



Arabic Language Teachers' Readiness for Task-Based Language Teaching in the 21st Century: Insights from ACTFL Standards

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ENGLISH ABSTRACT

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is essential for developing 21st-century Arabic language skills. This study aims to assess the readiness of Indonesian Arabic language teachers to implement TBLT, utilizing the comprehensive ACTFL World-Readiness Standards (5Cs): communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities, as the analytical framework. Employing a quantitative survey design, data were collected from Arabic teachers across various educational levels in Indonesia to evaluate their current preparedness levels against the 5Cs standard. The overall readiness index stands at 3.01 (on a 5-point scale), concluding that the teachers are “not ready, need some repairs” for full TBLT implementation. While Communication demonstrated the highest readiness (3.36), aspects like Comparisons (2.85) and Cultures (2.87) showed the lowest scores. These findings provide a crucial evaluation of teachers' preparedness, highlighting an urgent need for targeted professional development programs focused on integrating cultural competency and comparative linguistic skills within TBLT pedagogy to meet the demands of 21st-century language education.

Keywords: Arabic Teacher, Readiness Assessment, Task-Based Language Teaching

INDONESIAN ABSTRACT

Pengajaran Bahasa Berbasis Tugas (TBLT) sangat penting untuk mengembangkan keterampilan bahasa Arab di abad 21. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menilai kesiapan guru bahasa Arab di Indonesia dalam mengimplementasikan TBLT, menggunakan kerangka komprehensif dari standar kesiapan ACTFL (5C): komunikasi, budaya, koneksi, perbandingan, dan komunitas, sebagai kerangka analisis. Dengan menggunakan desain survei kuantitatif, data dikumpulkan dari pengajar bahasa Arab di berbagai jenjang pendidikan di Indonesia untuk mengevaluasi tingkat kesiapan mereka saat ini terhadap standar 5C. Indeks kesiapan keseluruhan berada pada angka 3.01 (pada skala 5), menyimpulkan bahwa para guru “belum siap, membutuhkan sedikit perbaikan” untuk mengimplementasikan TBLT secara penuh. Meskipun aspek komunikasi menunjukkan kesiapan tertinggi (3.36), namun aspek-aspek lain seperti perbandingan (2.85) dan budaya (2.87) menunjukkan skor terendah. Temuan ini memberikan evaluasi penting terhadap kesiapan pengajar, menyoroti kebutuhan mendesak akan program pengembangan profesional yang ditargetkan dan berfokus pada integrasi kompetensi budaya dan keterampilan linguistik komparatif dalam pedagogi TBLT untuk memenuhi tuntutan pendidikan bahasa abad 21.

Kata Kunci: *Pengajar Bahasa Arab, Penilaian Kesiapan, Pengajaran Bahasa Berbasis Tugas*

Introduction

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is widely recognized as a successor to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and is currently recommended by several educational bodies for implementation in language institutions globally, including in the Asian region (Ellis, 2021). This approach centers on achieving communicative meaning through concrete, goal-oriented activities. TBLT shifts the pedagogical focus from linguistic form to communicative function, prioritizing factors such as input, task conditions, and observable task results in foreign language acquisition (Chen & Wang, 2019; Jackson, 2024; Wei & Zhao, 2024).

The TBLT is fundamentally a student-centered approach and emerged as a practical response to the demands of 21st-century foreign language learning by critiquing traditional teacher-focused methodologies (Harris, 2018; Lam, Van Nguyen, & Nguyen, 2021; Prabhu, 1987). This paradigm places students at the core of planning, teaching, and evaluation, fostering active participation, peer feedback, and problem-solving through language use (Bakar, 2021; Hilmi et al., 2023; Richards & Schmidt, 2014). Consequently, TBLT has been massively and effectively used in teaching English as a second and foreign language across all educational levels, demonstrating efficient results, particularly in high school and university settings (Lam et al., 2021; Sang, 2023).

