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Analysis of issues and challenges surrounding the Arabic language in Iran with a future-oriented approach



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ABSTRACT

Having a strategic approach to issues is one of the necessities of macro-management of institutions and organizations. Understanding the problem is considered the first step in any type of policy-making. The first step in public policy-making is recognizing the issue and formulating it to put it on the policy-making agenda, which is considered a separate process in public policy-making. The purpose of conducting "Issue System Studies" as a strategic study is to determine the general lines of existing insight and experience about the main and key topics in a specific area. To identify, prioritize, and select priority issues of the Arabic language, comprehensive, holistic, and strategic research is needed. The present research has examined the "system of Arabic language issues with a future-oriented approach". This research is considered among applied research, as it seeks to create a basis for policy-making to solve Arabic language issues by analyzing the system of Arabic language issues. The method of information collection for enumerating Arabic language issues was based on a descriptive exploratory approach using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, and the method of information analysis is based on thematic analysis (as a research strategy). Data collection was carried out through documentary studies, interviews, questionnaires, and holding expert panels. The results show that the super-challenge of the Arabic language in Iran is the "vacuum of a dominant discourse in the field of Arabic language in Iran". This discourse vacuum indicates the "abandonment of the Arabic language in Iran"; three key challenges as the highest priority issues include the introduction of artificial intelligence to Arabic language teaching, the lack of connection between Arabic language education and job market-required skills, and the duality of Arabic language teaching with the aim of understanding religious texts or general purposes. The future-oriented approach to the issues facing the Arabic language and attention to new changes in the technology sphere and its impact on the emergence of new and emerging challenges, including the introduction of artificial intelligence to Arabic language teaching, are among the innovations of this article and distinguish it from previous research.

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1. Introduction and Problem Statement

Today's world consists of numerous and diverse countries, each with its own unique history, culture, and language. This diversity sometimes makes it difficult for people to live together, because "language is not merely a tool for communication, but also expresses people's worldview, imagination, and method of knowledge transfer." (UNESCO Message, 2000) Having a strategic approach to issues is one of the necessities of macro-management of institutions and organizations. Understanding the problem is the first step in any type of policy-making and planning. One of the main stages of public policy-making, and in fact the first step, is recognizing the problem as a reality and formulating it to put it on the policy-making agenda, which is considered a separate process in public policy-making. Subsequent stages of policy-making are influenced, willingly or unwillingly, by how this process unfolds and its outcome. On this basis, problem formulation is actually a central guidance system or a kind of guiding mechanism that affects the success of later stages of policy analysis for that issue. Therefore, one of the most important duties of policy makers and policy researchers is to understand the system of issues regarding a situation or phenomenon under study. This understanding is important from several aspects; firstly, by identifying the problem, unnecessary peripheral issues are pushed aside from the main problem, and secondly, understanding the problem creates an appropriate analysis of the current process and future situation. A correct understanding

of the problem has a direct effect on adopting appropriate policies.

In this regard, "Issue System Studies" is a tool to achieve this purpose. The aim of conducting "Issue System Studies", which are considered a type of strategic studies, is to determine the general lines of existing insight and experience about the main and key topics and issues in a specific area. However, it should be noted here that "the educational system in Iran has been designed based on the 20-year National Vision Document of Iran, which, along with other upstream documents, is considered the determining reference for educational policy" (Nemati and Rajaei, 2024: 3). Understanding the system of issues means discovering the constellation of problems, comprehending the relationship between them, and identifying the main bottlenecks and points of intelligent intervention in various fields, which is one of the necessities and priorities of governance, especially in the current conditions of the Islamic Revolution. The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, in a meeting with young elites and top scientific talents on November 17, 2021, called "problem-orientation" and solving the country's issues one of the important goals of the country's scientific community. By enumerating cases such as water problems, environment, traffic, social harms, village evacuation, monetary system, finance, tax, banking, and issues of the production system, he emphasized that scientific solutions can be found for all the country's problems.

One of the phenomena that requires fundamental study and basic understanding is the "issues of the Arabic language".

"Language is a system of signs that is itself considered a system with cultural value. Language users recognize themselves and others through the use of language and consider their language as a symbol of their social identity. Speakers of any language often perceive the prohibition of using their language as opposition to their social and cultural group. Therefore, we can say that language is a symbol of cultural reality." (Kramersch, 2011: 22) The teachings of the Holy Quran, the religion of Islam, and the intertwined cultural and civilizational relationship between Iranians and the Arab world from the past to the present, make the importance of this language more necessary than ever. On the other hand, the contents of Persian and Arabic languages are very close to each other. For this reason, learning the Arabic language in Iran has always been one of the concerns of policymakers and planners at macro and micro levels, so much so that according to the sixteenth principle of the Constitution, Arabic language education was included in the curriculum of all grades of the first and second secondary school periods. On the other hand, among foreign languages, Arabic is the only language that is intertwined with Iranian culture, civilization, and history, and understanding this civilizational domain doubles the need for the Arabic language. In the topic of Arabic language education, it should be emphasized that "language learning does not happen by completely memorizing a dictionary, but the user is obliged to align themselves with the genius that exists in that language" (Rezapour and Farjah, 2021: 630). Therefore, "the interaction of a Persian speaker with Arabic

speakers is not only based on learning the elements and skills of the language, but equally requires knowledge of the culture and customs of Arabic speakers. Often, when communicating with native speakers in a communicative situation, we need to use linguistic structures that the language system cannot confirm as right or wrong, but it is cultural values that can confirm or reject that linguistic structure or structures. Therefore, without considering the different dimensions of the discursive textual context of the language, the process of teaching and learning any foreign language is like parachuting into the midst of a nation whose history, culture, and civilization are unknown, and as a result, in a linguistic isolation, one will be confused and frustrated in creating any communication with them." (See: Homayouni and Azarshab, 2015) Therefore, having a comprehensive and coherent picture of Arabic language issues, in addition to establishing a theoretical consensus among researchers and professors in the field of Arabic language education and research and other related fields (theology, Islamic studies, linguistics, etc.), guides policymakers and planners in developing cultural, religious, and educational policies. Also, recognizing, analyzing, and prioritizing issues related to the Arabic language - especially issues related to the domestic sphere and environment - will cause strategic interactions with the countries of the region, especially the countries of the Islamic world, to become deeper, more effective, and more convergent than ever before. Arabic is the official language of more than 20 countries, and there are 375 million native speakers of

