

A Conceptual Framework for Teaching Arabic as a Second Language

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Abstract—Despite the increasing demand for learning foreign languages such as Arabic, approaches to teaching this language remain under-explored. The increasing complexity of classrooms renders the task of ensuring that learners with diverse backgrounds and experiences attain the stated objectives, challenging. To address this challenge, this study proposes the 3Cs approach, which combines communicative language teaching, collaborative learning and social constructivist theory, to improve the teaching and learning of Arabic. This approach integrates communicative techniques based on social constructivist theory and is implemented through the acquisition of shared knowledge of the environment. The 3Cs-based approach, which promotes students' active involvement, has the potential to facilitate comprehensive learning and real-world applications, offering new opportunities for both teachers and students to improve outcomes and address classroom difficulties.

Index Terms—Arabic language, second language acquisition, communicative language teaching approach, collaborative learning, social constructivist theory

I. INTRODUCTION

Effective teaching of a second language is vital to enable students to develop strong language skills. However, the traditional method of language teaching, with its emphasis on grammar rules and vocabulary memorization, has been criticized for its shortcomings. Students often struggle to grasp language concepts without collective communication and experience limited engagement which hinders their overall language acquisition. Thus, traditional methods alone are insufficient to meet the diverse needs of modern learners (Smith, 2019; Smith & Renzulli, 1984; Mokhtar, 2016). Albantani and Madkur (2019) reported that Arabic was the fifth most spoken language in the world in 2019 with 422 million speakers in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries. Since then, the Arabic language has continuously attracted worldwide attention, which has spread beyond traditional Muslim countries (Keshav et al., 2022). Berbeco (2017) reported a growing demand for Arabic in elementary, middle and high schools in America. Similarly, an increased demand for learning Arabic in the US, UK and the rest of Europe has been observed from pre-school to tertiary education (Soliman & Khalil, 2022). These observations highlight the importance of the Arabic language and the need to focus on effective ways of teaching it in educational institutions.

Despite its increasing growth and popularity, teaching Arabic as a second language is challenging for teachers mainly due to the lack of training in teaching and assessment methods, teaching materials and resources and the high variation in Arabic dialects (Soliman & Khalil, 2022). Furthermore, traditional Arabic teaching methods cannot address challenges posed by the diversity of background and experiences of students, especially bilingual ones. Soliman and Khalil (2022) reported a preference of Arabic teachers for traditional grammar-based rather than a more pragmatic communicative teaching approach, which often poses challenges to students learning Arabic as a second language. Similarly, while teachers may be aware of novel and more practical approaches to teaching Arabic, they do not always apply them, preferring their own conservative and traditional teaching methods (Snowden et al., 2016). Furthermore, due to the growing demand for Arabic and the evolving needs of learners, teachers have been forced to adjust their Arabic teaching approaches in order to achieve the desired goals and objectives (Berbeco, 2017). Without this adjustment, the teaching of Arabic as a second language could be problematic.

The teaching of Arabic as a second language in the Saudi context is impeded by various challenges. Although Arabic is taught as a compulsory subject and medium of instruction in Saudi public schools from primary to secondary schools, the ability of teachers to teach this language to students learning Arabic as a second language has proven to be insufficient (Albaha & Li, 2012). Early evidence of the gap between language teaching advancements and teacher preparation has been reported by Alghamdi and Li (2012). They noted that while there have been advancements in the teaching of the language, teacher preparation has not been adjusted to match these developments. This is further emphasized in a later study by Taha (2017) reporting that Arabic teachers in Saudi Arabia faced challenges in equipping their students with 21st century skills, such as critical thinking and collaboration. More recently, Batakji-Chazy (2020) has argued that the pedagogy of Arabic language teachers should be revisited, noting that most teachers relied on

impractical, out-of-touch teaching approaches that did not lead to the attainment of the established goals and approaches. Therefore, the teaching approaches used in teaching Arabic as a second language in the Saudi context merit more attention. In the present study, the use of the 3Cs approach which combines the communicative language teaching (CLT), collaborative learning (CL) and social constructivist theory (SCT), is proposed as a promising alternative to facilitate effective teaching of Arabic as a second language.

The literature on the challenges of teaching Arabic as a second language in colleges highlights the shortcomings of traditional approaches (Albantani & Madkur, 2019), while studies on new approaches suitable for addressing this problem are limited. Under this light, this paper discusses the current status and limitations of current approaches in teaching of Arabic as a second language and the use of the 3Cs approach, namely, the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, collaborative learning (CL) and social constructivist theory (SCT). Specifically, this study had the following objectives:

- i. To provide a comprehensive overview of current approaches in teaching Arabic as a second language and their shortcomings.
- ii. To discuss the concept of the 3Cs approach for teaching Arabic as a second language.