Despite its success in English language education, the implementation of TBLT in Arabic language teaching, particularly within the Indonesian educational context, remains significantly limited and under-researched (Al-Rashidi, 2025; Safrudin et al., 2024). This limitation is critical given the unique challenges of learning Arabic as a foreign language in the 21st century. These challenges include the language's inherent linguistic complexity (Arifianto, et al., 2023; Saiegh-Haddad, et al., 2020) and the overarching global trend demanding that students master 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. Therefore, TBLT is crucial for Arabic language instruction as it explicitly promotes communicative output and deep interaction, skills often neglected in grammar-focused curricula, thus preparing students to use the language effectively in real-world contexts.

The core principle of TBLT rests on the concept of a task, where learning is fundamentally viewed as learning by doing or experiential learning (Choi & Nunan, 2018; Pan & Nunan, 2025). This task-based paradigm is theoretically grounded in several acquisition perspectives. The Interaction Hypothesis emphasizes meaning negotiation, crucial for providing comprehensible input $I+1$ and modified output (Ellis, 2000; Gass & Mackey, 2020; Yin & Satar, 2020). The Output Hypothesis posits that language production is vital for syntactic analysis and recognizing gaps in interlanguage proficiency (Alahmadi, 2019; Peker & Arslan, 2020). The Cognitive Perspective focuses on the performance elements of Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency (CAF) (Bui & Skehan, 2018; Li, et al., 2016; Pang & Skehan, 2021), while the Sociocultural Perspective highlights collaborative task completion as a mechanism for co-constructing knowledge (Vuopala et al., 2019; Zabolotna et al., 2025). These theoretical underpinnings underline TBLT's effectiveness in fostering the deep, practical language skills necessary for the 21st century.

Achieving successful TBLT implementation requires a high level of teacher readiness, encompassing knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards student-centered, 21st-century facilitation (Bhandari et al., 2025; Lakew et al., 2025; Rozak et al., 2023). While some studies show high teacher knowledge regarding multimedia use (Tyan et al., 2020). Overall readiness for complex strategies like TBLT remains a concern in foreign language contexts. A highly reliable framework for setting readiness standards is the ACTFL World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (WRS).

The ACTFL WRS defines five interconnected goals, collectively known as the 5Cs, which provide a comprehensive roadmap for developing effective communication and cultural competency. These goals encompass: Communication, requiring mastery across Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational modes; Cultures, emphasizing interacting with genuine cultural competence and understanding; Connections, which focuses on linking the acquired language with knowledge from other academic disciplines; Comparisons, essential for enhancing cultural competency through meticulous linguistic and cultural analysis; and finally, Communities, which encourages active participation in multilingual settings for lifelong learning (Ghaith & Awada, 2022; Hines-Gaither & Accilien, 2022; Wesely et al., 2025).

The literature on TBLT readiness in Arabic instruction leaves a critical gap: there is no systematic evaluation of Indonesian teachers' preparedness using a globally recognized, comprehensive framework. Specifically, the relationship between TBLT implementation and the ACTFL 5Cs in the Arabic context remains underexplored.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to assess the readiness of Indonesian Arabic language teachers to implement TBLT as a 21st-century instructional approach, specifically using the ACTFL World Readiness Standards (5Cs) as the analytical framework. To achieve this objective, this study attempts to answer the following questions: (1) What is the overall readiness level of Indonesian Arabic language teachers for implementing TBLT according to the ACTFL 5Cs? (2) Which ACTFL 5C aspect (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, or Communities) shows the highest and lowest readiness levels among Arabic language teachers?

Methods

The data collection method used in this research is descriptive quantitative through a survey-based design (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Hirose & Creswell, 2022) to seek input from Arabic language teachers in Indonesia who can assess the readiness of aspects of learning interaction in the classroom. The following is information about respondents and the survey instruments used in the research.