this language, who mostly live in the Middle East, but there are also many minority groups around the world. Arabic was able to take on a global face and spread extensively in the heart of Islam when it reached the borders of China on one side and North Africa and southwestern Europe on the other. Islam caused people around the world to enthusiastically embrace the Arabic language, and among them, Iranians, with their enormous participation in Islamic and Arabic civilization and their unparalleled role in organizing the Arabic language, were at the forefront of other nations. (Victor, 2008, as cited in [Torkashvand, 2021: 81](#)) Therefore, due to the importance of Arabic as an intra-territorial language of Iran and also as an extra-territorial language in the Islamic world system, as well as its position in the progress of Islamic society and its central role in effective interaction between Islamic nations, it is necessary that the current issues and linguistic problems related to this language be explored and analyzed. In this regard, in order to create a space for strategic studies, it is better to focus on understanding or general comprehension of all issues surrounding this language, especially in the present era which is the era of cyberspace, internet, and globalization, instead of focusing on a single challenge or issue affecting this language. This macro, strategic, comprehensive, and all-encompassing view will create a coherent and integrated intellectual space for focusing on subsequent studies and more detailed examination of issues in the future. In other words, first, the system of Arabic language issues must be understood. The system of Arabic language issues refers to the main

elements of the system, linguistic issues and the relationships between them, the maintaining and reinforcing interactions among these issues, and how they mutually influence each other. Therefore, in analyzing the current situation of the Arabic language and providing solutions to overcome its challenges, it is necessary to explore the issues of this language as a coherent whole and to look at solving Arabic language issues with this approach in developmental policymaking in general and in situational programs (education, cultural-political interactions, religious affairs, etc.) in particular.

With this explanation, it can be said that the research problem of the present study is that the Arabic language, especially in Iran, as one of the social-human subsystems, is affected by a coherent set of efficiency gaps. The synergistic relationship of these gaps with each other leads to inefficiencies and instabilities related to the Arabic language (including the ineffectiveness of Arabic language teaching and learning in schools and universities of the country, reduction or vulnerability of cultural, political, social and economic interactions with countries in the region, religious ineffectiveness and religious harms especially among the youth, weakness in learning Quranic knowledge in some members of society, etc.). These efficiency gaps can be categorized into two broad areas. In other words, from the typology of Arabic language issues in Iran, one can imagine a kind of duality in the nature and application of this language, and distinguish and categorize the issues in terms of

understanding this duality. This duality in nature can be imagined as follows:

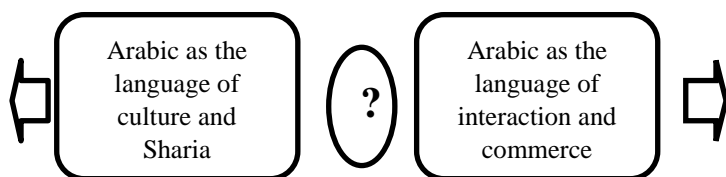


Figure (1): The dual nature of understanding the position of the Arabic language in Iran

Therefore, in order to identify, recognize, analyze, prioritize, and select the priority issues of the Arabic language, we need comprehensive, holistic, and strategic research. In this regard, and to achieve the above goal, this research has examined the "system of Arabic language issues with a future-oriented approach".

1.1 Importance and Innovation of the Topic

Regarding the necessity of this research, it can be said that the Arabic language, especially in the sphere of the Islamic Republic of Iran, is distinct and distinguished from other non-Persian languages. In other words, the type of encounter is not subject to linguistic and interactive components of the same kind as other languages. Arabic is the language of the holy book of us Muslims. Moreover, Arabic is also the civilizational language of Muslims. The intellectual, scientific, literary, and interpretive works of Muslims have been greatly influenced by Quranic knowledge, and the language of the Quran has been codified and left as a lasting legacy in the civilizational heritage of Muslims. This has gone so far that in the third and fourth centuries AH, Arabic is referred to as the world's language of science, and even non-Arab scholars have authored their important books in Arabic. The second aspect

of the Arabic language is its linguistic features. Arabic is one of the six official languages of the world. This language is the official and first language of 25 countries in the world and the religious language of more than 50 countries and nearly a quarter of the world's population. Also, Arabic is the language of the western and southern neighbors of Islamic Iran. Thus, the linguistic aspect and linguistic functions and regional and international interactions have authenticity and relevance in monitoring the issues of this language. The result of the two important previous aspects in the field of linguistic, literary, and civilizational intertwining of Persian and Arabic has a prominent manifestation, such that understanding, comprehension, and reading of many distinguished Persian works and sources will not be possible without the benefit of Arabic linguistic and literary knowledge.

Therefore, having a comprehensive and coherent picture of Arabic language issues, in addition to establishing a theoretical consensus among researchers and professors in the field of Arabic language education and research and other related fields (theology, Islamic studies, linguistics, etc.), guides policymakers and planners in developing cultural, religious, and educational policies. Also, recognizing, analyzing, and prioritizing issues related to the Arabic language - especially issues related to the domestic sphere and environment - will cause strategic interactions with the countries of the region, especially the countries of the Islamic world, to become deeper, more effective, and more convergent than ever before. Therefore,

considering the above points and the unique role of the Arabic language in the present era in terms of ideological, political, cultural, and social aspects for Iran, this research becomes necessary. Thus, and considering the above explanations, the main objective of this research is specifically to identify and structure the fundamental issues of the Arabic language in Iran (analysis of the system of Arabic language issues).

1.2. Research Questions and Hypotheses

To achieve this general objective, the following questions have been answered in this research:

1. What are the issues and challenges surrounding the Arabic language in Iran according to experts?

2. In what areas can the extracted key issues and challenges of the Arabic language be categorized?

3. Among the extracted issues and challenges, what are the hundred priority issues and challenges of the Arabic language in Iran?

The hypotheses proposed for these questions are presented as follows:

1. It seems that the approach to Arabic as the language of religion or the language of knowledge is the most important challenge of the Arabic language according to experts.