II. LIMITATIONS OF TRADITIONAL APPROACHES IN TEACHING OF ARABIC AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Despite the implementation of innovations, traditional language learning methods have exhibited limitations in adapting to new approaches (Akbaria, 2015). Scholars learning Arabic as an additional language should focus on improving their delivery and pronunciation of the language to align with the specific community that uses it for conversation and communication, as suggested by Almelhes (2016). Although there is no single method that can satisfy all language seekers' needs, CL and the application of SCT have recently become more valuable in addressing these needs.

According to Gass (2017) and Jeffreys (2015), individuals interested in learning a second language such as Arabic need to acquire spoken language capabilities not only via obtaining information on vocabulary, diction and grammar but also through the practice of conversation. Furthermore, Kang (2010) and Long (2014) have both argued that second language learners often resort to their first language when faced with new challenges for understanding and exploring the vocabulary in comparison to ideas or instances they have learned. Similarly, Ilhan and Oruc (2016) observed that during initial steps of language acquisition, a major problem arises when people learn to solve Arabic letters. This highlights the need for an approach -or set of approaches- that can be employed to improve the acquisition of Arabic as a second language. An ideal standard for classroom learning that enhances speaking and literacy skills, promotes students' communication proficiency, and understanding of the language in their community, can be achieved through a learner-centered approach emphasizing active participation. Acquiring a second language is a powerful and demanding skill. The significance of the learning environment in learning Arabic as a second language cannot be overemphasized. Obaki (2017) suggests that a learning environment should be suitable for the grade level of the students and should enhance their learning through encouraging communication and collaboration with others. An ideal learning environment should foster the acquisition of new skills and ideas, as well as help learners communicate in a new language through familiar concepts and forms. Furthermore, as students' comprehension deepens, they may encounter misconceptions and seek to replace them with new ideas. In some instances, they may realize that multiple types of syntactic rules can be applied. Padurean and Margan (2009) noted that students' perspectives shift as their understanding and expertise grow. Overall, in such learning environments students can enhance their comprehension using research, developing new strategies to replace outdated ones and examining existing knowledge to gain a deeper understanding (Almelhes, 2016).

According to Nor and Ab Rashid (2018), the acquisition of fluency in a language, including Arabic, is influenced by various interconnected factors, and no single linguistic approach can ensure this outcome. This highlights the importance of combining more than one teaching approaches to achieve the desirable outcome. This paper, therefore, aims to outline the benefits of implementing the 3Cs approach in the instruction of Arabic as a second language and the administrative considerations for training Arabic language teachers in Saudi colleges and other similar settings to adopt the standards of the suggested model. It also explores methods to reform and enhance current pedagogical methods, which have mainly relied on instructor-centric methods. The outcomes of this study could be beneficial in enhancing Arabic teaching techniques for individuals learning a second language who are not native Arabic speakers and may inspire teachers to support Arab organizations that concentrate on Arabic education.

III. APPROACHES TO TEACHING ARABIC AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

The 3Cs approach proposes the integration of the communicative language teaching (CLT), collaborative learning (CL) and social constructivist theory (SCT).

A. *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)*

The communicative language teaching approach considers a foreign language as a method of conversation rather than a set of rigid grammatical rules and complex phrases (Mitchell, 1988; Rabiah, 2018). This approach discourages rote

repetition, excessive translation exercises, and drilling of specific speech samples. In addition, each class can be made vibrant, exciting and dynamic using a communicative teaching approach (Dörnyei, 2009). The unique characteristics of the CLT approach are highlighted by Eisenring and Margana (2019) and Al-Khafaji (2015), which conclude that this approach specializes in interactions among college students through the use of the language outside the classroom setting.

Researchers reported that the CLT approach emphasizes the communicative length instead of focusing on grammatical language traits (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). They also concluded that interplay in and outside the classroom is essential in communicative language education (Nunam, 1991; Tiwari, 2021). According to Illés and Akcan (2017), foreign language teaching should prioritize real-life conversation, implying that CLT is focused on the practical acquisition of language skills. Furthermore, CLT approaches allow beginners to use the target language directly. Dos Santos (2020) and Yuan (2013) both noted that the central focus of the CLT approach is on student-centered methods, which empower the learner to take control of their learning. This emphasis provides students with a significant advantage in their second language acquisition efforts.