Before data analysis, the instrument underwent rigorous validation tests. This process aimed to establish its construct validity using item-total correlation, where all 27 items exceeded the critical r -value of 0.3081 (at $N=114$). Furthermore, internal

consistency reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient that met the acceptable threshold (≥ 0.70), thus confirming the instrument's trustworthiness. The data analysis procedure employed descriptive statistics to calculate the mean score for each ACTFL 5C aspect and the overall readiness index. Crucially, these descriptive mean scores were then interpreted using the established readiness index categories developed by Aydin and Tasci (2005) as the primary benchmark (Aydin & Tasci, 2005). This index provides the criterion for classifying the quantitative mean values into qualitative readiness levels, such as *"not ready, needs some repairs"*, *"ready, needs little repair"*, or *"very ready"*, allowing the study to determine the exact level of teacher preparedness for TBLT implementation based on a recognized external standard.

Result and Discussion

Respondent Characteristics

Analysis of the 114 respondents, consisting of 38 Arabic language lecturers and 76 Arabic language teachers, revealed several key characteristics. The average Arabic language competency score among participants was 500 TOAFL (Test of Arabic as a Foreign Language). Regarding teaching experience, 65.4% reported having more than one year of experience but were not yet certified, while 26.9% were certified. Furthermore, a majority of respondents (55.55%) reported not having participated in formal training programs aimed at enhancing their Arabic language or pedagogical competency.

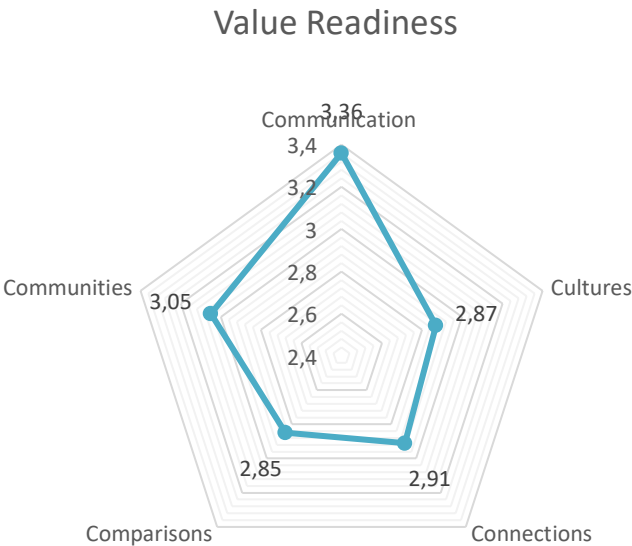
Readiness Index Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Utilizing the Teacher Readiness assessment model with the criteria proposed by ACTFL (Roeming, 1967) The data processing results yielded the following mean scores for the five aspects: Communication (3.36), Cultures (2.87), Connection (2.91), Comparison (2.85), Community (3.05). The overall readiness index for adopting 21st-century TBLT in Indonesia is 3.01. Based on the Aydin and Tasci model, this score falls into the category of *"Not ready, needs some repairs"* for full implementation. These detailed results are presented in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1. Summary of Arabic Language Teachers’ Readiness Index (ACTFL 5Cs)

No	Factor	Number of Factors	Average Factors	Value Readiness
1	Communication	1532	3.3596	3.36
2	Cultures	655	2.8728	2.87
3	Connections	1326	2.9078	2.91
4	Comparisons	651	2.8552	2.85
5	Communities	696	3.0526	3.05
	Average Score			3.01

Figure 1. Radar Chart of Arabic Language Teachers’ Readiness Index based on ACTFL 5Cs



Communication Supporting Factors

The communication aspect yielded an overall mean readiness score of 3.36, placing it in the *“not ready, needs slight improvement”* category. A more detailed look shows an imbalance across the sub-skills: interpretive communication scored the highest (3.57), reaching the *“ready, needs a little development”* category, suggesting relative confidence in enabling students to understand and analyze Arabic input. Conversely, presentational communication (3.27) and interpersonal communication (3.32) both scored lower, indicating a persistent gap in output-focused skills.