2. The challenges of the Arabic language can be categorized into scientific-educational, cultural, political, economic, and transnational domains.

3. Considering the challenging areas of the Arabic language, priority issues can be classified according to their importance from the perspective of experts.

2. Research Background

In recent decades, the Arabic language has faced increasing challenges in its continued existence, and with the formation of a powerful and rapid trend of "globalization", these challenges have become stronger and more prominent. Of course, this issue has also affected other living languages of the world, including Persian, and the extent of preventing damage to the body of these languages depends on the amount of effort made by experts and practitioners in this field.

In Iran, most research in the field of Arabic language is related to the problems and issues of Arabic language teaching in schools and universities of the country. For instance, one can refer to the study by [Rasouli \(2005\)](#) "Root-finding of Arabic language teaching problems in Iranian universities (Basics of defining orientations)", *Journal of Humanities*, issue (47-48). In his research titled "Root-finding of Arabic language teaching problems in Iranian universities = مصادر الخلل في تعليم اللغة العربية في الجامعات الإيرانية ((القواعد تعريف التخصصات)", he has explained four factors as fundamental issues in the emergence of these problems. These factors include: (1) The level of Arabic language education in Iranian schools is lower than desirable. (2) Some students do not show much interest in the Arabic language. (3) Many students in Arabic departments of universities are unmotivated and discouraged. (4) In some centers related to the Arabic language, there is a lack of specialized Arabic language personnel.

[Taqvaei \(2006\)](#) in an article titled "Globalization of Identity and Arabic Language" in the *Journal of Islamic*

Education Growth, Spring 2006, Issue 60, discusses the role and position of the Arabic language in the national and religious identity of Iranians. He generally believes that to preserve religious and national identity, it is necessary for Iranians in the age of globalization to learn the Arabic language. In this regard, the author raises the topic of globalization and considers it as the dominance of Western cultural patterns, especially American, over the nations of the world. He argues that the primary result of this in Islamic countries is the creation of an identity crisis and planning to weaken Islamic beliefs and convictions in line with inducing Western superiority over the Islamic world.

Zayerivand (2012) in an article titled "Challenges of the Arabic Language in the Age of Globalization", published in the Journal of Critical Studies and Translation in Arabic Language and Literature, Issue 4, First Year, examines the challenges facing the Arabic language in the era of globalization. In this context, he refers to the confrontation of Arabic with Western languages and introduces the term "diglossia and bilingualism". By "diglossia", the author means the existence of two different versions of one language (classical and colloquial) in a country, and by "bilingualism", he means the existence of two different languages "such as Arabic and Persian" in one country. The author of this article considers the efforts of Western countries to legitimize colloquial dialects and replace them with classical Arabic as a conspiracy by these countries to marginalize the Arabic language. He also identifies the second challenge as the

replacement of Latin letters for Arabic letters and the call for this in universities.

Sayadinejad and Dadaei Digehsara (2013) in their research titled "Challenges of the Arabic Language in the Age of Globalization", published in the Quarterly Journal of Cultural Studies and Communication, Volume 9, Issue 30, raise an issue under the title of Western imperialism's struggle against Arabic language and culture. In this issue, it is assumed that American cultural imperialism, by attacking the Arabic language and culture manifested in classical Arabic, attempts to empower colloquial dialects and vernaculars. Through this method, it gradually removes classical Arabic from the competition with American language and culture under the claim of inefficiency. This way, it aims to prepare the ground and conditions for imposing American culture and language on the Arabic-speaking society.

Bayat and Homayouni (2020) in a study on the challenges and strategies of Arabic language teaching in schools, published by the Research Center of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, Serial Number 17144, analyzed the policy of Arabic language education in upstream documents and laws in the field of education. They also examined the executive challenges facing Arabic language education and provided solutions to overcome these challenges. The authors initially focused on examining the position of the Arabic language in the Iranian educational system and concluded that the Arabic language has a very high status in the Iranian educational system and is not comparable to other foreign languages in this

regard. They mentioned the challenges of Arabic language education including challenges related to human resources in Arabic language education, traditional methods of Arabic language teaching, and inappropriate teaching of Arabic grammar.

Riyadh and Al-Farani (2007) in their research on the issues of the Arabic language and the role of the Holy Quran in facing these challenges and issues, "The challenges facing the Arabic language and the role of the Holy Quran in addressing them", presented at the conference "Islam and Contemporary Challenges", state that the Arabic language, thanks to the existence of the Holy Quran, is a living language that still preserves many of its characteristics and features. However, in recent years, there have been many attacks on Islam, especially in the shadow of the new global system. These attacks and threats primarily target the Arabic language because it is the language of Islam, and in this context, the existence of satellite and internet networks has intensified these attacks.

Torkashvand (2021) in a study titled "Examining Arabic Language Education Policies in the Islamic Republic of Iran", published in the Scientific Research Quarterly of Public Policy, Volume 7, Issue 2, attempted to investigate the challenges of Arabic language education in Iran. In this research, he addressed the hierarchy of the country's policymaking system (general policies of the system, approvals of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, laws of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, approvals of the Supreme Council of Education, approvals of the Cabinet of Ministers and executive agencies) in Arabic

language education and tried to identify the challenges of teaching this language in the country. The results of this research showed that the weakness of human resources in Arabic language education, the lack of multimedia teaching aids, and the use of traditional methods in language teaching are among the most important of these challenges and weaknesses. Other challenges include daily routines, lack of innovation, lack of needs assessment, dispersion and lack of coherence, lack of a central upstream idea, radical changes in policies, etc. The main cause of these challenges is attributed to the formulation of Arabic language education policies at the executive levels of the country (deputies of the Ministry of Education).

Bouzifi (2010) in his thesis titled "The Reality of the Arabic Language on the Internet: A Descriptive and Analytical Study of Arabic Websites", Faculty of Political Sciences and Media, University of Algiers, examines the reality of the Arabic language on the Internet. This study is a descriptive and analytical research on Arabic websites available on the Internet, aimed at understanding the position of the Arabic language in the global Internet network and the challenges that the Arabic language faces from what is called the information revolution. The results of the research showed that immediate and rapid solutions are necessary to face such challenges, and these challenges threaten not only Arabic words but also the entire structure of the Arabic language.