The CLT approach differs significantly from traditional language teaching approaches. The major goal of the traditional way of teaching a second language, often known as the grammar-translation method, is to provide college learners with a conceptual understanding of the grammatical and lexical shape of sentence structures (Eisa, 2020). In this method, university students memorize norms and texts, as well as translating them (Richards, 2005) instead of being introduced to communication behaviors by asking questions, questioning what they hear and expressing joy, surprise or anger. In contrast, the CLT approach tends to use linguistic context in terms of real communication (Abdulkader, 2016). When adopting a CLT approach, students must utilize the target language's forms, meanings, and functions to effectively communicate (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Furthermore, Byram and Mendez (2009) conducted research aimed at establishing clear guidelines for a communicative approach to language teaching. They proposed that students should refrain from using their native language in the classroom, while being able to engage in natural conversations in pairs. These language proficiency requirements imply the need for total separation from the native language environment.

Several other researchers have studied the CLT approach including Dos Santos (2020), who stated that the essential precept of the CLT approach is to operate with real language in real situations. This develops the ability to communicate effectively and fluently, enabling the learner to speak without hesitation and avoid awkward pauses in conversations (Irmawati, 2012). Relatedly, Gatbonton and Segalowitz (2005) and Belchamber (2007) suggested that the CLT could be enhanced with recreational elements, such as function-gambling games, where students are asked to imagine a secure setting and engage in dialogues using the vocabulary or grammar they have learned. Furthermore, Hiep (2007) asserted that learning is most effective in situations that are as authentic as possible. According to Gurunathan and Geethanjali (2016), working in groups of two or more is best. Marpuah (2019) noted that one of the particular problems Arabic learners faced is understanding Arabic grammar. Under the framework of the CLT approach, grammar must be studied in context to improve understanding. In this regard, the learner should be aware of the circumstances in which a particular grammatical form should be used. Belchamber (2007) emphasized that the 'direct to speech' principle may be exceptionally valuable when studying grammar as students use what they learn in context. Furthermore, in the implementation of the CLT approach, the student not only learns to speak in Arabic and acquire information but also communicates with others. To understand what a person is saying, a student must possess the ability to engage in a complete conversation and develop their listening skills (Belchamber, 2007). It is important to link language instruction in the classroom with opportunities for language learning outside the classroom (Nunam, 1991). The CLT method, therefore, requires the use of assets that offer a wide variety of several auditory and videotape samples recorded locally (Çakir, 2006; Chamba & Gavilanes, 2019).

Another advantage of CLT is the diverse range of teaching methods it employs, such as small group activities, the use of video games, and engaging cognitive materials and videos to facilitate learning (Thamarana, 2015). Another important aspect of the CLT concerns the role of the educator, which is to coordinate the students' learning procedure by providing guidance, stimulating their speech, and engaging them in active conversation (Hasim et al., 2016). The communicative method of teaching Arabic is suitable for individuals who have not had prior experience in speaking Arabic.

Much work has been done to determine how the CLT approach affects SLA. For instance, Haron (2015) designed a 14-week series of classroom activities based on the communicative approach using a sample that included learners of Arabic as a second language (ASL). Their findings indicated that the students' perception of Arabic and their capacity to speak improved during the training, which helped them to overcome their speaking difficulties. Using the CLT approach, Marpuah (2019) observed a favorable impact of studying Arabic on skills such as speaking, sentence formation, vocabulary and enhanced comprehension of the scriptures. Furthermore, Bahruddina et al. (2021) suggested that some activities to aid Arabic language acquisition might include questioning, speaking and problem solving among a group of students. In addition, Alsaiani (2016) documented the perspectives of 24 male primary educators of Arabic on teaching through CLT approaches, which were informed by the new literacy theory in Saudi Arabia.

B. Collaborative Learning (CL)

Collaborative learning (CL) has been shown to be an efficient way to enhance students' understanding (Altamimi &

Attamimi, 2014; Chamberlin, 2010; Keser & Ozdamli, 2012; Pattanpichet, 2011; Sugianto, 2022). It has changed the role of the instructor from a mere source of information to that of a helper who supports students in understanding and obtaining knowledge (Altamimi & Attamimi, 2014). Furthermore, CL helps learners acquire knowledge at a rate that suits their capabilities. Pallof and Pratt (2005) perceived that CL techniques can help most students learn a language more efficiently. Furthermore, students who learn in groups perform better than those who work individually, particularly in terms of improved learning outcomes and higher scores on standardized and teacher-made tests (Van Leeuwen & Janssen, 2019).

