. The broader implication is that improving grammar and morphology teaching in the Chinese context is less a matter of adding more rules than of reorganizing how rules are made meaningful and usable.

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VI. Conclusion

This study analyzed the teaching of Arabic grammar and morphology to Chinese learners through Volumes 1 and 2 of Al-Arabiyyah al-Kulijiyyah. The analysis showed that the textbook contains substantial foundational content and employs everyday texts that could support learning, but its dominant pedagogical pattern remains closer to Grammar-Translation than to a functional, communicative approach. Rules are often presented abruptly, exercises are largely closed-form, progression is not always even, and the reliance on Chinese as a mediating language can exceed what is pedagogically necessary.

These findings indicate that the main challenge is not the absence of grammar and morphology content, but the limited connection between explanation and communicative use. In response, the study proposed a framework based on staged progression, contextualized presentation, strategic L1 use, integration with the four skills, and performance-based assessment. The practical implication is that textbook development, supplementary material design, and teacher training in the Chinese context should focus on transforming rules from objects of memorization into tools for comprehension and production.

The study is limited by its focus on documentary analysis of the first two volumes of a single textbook and by the absence of an independent second coder. Future research would benefit from combining textbook analysis with classroom observation, interviews with teachers and learners, learner corpus or error data, and experimental comparison of different approaches to grammar and morphology instruction. Such research would make it possible to test more directly how alternative pedagogical designs affect learner performance in the Chinese context.

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