Hamdi (2012) in his study on the reality of using the Arabic language in the shadow of modern communications and media from the

perspective of Algerian university youth "The Reality of Using Arabic Language in Light of the Use of Modern Communication and Media Means from the Perspective of Algerian University Youth", presented at the International Conference "اللغة العربية ومواكبة العصر" (Arabic Language and Keeping Pace with the Era) in Medina, examined how university youth use classical Arabic in their daily lives in family, university, and society, and how this type of language is used in various media and social networks. The study also aimed to identify the most fundamental reasons for the decline in the status of classical Arabic in Arab societies. This researcher's study showed that most Algerian university youth prefer to use their local dialect [which is heavily mixed with French words] in daily interactions.

[Kanani \(2012\)](#) in his research titled "The Arabic Language and Contemporary Challenges and Ways to Address Them", which was presented at the International Conference on the Reality of Arab Countries, examined the current challenges of this language and strategies to face these challenges, with the aim of investigating the most prominent challenges and threats that the Arabic language faces in the twenty-first century. The research findings showed that two very important and prominent challenges threatening the Arabic language include the existence of intense competition between English and Arabic in Arabic-speaking countries and the spread of local dialects among Arabic speakers and the weakness of classical Arabic against local dialects. The author believes that English as a foreign language threatens the identity and cultural

independence of Arab countries, and the weakness of the civilizational culture of the Arabic language among the new generation also adds to the power and ability of this threat. He considered the most prominent threat to the Arabic language in the present era to be the competition of this language with foreign languages, to the extent that this threat has reached the stage of threatening the ethnic identity of Arab nations.

[Mohammed Ibrahim et al. \(2017\)](#) in the article "Appropriate Cultural Purposes for Non-Arabic Speakers in Light of 21st Century Challenges" in the Journal of the Faculty of Education (Assiut), No. 33, Volume 7, examines some cultural competencies that individuals learning Arabic as a second language need to learn to face the challenges of the 21st century. He introduces religious goals and motivations for learning Arabic as the strongest and most effective factor in learning this language as a second language and categorizes the challenges of the 21st century in learning Arabic as cultural, political, economic, and social challenges.

[Tayyeb Fa and Al-Haddad \(2019\)](#) in a study titled "Arabic Language and Its Most Important Challenges in the Contemporary Era" at the University of Malaya, Malaysia, *Al-Dhad Journal*. (1)3 considered the most important challenge facing the Arabic language to be the entry of foreign words into Arabic speech and writing due to the expansion of cyberspace and social networks.

[Abdul Tawab Ramadan \(1420 AH\)](#) in the book "Chapters in Arabic Philology" regarding the problems of the Arabic language in the transnational domain,

especially in the area of inherent and essential issues and problems of the Arabic language, in the last section of this book titled "Chapter Five: From Language Issues and Arabic Problems" refers to three general sections of issues and problems of the Arabic language including "Problems of Parsing, Problems of Arabic Script, Linguists' Illusions, and Problems of Teaching Arabic." Specifically, in the section on teaching Arabic, he points out that many people complain about the weakness in the method and level of teaching Arabic in schools and universities. He also considered the lack of attention of people and Arab countries to classical language as one of the other problems of the Arabic language. He also answered the question of whether Arabic is really a difficult language to learn. Finally, he emphasized the competence of Arabic language teachers and stated that the most important issue in teaching Arabic is the selection of qualified teachers. In conclusion, it should be emphasized that despite the fact that valuable research has been conducted in the field of Arabic language education and related issues in Iran and Arab countries, no research has yet been conducted independently and using the elite community to examine the issues of the Arabic language system in Iran, and this fact proves the necessity and importance of the present research.

3. Research Method

This research is considered among applied research in terms of its objective, as it aims to create a knowledge and scientific basis for policymakers who are trying to solve the issues and challenges of the Arabic language by analyzing the system of Arabic language

issues. Accordingly, the method of data collection (enumerating Arabic language issues) is based on a descriptive-exploratory approach using a mixed method, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The method of data analysis is based on thematic analysis (as a research strategy). Data collection was carried out through documentary studies, interviews, questionnaires, and holding expert panels.

In the qualitative section, researchers used interviews to seek the views of experts and specialists in this field regarding various dimensions and components of past, present, and especially future issues and challenges, considering the information age. In this study, a total of 7 interviewees participated, whose opinions were obtained through online interviews. The demographic characteristics of these individuals are as described in the table below. The average duration of each interview in this study was about 1.5 hours. In total, 680 minutes of interviews were conducted. Of the total interviewees, 6 were male (75 percent) and one was female (25 percent). Additionally, 2 were full professors, 4 were associate professors, one was an assistant professor, and one was a doctoral student.

All interviewees had relevant education (Arabic Language and Literature) and were from Tarbiat Modares University, University of Tehran, Payame Noor University, and Semnan University. Sampling from experts was done through purposive sampling until theoretical saturation was reached (theoretical saturation is the point in the research sampling process where the researcher thinks that continuing the work

will not yield any new information). (In this sampling method, the researcher will try to include different groups involved with experiences related to the issue in the sample with a maximalist approach, so that the research data reaches saturation in terms of its diversity and adequacy. In order to cover all perceptions related to the aforementioned duality in the minds of experts and subject specialists, it is necessary to consider the spectrum of expertise to be sufficiently broad and comprehensive). The criteria for expertise included (1) having a background in authorship, teaching, or lecturing on the research topic (educational-research background), (2) having expertise, education, or academic position related to the research topic (educational background), and (3) having a position related to the research topic (managerial background).

4. Research Findings

After conducting the interviews, the recorded content was transcribed into text

and uploaded, thematically categorized, and analyzed in the qualitative content analysis software MAXQDA. At this stage, open codes from the interview texts were extracted. In this section, about 125 open codes were extracted, some of which were combined due to complete conceptual overlap.