Many studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of CL. Scager et al. (2016) reported that students who participated in a CL environment learned how to absorb information and confidently interact in group settings. Additionally, they learned how to appreciate their success and accomplishments when working collaboratively. West et al. (2015) concluded that students learning in groups were not only responsible for their own learning but also helped their peers learn. Rosen and Rimor (2016) discovered that CL is influenced by two factors: the subject being taught and the institution where it is taught. They first discussed the evolution of the concept of a collaborative education system, and then they analyzed different collaborative conditions from various perspectives such as the individual, persuasive elements, societies, the group of individuals and their relationship with each other in a collaborative learning environment. Therefore, mastering the collaborative technique plays a central role in learning any language (Le et al., 2018), including Arabic, where this approach has been found to be even more effective (Al-Shehari, 2017).

Due to the interactive nature of language acquisition, and since students often talk loudly during their classroom sessions, language mastering varies based on the surroundings and the different educational topics. According to researchers, CL can enable inexperienced individuals to respond with a degree of autonomy and develop their personal understanding base (Hussain, 2012). Furthermore, sports activities that are related to collaboration in communicative methods can provide crucial means for learning Arabic. Additionally, collaborative reading is a successful method used by teachers to enhance the communicative competencies of students (Al-Shehari, 2017).

Benefits from applying the CL approach have been reported by a number of researchers. Farha et al. (2017) studied a group learning environment for Arabic by gathering information from teachers with the help of survey forms containing questions based on a CL scheme for Arabic. The teachers discovered that CL not only enabled pupils to learn by strengthening their linguistic abilities but also increased their fondness for Arabic, philosophy and literature. In a related study, Alwaleedi et al. (2018) studied collaborative writing procedures, reactions and consequences in the classes of two ASL teachers. The study focused on the writing skills of 64 pupils. It was a combination of a qualitative case study and a quasi-experimental design. And the researchers collected information by monitoring the learning facilities and using tape recordings of conversations. They compared the results of collaborative and traditional learning groups before and after the experiment. Different ways of interaction between students and teachers during collaborative writing were established. They concluded that the students' involvement in the collaborative writing method accounted for the marked differences in the grades of the collaborative and traditional learning groups.

Further evidence for the effectiveness of CL was provided by another study conducted by Mei et al. (2017) which examined the views of Arabic teachers toward CL methods for non-Arabic speaking learners, using a sample of instructors. The researchers concluded that CL practices were valuable inside as well as outside learning facilities as they enhanced the linguistic expertise, connections with their fellows and socialization of students. Additionally, Alwaleedi et al. (2018) analyzed the impact of CL on the writing skills of 64 pupils who were learning ASL. The researchers studied the differences in the interaction patterns during collaborative writing exercises in the control and experimental groups. They discovered that the involvement of students in collaborative writing methods was the cause of the marked differences between the grades earned by the students in the groups. This suggests that learners involved in CL can academically benefit, which is likely to be also true for those undertaking ASL. While collaborative learning is instrumental to the acquisition of second language, it is not sufficient on its own. The nature of collaboration within CL and the human interaction that can elicit the benefit of language acquisition may need further exploration, a fact which makes the use of other approaches such as social constructivism necessary.

C. *Social Constructivism Theory (SCT)*

According to the SCT, human development is socially located (Segre, 2016), where knowledge is created through social interaction. In SCT, individuals collaborate to create meaning. The emphasis of group work is placed on the learning that occurs as a result social interactions rather than on the products of the group. The language, history and social setting of a person's culture impact its cognitive development. SCT learning depends on the motivational methods used and the learning abilities and environment of learners (Zajda, 2018). SCT does not focus on the memorization or regurgitation of facts. Instead, it encourages learning by removing gaps in learners' knowledge and consequently helps students to experience things within groups (Huang & Liaw, 2018). In conclusion, SCT does not prioritize information memorization. Instead, the theory enhances the learning process by promoting student-centered learning, group study and differential techniques (Lam et al., 2021).