The finding that interpretive communication readiness is the highest suggests that Indonesian Arabic teachers possess a foundational pedagogical comfort rooted in the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which often serves as the initial

stage before full TBLT implementation (Ellis, 2021). However, the lower scores in presentational and interpersonal communication reveal a critical challenge in transforming receptive knowledge into active, spontaneous output and negotiated meaning. This disparity is frequently observed in foreign language contexts where curriculum design prioritizes structured grammar over complex, real-time communicative task execution (Aubrey et al., 2022; Bryfonski & McKay, 2019; Hima et al., 2021). To achieve full TBLT readiness, professional development must urgently focus on task design that demands higher cognitive load in output production and feedback mechanisms for modifying student performance (Alahmadi, 2019), thereby aligning instruction with the output hypothesis of language acquisition.

Culture Supporting Factors

The culture aspect demonstrated a critical weakness in teacher preparedness, yielding an overall mean readiness score of 2.87. This places the Indonesian Arabic teachers firmly in the *"not ready, needs some repairs"* category, signaling a significant pedagogical hurdle. A detailed breakdown shows that both practical culture (2.90) and cultural product (2.84) received similar low scores. This suggests that the current instructional approach struggles to integrate the required cultural dimensions into TBLT tasks. Specifically, teachers feel unprepared to facilitate student activities that require using Arabic to investigate and reflect on the deep relationship between Arab cultural perspectives, practices, and products. This deficiency is particularly concerning because the ability to navigate culture is foundational to true 21st-century language proficiency.

The consistently low scores in cultures are arguably the most revealing findings of this study, reflecting a systemic issue rather than just individual teacher weakness. It appears that Arabic language pedagogy in many institutions still prioritizes the transmission of grammar and vocabulary over the development of intercultural communicative competence. The difficulty lies in shifting the focus from simply teaching about culture to requiring students to use language to interpret, explain, and compare cultural phenomena (Ghaith & Awada, 2022). This structural challenge often stems from a lack of formal training provided to teachers on how to integrate the ACTFL culture framework into task-based lesson plans, especially in the context of Arabic, which involves diverse regional dialects and religious nuances (El Seoud, 2024; ElHawari,

2020). Addressing this gap requires immediate and targeted professional development that equips teachers not only with awareness but also with concrete TBLT strategies to make culture an active, analytical component of every task, moving beyond mere memorization.

Connection Supporting Factors

The Connections aspect yielded an overall mean readiness score of 2.91, placing it in the *"not ready, needs some repairs"* category. This indicates that teachers are struggling to fully integrate Arabic language instruction with other academic disciplines. A closer look at the indicators reveals a critical challenge: the lowest readiness score (2.71) was recorded for the sub-aspect concerning students' use of Arabic to build, strengthen, and expand their knowledge in various scientific contexts. This difficulty suggests a persistent view of Arabic as a compartmentalized subject, separate from fields like History, Science, or Islamic Studies, hindering its function as a tool for interdisciplinary knowledge acquisition. Conversely, the highest score (3.12) was achieved in the area of enabling students to access information from various perspectives available through Arabic and local culture, suggesting teachers are slightly more comfortable with passive information access rather than active problem-solving and knowledge expansion.

The gap between the readiness to access information (3.12) and the readiness to actively solve problems creatively (2.71) highlights a fundamental pedagogical barrier: teachers are more prepared for tasks involving simple translation or retrieval of facts than for complex, interdisciplinary applications of the language. TBLT, particularly in the Connections domain, requires tasks that necessitate critical thinking and the use of specialized academic Arabic terminology to synthesize concepts across subjects (Ghaith & Awada, 2022). The low score suggests that current training has not adequately equipped Arabic teachers to create these authentic, cognitively demanding tasks. Furthermore, research indicates that the compartmentalization of subjects often exists at the institutional level, making it challenging for an individual language teacher to unilaterally enforce interdisciplinary integration (Bryfonski & McKay, 2019; Burdujan, 2024). Therefore, improving the Connections score requires institutional support and

targeted professional development that specifically trains teachers on cross-curricular task design and collaborative teaching with other subject teachers.