After extracting the open codes related to the interviews, the open codes were combined and homogenized, and broader categories (axes) were created. At this stage, in other words, axial codes (or axes) were extracted, specifically 5 axial codes (major issues or challenges) including scientific-educational challenges, cultural-social challenges, economic-commercial challenges, political-policy challenges, and transnational challenges. The results are presented in the table below:

Categories (Open Codes)	Axial Code (Challenges)
Teaching grammar instead of teaching Arabic language	
Academics' unfamiliarity with current linguistics issues	
Lack of fundamental change in education and failure to achieve goals	
Ineffective learning of Arabic language in schools	
Failure to achieve Arabic language education goals in universities	
Knowledge accumulation and lack of practical application of Arabic major in universities	
Unawareness of current scientific trends in traditional education	
Lack of connection between educational content and teaching methods in universities	
Lack of motivation among Arabic language students	
Dominance of socio-cultural objectives over university texts	
Lack of attention to economic objectives in university texts	
Focus of university research on Arabic language teaching problems rather than problems of the language itself	
Lack of skills among Arabic language graduates	
Existence of a commercial and income-generating view towards Arabic language major in Iran's higher education system	

Dissolution or inefficiency of scientific institutions and associations related to Arabic language	Scientific-Educational Challenges
Making income from foreign students the main goal instead of education	
Incompatibility between educational materials and student motivations	
Lack of new language teaching orientations in universities in line with current developments	
Lack of competency assessment (evaluation of literary taste and skills) for university entrants	
Lack of skill-based Arabic language teaching in the country's education system	
Introduction of artificial intelligence to Arabic language teaching	
Inconsistencies in the syllabus of Arabic literature major with the current needs of society	
Dominance of religious perspective on the syllabus of Arabic language and literature major	
Severe weakness of graduates in the conversation (speaking and listening) aspect of Arabic language	
Ineffectiveness of some university courses in Arabic language (e.g., entrepreneurship course)	
Lack of practical experiences of professors for teaching courses	
Duality of Arabic language teaching with the aim of understanding religious texts or with general objectives	
Lack of attention to Arabic language teaching with general and specific objectives in Iran	
Lack of attention to the potential from the entry of Arabic-speaking health, academic, religious, etc. tourists	
Failure to achieve the objectives of Arabic language teaching in Iran	
Lack of connection between university education and job market	
Lack of job market-required skills in Arabic language major professors	
Lack of job market-required skills in students	
Lack of a skill-oriented approach to Arabic language teaching in the country's universities	
Mismatch between skills taught in universities and skills required by the job market	
Lack of balance between the number of Arabic language graduates and job market needs	
Lack of needs assessment for the Arabic language major	
Lack of a specialization-oriented approach in university Arabic language education	
Failure to recognize an independent status for Arabic language, separate from literature, in university education	
Lack of attention to dialects in university education and training of workforce needed by the job market	
Lack of job market-required skills in students - repeated code	
View of Arabic as a religious language in universities and basing course content on this assumption	
Failure to view Arabic as an international language on par with other foreign languages in Iran	
Incorrect or incomplete arguments for the use of Arabic language in Iran	
Student confusion due to diverse and scattered course units	

Lack of a specialized approach to university professors' teaching in the Arabic major	
Linguistic weakness for political purposes and influence in the Arab world	
Inability of Arabic language graduates to work in media	
Existence of a negative view towards Arabic language students in society due to alleged hostility between Iranians and Arabs	
Lack of interest from talented candidates to enter the Arabic major in universities due to cultural reasons	
Excessive focus on Arabic literature in universities instead of the Arabic language itself	
Development of repetitive theses in Arabic language and literature major in universities	
Ineffectiveness of domestic university research in the field of Arabic language	
Emphasis on pure morphology and syntax instead of basic rules in teaching Arabic	
Inappropriate course content and unsuitable university teaching methods (excessive emphasis on the "Mabadi" book in university)	
Inappropriate course content and unsuitable university teaching methods (inappropriate teaching of rhetoric in university)	
Inappropriate course content and unsuitable university teaching methods (traditional teaching of translation course)	
Confusion in teaching Arabic in Arabic or Persian in universities	
Lack of connection between Arabic language education and job market-required skills	
Job market preference for hiring skilled Arabic-proficient workforce without degrees instead of university graduates	
Memorizing rules instead of learning the language by students and professors, and inability to speak Arabic	
Shortage of professors in new specializations and fields of language, and inability to launch new majors	
Lack of attention to developing non-specialized skills required by the job market in students	
Threat to Arabic language-related jobs by artificial intelligence	
Resistance to changing university course syllabi due to personal interests and preferences of faculty members	
Unrealistic view of people in Arab countries towards Iran due to negative media propaganda	
Decline in enthusiasm for learning Arabic in Iranian society compared to the early days of the revolution	
Insufficient Arabic language education in Iranian society	
Decline in Arabic literary texts in Iranian universities	
Lack of attention to the need for changing methods, texts, and curriculum of Arabic language and literature major	
Lack of serious attention to the undergraduate level in Arabic language and literature major	
Superficiality and lack of content in Arabic literature in universities	
Lack of purposeful activity in the field of Arabic language on social networks	
Society not being up-to-date in the field of Arabic language	

Lack of cultural work to change the negative historical view of Iranian people towards Arabic language	Cultural-Social Challenges
Birth of peripheral languages alongside the main Arabic language	
Failure to explain the scientific and cultural position of Arabic language compared to English in Iran	
Lack of attention to the needs of the tourism job market in Arabic language education	Economic-Commercial Challenges
Lack of attention to Arabic as a language of commerce	
Need to pay attention to business capacities of the Arabic language	
Neglect of Arabic language in commercial and business areas	
Lack of active economic diplomacy in exporting to Arab countries due to weakness in Arabic language in Iran	
Failure to explain entrepreneurship capacities of Arabic language in Iran	Political or Policy-Governance Challenges
Weak governance in turning Arabic language into an opportunity	
Lack of a policy-making institution for Arabic language in Iran	
Neglect of Arabic as a language of political influence	
Efforts to dominate Persian language in Iran	
Lack of attention to Arabic as a tool for communication with neighbors	
Demeaning Arabic as the language of an ethnic group or national subculture for political reasons	Transnational Challenges
Negative impact of globalization on Arabic language	
Duality between classical (standard) language and practical language in the Arab world	

After categorizing the open codes extracted from the interviews (issues and challenges of the Arabic language) into specific axial categories, at the third level of conceptualizing codes, we reach the most abstract conceptual level. At this level, we should look for a broad conceptual umbrella that can encompass all categories under itself. In other words, we should search for a single comprehensive conceptual code that contains all the meanings mentioned in the axial codes of the previous stage within itself. It is worth noting that since the current research is specifically of a phenomenological type and aims to explain the issues of the Arabic language, pursuing only this one mentioned goal, therefore, at this stage, we will have only one selective code.