In SCT, learners are expected to participate actively in lessons and engaging language learning activities with groups as well as to develop independent learning skills. Furthermore, the importance of speaking is paramount and interconnected with other linguistic abilities (Rajendran & Yunus, 2021). It is possible to convey how individuals perceive their environment when there are diverse viewpoints about a specific subject (Xu & Shi, 2018). According to

Bruner (1985), SCT is an interaction-based approach to language learning. It assesses the formation of communicative concepts, linguistic expressions, and the role of engaging circumstances of linguistic use in early life, as well as the contribution of parents' input and scaffolding behavior to the learning of language expressions. This interaction enhances the ability of comprehension and learning new things among learners (Altaftazani, 2020).

Bruner's (1985) conception of constructivism serves as an example of generating common meaning through inter-personal, inter-subjective and collaborative processes. Constructivism contributes in learning a second language by providing new insights and innovative ways of comprehending and learning novel things (Jung, 2019). Students are required to take responsibility for and oversee their own learning process based on their specific requirements. Furthermore, constructing a sentence structure can enable language learners to rapidly grasp information conveyed (Kim & Rah, 2019). The roots of constructivism can be traced to Vygotsky's theory which focuses on the mechanism of social and cultural learning. The main points of this theory are the attention to the social context of learning and the interplay between internal and exterior components of learning (Vygotsky, 1978). It explains the creation and acquisition of knowledge (Shah, 2019). According to Vygotsky, social interactions within a cultural environment play a significant role in shaping human cognitive functioning.

The constructivist method is based on the premise that knowledge is not transferred from one individual to another. Instead, acquired knowledge must be created or constructed (Vintere, 2018). Additionally, according to Vygotsky (1978), knowledge is acquired when students engage in activities that are novel, yet within their grasp. However, this procedure is affected by their ability to solve issues on their own and the degree of their development potential, which is defined as the capacity to solve difficulties while being guided by peers or more competent adults. Instructors play an equally vital role as they must develop a learning environment to enable students to discuss their issues and assess their learning abilities (Anagün, 2018).

Furthermore, active participation in trials and experiences coupled with engaging in discussions, leads to students acquire and comprehend information. Inter-personal conversation helps to create meaning; learners in this situation require interaction with the experience of others to complement their physical experience. Constructivism theory promotes a multidisciplinary environment for learning (Kara, 2019). Hence, it promotes and complements collaborative learning. Cooperative, learning-based classroom management can assist students in creating goals and strategies for cooperating and interacting with others. Grouping, cooperative learning and class organization are three important factors in classroom management. This approach helps to cultivate oral communication skills and encourages students to take an active role in their own learning (York & Dehaan, 2018). More recently, the constructivist approach has utilized modern-day technology, such as computer- and mobile-assisted language learning, for the acquisition of a second language (Zhang et al., 2020). Overall, this theory places a strong emphasis on the socio-cultural context in which learning occurs and sees students as active creators of their own learning environments. Furthermore, constructivist strategies have obtained widespread acceptance in various educational environments (Neutzling et al., 2019).

IV. PROPOSED 3Cs CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Realizing that an individual approach may not be sufficient for efficient second language acquisition, this paper proposes the 3Cs approach which integrates the three approaches already discussed (i.e., CL, SCT, and CLT). Generally, the aim in the 3Cs approach is to capitalize on the benefits or advantages of each of the three language acquisition methods. Fundamentally, SCT is at the center of the 3Cs approach. The foundational principles of the CLT CL approaches are based on various educational theories, with the most influential being SCT, which is due to its deeper connection with language learning theories and curricula. According to SCT (Vygotsky, 1978), language is the most powerful social learning tool, and improves the expression and transmission of ideas in the process of social communication. Vygotsky (1978) identified two sources of knowledge for the individual learner; the first is interaction with the environment (everyday knowledge), which is influenced by interactions with peers, language use and experiences that the individual has (CL). The other source is the classroom, where teachers interact with their students (CLT approach).

As noted by Dewey (1983), individuals tend to discover knowledge and build meaning through personal experience and interpersonal interactions in a supportive environment. Similarly, Piaget (2005) argued that social experience, knowledge, language, grammar, values and ethics are traits acquired through the interaction with others. Furthermore, Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that in a CL context, learners can exchange ideas and knowledge to achieve common goals. Moreover, CL considerably benefits language education by providing learners with opportunities to communicate and negotiate meaning under a social context (Richards, 2005). In CL, learners have the opportunity to listen to each other, exchange ideas and engage in dialogue and debate (CLT approach). For instance, many CLT activities such as role playing, storytelling and debate, require CL between students themselves or between the students and the teacher.