At this stage, which is naturally a challenging and sensitive phase, multiple

concepts were proposed by the research team. The important issue here is to understand "which major or fundamental factor has caused the Arabic language to face numerous challenges and issues in the educational, cultural, social, economic, commercial, and political domains in Iran, and what should this factor be called?" It seems that this factor can be termed "the vacuum of a dominant discourse in the field of Arabic language in Iran." Although these challenges and issues can also be attributed to a factor called "the abandonment of the Arabic language in Iran." However, it seems that the concept of "discourse vacuum" better conveys the intention and will gather all types of challenges under itself - as a broad conceptual umbrella. Discourse is a term that has been widely used in various fields and disciplines such as philosophy, sociology,

anthropology, and linguistics, and different philosophers and theorists have proposed various and somewhat different theories about its scope, concept, role, and function, and have had different views about it. Here, discourse refers to the method and approach of **policy knowledge** and policymaking. Therefore, in this context, the discourse vacuum means the absence of a governance method and policy knowledge approach, and consequently, **discourse construction** is necessary to fill this vacuum. In general, in humanities and social sciences, discourse describes a formal method of thinking that is expressed through language. In social sciences, discourse is a social boundary that determines which statements can be made about a subject. Many definitions of discourse are largely derived from the works of French philosopher Michel Foucault. Political science considers discourse to be close to politics and policy-making. Therefore, it can be said that the most fundamental challenge of the Arabic language in Iran is the lack of a common discourse in the field of Arabic language. Finally, the system of Arabic language issues can be depicted as follows:

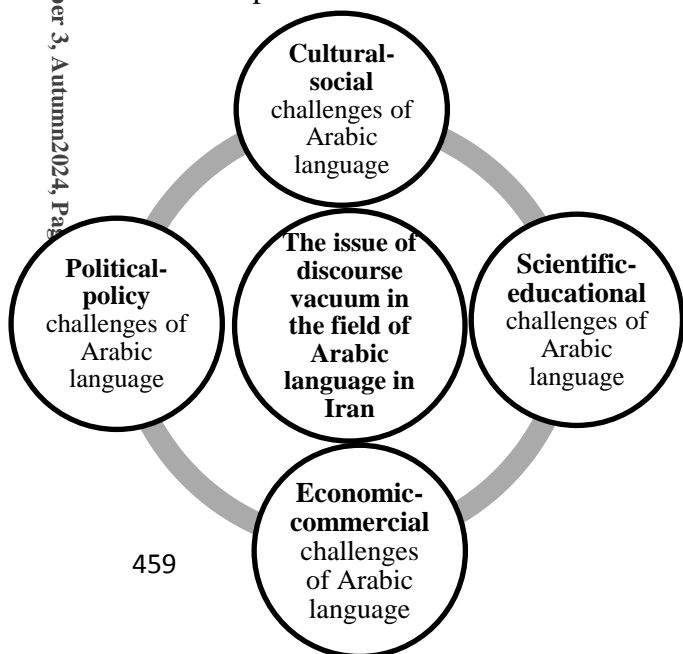


Figure (2): System of Arabic language issues (Source: Research findings)

This challenge, as the root cause, leads to the emergence of challenges (or in other words, manifestations of itself) in various social, cultural, economic, political, and other fields. Regarding the most important issues or challenges, the interviewees explicitly referred to 3 key challenges as the most important (or highest priority issue), which were considered as priority issues from the experts' perspective. These three important issues are presented in the figure below.

- Introduction of artificial intelligence to Arabic language teaching
- Lack of connection between Arabic language education and job market-required skills
- Duality of Arabic language teaching with the aim of understanding religious texts or with general objectives

The following explains each of these three key issues based on the examples mentioned by the experts:

Challenge arising from the introduction of artificial intelligence to Arabic language teaching: Today, Machine Learning is presented as a very important and extensive method. Last week at Tarbiat Modares University, I discussed how to use artificial intelligence in Arabic language teaching research and how important and serious it is. You see, this is our new challenge now. The new challenge we will face in the future is that if an educational system based on artificial intelligence comes, we won't need these professors anymore. We don't need professors at all; we need a professor who... Imagine that an educational system based on

artificial intelligence has been formed within the educational system. A person enters an educational environment, and in that educational environment, there is an artificial intelligence whose information is millions of times greater than that of a teacher. It answers any question you ask very well. If you've tried it now, you've noticed. So, you see, an educational system based on artificial intelligence is a serious challenge problem for Arabic language education and all other fields. This means that if we don't act quickly, if we don't make efforts, especially the Research Center where professor is, to consider this as a priority... How should I put it, that all other priorities should be based on this, this challenge is above all other challenges; the rest are based on this. We have the challenge of educational materials; we need to return to capable professors, although with artificial intelligence we enter into something else entirely.

Lack of connection between Arabic language education and job market-required skills: Look, I think it's clear from my comments that the most important challenge, in my opinion, is the "lack of connection between the education we're providing, the methods we're using, and the skills needed in the job market." If we can establish this connection... Look, I haven't been able to go to other countries myself, to see other universities. For example, a case I heard about in Germany, friends were saying that BMW comes to German universities, for instance, one of the German universities, and says, "I want to hire 100 people with these skills four years from now, and I'll pay for their expenses." And that university then trains

people based on the skills defined by that factory, and after they graduate, they go to work right there. This is what's happening in the world, all over the world. So, skills are very important and are the first priority. And why do we say skills are the first priority? Because now reputable companies like Google, like Ali Baba, have removed university degrees from their hiring requirements. They say, "Come here and show us your skills." Even if you don't have a high school diploma, it doesn't matter. We want you to do a job, and whoever can do it in the best way, we'll hire them. Now, which university you got your degree from, or whether you got one at all, doesn't matter to me at all. I want work from you.

Duality of Arabic language teaching with the aim of understanding religious texts or with general objectives: The first and, in my opinion, the most important issue among the challenges of the Arabic language in our country is that we have created a deep duality in the field of Arabic language. This duality has created a major challenge and has become a kind of unsolvable problem. This duality includes teaching Arabic with the aim of understanding religious texts and teaching Arabic for general purposes.

5. The First Hundred Priority Issues (in terms of quantitative ranking)

In this section, based on the findings of the qualitative part (interviews), the extracted codes were turned into question options, and a questionnaire was designed using all the options extracted in the qualitative section. The response options were based on a 5-point Likert scale (1- Very unimportant, 2- Unimportant, 3- Somewhat important, 4-

Important, 5- Very important). The designed questionnaire was developed electronically, and its link was sent via SMS to about 385 faculty members of Persian Language and Literature departments across all subsystems of higher education in the country (general public universities, Islamic Azad University, Payame Noor University, non-profit higher education institutions, institutional universities such as Imam Sadiq, Al-Mustafa Community, etc.). In total (after 3 weeks), about 180 questionnaires were received. To analyze and prioritize the challenges (issues),

the average of responses for each option (issue) was calculated for all respondents, and the averages were sorted from largest to smallest. Then, the 100 largest averages were selected to extract the 100 priority issues in order of importance. The remaining challenges were eliminated. The results are presented in the table below.

**100 Important Issues of the Arabic Language
In order of priority and importance
(Results of quantitative analysis)**

Average	Challenge/Issue related to Arabic language	Rank
4/55	Lack of attention to the commercial and income-generating capacity of the Arabic language major in Iran's higher education system	۱
4/45	Severe weakness of graduates in the conversation (speaking and listening) aspect of Arabic language	۲
4/43	Students' despair about the future of the Arabic major and job opportunities in this field	۳
4/40	Teaching grammar instead of teaching Arabic language in the country's universities	۴
4/38	Lack of attention to the needs of the tourism job market in Arabic language education (lack of connection between university education and job market)	۵
4/38	Lack of attention to the necessity of scientific trips for Arabic language students to Arabic-speaking countries in the region	۶
4/37	Introduction of artificial intelligence to Arabic language teaching	۷
4/36	Failure to view Arabic as an international language on par with other foreign languages in Iran...	۸
4/35	Lack of attention and commitment from the Ministry of Science to Arabic major graduates	۹
4/34	Lack of attention to Arabic as a language of regional commerce (lack of attention to business capacities of the Arabic language)	۱۰
4/34	Lack of job market-required skills among Arabic language graduates	۱۱
4/33	Failure to explain the scientific and cultural position of Arabic language compared to English in Iran	۱۲
4/33	Lack of attention to dialects in university education and training of workforce needed by the job market	۱۳
4/27	Failure to explain entrepreneurship capacities of Arabic language in Iran	۱۴
4/27	Neglect of Arabic as a language of political influence	۱۵
4/26	Neglect of Arabic language in commercial and business areas	۱۶
4/26	Lack of attention to the need for changing methods, texts, and curriculum of Arabic language and literature major	۱۷
4/25	Lack of study and pathology of reasons for lack of interest in Arabic language in Iran	۱۸

4/24	Lack of cultural work to change the negative historical view of Iranian people towards Arabic language	۱۹
4/24	Lack of a skill-oriented approach to Arabic language teaching in the country's universities	۲۰
4/23	Weak governance in turning Arabic language into an opportunity	۲۱
4/23	Lack of job market-required skills in students	۲۲
4/22	Not being equipped with up-to-date knowledge in the field of Arabic language learning	۲۳
4/21	Inability of Arabic language graduates to work in media	۲۴
4/20	Lack of practical and effective learning of Arabic language in the country's schools	۲۵
4/20	Lack of a policy-making institution for Arabic language in Iran	۲۶
4/20	Inconsistencies in the syllabus of Arabic literature major with the current needs of society	۲۷
4/19	Mismatch between course units and students' future in this field	۲۸
4/18	Lack of needs assessment for the Arabic language major	۲۹
4/17	Lack of attention to Arabic as a tool for communication with neighbors	۳۰
4/17	Lack of motivation in learning Arabic in Iran at all educational levels	۳۱
4/17	Lack of attention to developing non-specialized skills required by the job market in students	۳۲
4/15	Failure to achieve the objectives of Arabic language teaching in Iran	۳۳
4/14	Lack of competency assessment (evaluation of literary taste and skills) for university entrants	۳۴
4/14	Shortage of professors in new specializations and language fields, and inability to launch new majors	۳۵
4/12	Failure to make the Arabic major practical in universities despite the accumulation of applied knowledge	۳۶
4/12	Lack of new language teaching orientations in universities in line with current developments	۳۷
4/12	Lack of attention to Arabic language teaching with general and specific objectives in Iran	۳۸
4/12	Absence of combined and interdisciplinary majors appropriate to the needs and expectations of the Arabic language	۳۹
4/12	Lack of attention to the potential from the entry of Arabic-speaking health, academic, religious, etc. tourists	۴۰
4/12	Lack of effective interaction and scientific cooperation with universities in Arab countries	۴۱
4/11	Lack of serious attention to the undergraduate level in Arabic language and literature major	۴۲
4/11	Linguistic weakness for political purposes and influence in the Arab world	۴۳
4/10	Lack of a specialization-oriented approach in university Arabic language education	۴۴
4/10	Absence of a comprehensive regional diplomacy development strategy (political, scientific, etc.) for Arabic language	۴۵
4/09	Mismatch between skills taught in universities and skills required by the job market	۴۶
4/06	Lack of mandatory training courses for professors of Arabic language and literature	۴۷
4/06	Incorrect or incomplete arguments for justifying the religious use of Arabic language in Iran	۴۸
4/06	Ineffectiveness of some university courses in Arabic language (e.g., entrepreneurship course)	۴۹