To provide a clearer explanation of the 3Cs approach, it is essential to grasp the significance of negotiation in SCT. Vygotsky (1978) highlighted the role of the teacher in encouraging students to have a negotiated dialogic discussion (CLT approach and CL), focusing on the interaction between students and between students and teachers. For this negotiation to take place, it is necessary for the teacher to ask open-ended questions, allowing students to use the target language in a communicative and collaborative manner. SCT suggests that learners acquire knowledge through social

negotiation with others rather than in isolation. The role of the teacher in the 3Cs approach is centered on providing students with interactive educational situations (CLT). For students to be able to learn through communicative and collaborative language activities, the teacher should arouse the interest of learners and encourage their social interactions. The role of the student in the 3Cs approach is that of a social learner where knowledge is acquired not only individually but also within a social framework through social negotiation. Furthermore, through the exchange of ideas with others, collective ideas are formed. Notably, the role of the learner in the 3Cs approach is centered on being an active learner as knowledge is acquired through discussion and dialogue, the essence of which is the CLT approach. The overall characteristics and benefits of the proposed 3C's approach are summarized in Figure 1, which presents the conceptual framework for this study.

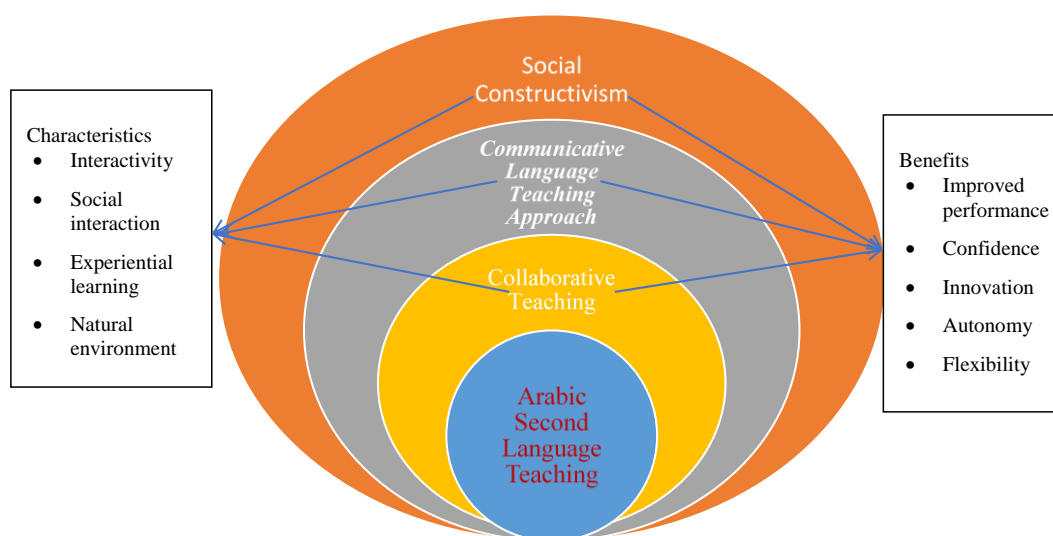


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the 3C's Approach in Arabic Teaching as a Second Language

In brief, the communicative approach, social constructivist theory, and collaborative learning are interconnected concepts that enhance language teaching and learning. These methods prioritize interaction, social context, and student engagement as crucial elements for acquiring a new language. By incorporating these approaches into language acquisition, educators can establish immersive learning environments that foster meaningful communication, knowledge building, and collaborative problem-solving.

V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Inexperienced second language teachers can have a significant impact in spreading the linguistic component of foreign languages. Specifically, a lack of proper mastery strategies and study materials for second language acquisition can hinder the recognition of a foreign language. This paper highlights an approach that may help teachers and students acquire skills, competence and knowledge required for ASL. Under this light, the present study explores three established approaches: CLT, CL and SCT. Additionally, the paper establishes possible relations among the SLA study environment and the effects of the 3Cs approach on new learners of a second language.

Over the past few years, university students have been placing renewed emphasis on an important aspect of the learning process. They have become enthusiastic about the study of languages with the help of communicative theories. The 3Cs approach provides a supportive environment for active, context-specific and social-based learning. Based on the 3Cs approach, learners can actively construct meaning for themselves during the learning process. This means that they need to take responsibility for their learning. Furthermore, the 3Cs approach has been shown to be an effective approach to learning Arabic because it encourages learning via the student's individual learning style.

For instructors at Saudi universities, adopting a combined approach to ASL can provide numerous benefits for both learners and teachers. Specifically, the use of the 3Cs approach can provide learning innovation, flexibility, improved performance, autonomy, and even increased learner confidence.

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