4/03	Lack of evolution in the Arabic language education system in Iran over the past few decades	۵۰
4/02	Incompatibility between educational materials and student motivations	۵۱
4/02	Confusion in teaching Arabic in Arabic or in Persian in universities	۵۲
4/01	Lack of attention to economic objectives in university texts	۵۳
4/01	Emphasis on pure morphology and syntax instead of language rules in teaching Arabic	۵۴
4/01	Inappropriate course content and unsuitable university teaching methods (especially traditional teaching of translation course)	۵۵
4/01	Lack of material resources in universities for teaching Arabic	۵۶
4/01	Absence of a language skills test for learners and students of Arabic major	۵۷
4/00	Job market preference for hiring skilled Arabic-proficient workforce without degrees instead of university graduates	۵۸
3/99	Lack of attention to Arabic as the language of an ethnic group or national subculture	۵۹
3/99	Lack of interest from talented candidates to enter the Arabic major in universities due to cultural reasons	۶۰
3/97	Failure to recognize an independent status for Arabic language, separate from literature, in university education	۶۱
3/97	Lack of necessary motivation for research opportunities for faculty members and Arabic language students	۶۲
3/97	Shortage of useful, up-to-date teaching resources compatible with the needs and requirements of Arabic language use in Iran	۶۳
3/96	Lack of job market-required skills in Arabic language major professors	۶۴
3/96	Excessive focus on Arabic literature in universities instead of the Arabic language itself	۶۵
3/96	Resistance to changing university course syllabi due to personal interests and preferences of faculty members	۶۶
3/96	Lack of active NGOs in the field of Arabic language application in various occupations	۶۷
3/95	Duality between classical (standard) language and practical language in Iran and even the Arab world	۶۸
3/94	Unawareness of current scientific trends in the field of Arabic language teaching	۶۹
3/93	Lack of a specialized approach to university professors' teaching in the Arabic major	۷۰
3/93	Academics' unfamiliarity with current linguistics issues	۷۱
3/93	Lack of attention to the civilizational aspect of Arabic language in Iran	۷۲
3/92	Ineffectiveness of domestic university research in the field of Arabic language	۷۳
3/92	Decline in enthusiasm for learning Arabic in Iranian society compared to the early days of the revolution	۷۴
3/92	Superficiality and lack of content in Arabic literature in universities	۷۵
3/90	Lack of balance between the number of Arabic language graduates and job market needs	۷۶
3/88	Duality of Arabic language teaching with the aim of understanding religious texts or with general objectives	۷۷
3/88	Dissolution or inefficiency of scientific institutions and associations related to Arabic language	۷۸
3/88	Student confusion due to diverse and scattered course units	۷۹
3/87	Weak economic diplomacy in exporting to Arab countries due to weakness in Arabic language	۸۰
3/87	Failure to achieve Arabic language education goals in universities	۸۱

3/87	Basing resources and course content on the religious aspect of Arabic language and the existence of a religious view of Arabic language in universities	۸۲
3/85	Inability to achieve Arabic language education goals in accordance with the Fundamental Reform Document of Education	۸۳
3/84	Existence of a negative view towards Arabic language students in society due to alleged hostility between Iranians and Arabs	۸۴
3/84	Development of repetitive theses in Arabic language and literature major in universities	۸۵
3/81	Decline in Arabic literary texts in Iranian universities	۸۶
3/80	Lack of purposeful activity in the field of Arabic language on social networks	۸۷
3/79	Failure to create compatibility and synergy between the religious-civilizational aspect of Arabic language and its practical and communicative aspect	۸۸
3/79	Negative impact of unrealistic view of people in Arab countries towards Iran due to negative media propaganda on the interest in learning Arabic in Iran	۸۹
3/75	Lack of development of specializations and specialized courses in line with the diversity of expectations from Arabic language education	۹۰
3/74	Lack of motivation or interest in Arabic language students	۹۱
3/70	Emergence and prominence of peripheral languages alongside the main Arabic language in Arab countries	۹۲
3/68	Lack of connection between educational content and teaching methods in universities	۹۳
3/68	Lack of practical experiences of professors for teaching Arabic courses	۹۴
3/65	Dominance of socio-cultural objectives over university texts instead of general objectives of Arabic language learning	۹۵
3/61	Threat to Arabic language-related jobs by artificial intelligence	۹۶
3/55	Focus of university research on Arabic language teaching problems rather than problems of the language itself	۹۷
3/48	Competition between universities and cyberspace in playing a larger role in Arabic language education	۹۸
3/35	Negative impact of globalization on Arabic language	۹۹
3/21	Lack of talent in students for learning Arabic language	۱۰۰

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Having a strategic approach to issues is one of the necessities of macro-management of institutions and organizations. Understanding the problem is considered the first step in any type of policy-making and planning. One of the main stages of public policy-making, and in fact the first step, is identifying and recognizing the problem as a reality and formulating it to put it on the policy-making agenda, which is considered a separate process in public policy-making. Subsequent stages of policy-making are influenced, willingly or unwillingly, by how

this process unfolds and its outcome. On this basis, problem formulation is actually a central guidance system or a kind of guiding mechanism that affects the success of later stages of policy analysis for that issue. From this perspective, one of the most important duties of policymakers and policy researchers is to understand the system of issues regarding a situation or phenomenon under study. This understanding is important from several aspects. Firstly, through problem identification, unnecessary peripheral issues are pushed aside from the main problem. Secondly, understanding the problem creates

an appropriate analysis of the current process and future situation. A correct understanding of the problem has a direct effect on adopting appropriate policies. In this regard, "problem system studies" is a tool to achieve this purpose. The aim of conducting "problem system studies", which are considered a type of strategic studies, is to determine the general lines of existing insight and experience about the main and key topics and issues in a specific area.

The research results showed that although, according to the experts and elites whose opinions were used in this study, the issues and challenges of the Arabic language in Iran manifest in various economic, political, and educational domains, it appears that the super-challenge of the Arabic language in Iran is the "vacuum of a dominant discourse in the field of Arabic language in Iran". Although these challenges and issues can also be attributed to a factor called "the abandonment of the Arabic language in Iran". However, it seems that the concept of "discourse vacuum" better conveys the intention and will encompass all types of challenges under itself - as a broad conceptual umbrella.

Although in the present study, one hundred priority issues of the Arabic language were extracted based on the opinion of experts and presented in a table, regarding the most important issues or challenges, 3 key challenges were identified as the most important (or highest priority issues). These include the introduction of artificial intelligence to Arabic language teaching, the lack of connection between Arabic language education and job market-required skills, and

the duality of Arabic language teaching with the aim of understanding religious texts or with general objectives.

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