Comparisons Supporting Factors

The Comparisons aspect registered the lowest overall readiness score at 2.85, placing it firmly in the *"not ready, needs some repairs"* category. This finding indicates that teachers are least prepared to integrate tasks that require students to investigate the nature of language and culture through comparisons between Arabic and their native language/culture (Indonesian). The specific weakness lies in the ability to facilitate critical linguistic and cultural analysis, which is fundamental to the ACTFL framework. This reluctance or inability suggests that the current Arabic curriculum heavily favors isolated language learning, neglecting the pedagogical opportunity to use contrastive analysis to deepen understanding of both Arabic and Indonesian structures (Widodo & Setiawan, 2021).

This result aligns with the low score in the culture aspect, suggesting a pervasive structural weakness in non-communicative dimensions of TBLT. Previous studies indicate that teachers of Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs) often lack the methodological training required to design TBLT tasks that explicitly draw students' attention to meta-linguistic and meta-cultural awareness (Chalhoub-Deville & Lin, 2022; Troyan et al., 2025). Addressing this 2.85 readiness requires shifting the focus from simply correcting errors to encouraging analytical exploration. Teacher development must therefore be tailored to equip practitioners with tools to leverage linguistic similarities and differences as productive teaching moments, ensuring TBLT activities transcend mere replication and foster deep comparative insight.

Community Supporting Factors

The final aspect, Communities, yielded an overall mean readiness score of 3.05, placing it exactly at the threshold of the *"not ready, needs some repairs"* category. This finding indicates that while teachers have a moderate level of readiness to promote Arabic use beyond the classroom, full integration into the global community remains challenging. A detailed breakdown shows a disparity between the two sub-factors: Using Arabic as a lifelong learning concept scored higher (3.18), suggesting teachers accept and encourage the continued personal study of Arabic. However, readiness to facilitate

communication with the community and the global world scored lower (2.92). This reveals that teachers are better equipped to inspire individual motivation than to facilitate authentic, real-world engagement tasks that involve external or global communities.

The higher readiness for Lifelong Learning (3.18) is a positive signal, suggesting that teachers see the value of Arabic beyond the formal classroom setting. This is often intrinsically linked to the cultural and religious importance of Arabic in the Indonesian context, providing a strong internal motivation for continuous study. However, the lag in engaging the Global Community 2.92 reflects a common challenge in TBLT implementation: the difficulty of creating authentic, low-risk opportunities for students to interact with native speakers or use Arabic for practical societal participation outside of their immediate environment (Bygate, 2020; Crookes & Ziegler, 2021). To improve this, professional development needs to focus on strategies that leverage technology to bridge the physical gap between the Indonesian classroom and the wider Arabic-speaking world. Fully realizing the Community aspect requires teachers to transition from teaching about communication to orchestrating real communicative tasks that prepare students for genuine multilingual participation.

The analysis of the readiness of Arabic language teachers in Indonesia to facilitate and implement 21st-century language learning confirms the initial conclusion that the overall index score of 3.01 places them in the *"not ready, needs improvement"* category. The detailed findings highlight a crucial imbalance: while teachers show moderate readiness in basic communicative aspects (3.36), they demonstrate critical unpreparedness in the cultural (2.87) and analytical dimensions (2.85) of the ACTFL standards. This persistent gap suggests that teacher readiness is not simply an individual problem, but is heavily determined by systemic factors that hinder the adoption of TBLT beyond basic communicative tasks.

These macro factors significantly influence the pace of TBLT adoption. Institutional policy regarding the primary direction of Arabic language learning, whether prioritizing comprehensive communicative competence or specialized religious understanding, critically determines the curriculum's flexibility in integrating the 5Cs. Furthermore, the overall quality of teaching resources and professional development (Abdul Hamid et al., 2025; Arifianto et al., 2023; Mandaka et al., 2023) is insufficient to address the identified

weaknesses. The high percentage of teachers lacking formal training and the challenge in maintaining high TOAFL scores suggest an urgent need for government and institutional investment in targeted TBLT training programs focused explicitly on cultural integration and analytical task design, ensuring the curriculum can truly adapt to the demands of 21st-century language learning.

At the Micro level, the implementation of TBLT hinges on the teacher's ability to select and design tasks based on robust acquisition theories. For instance, teachers must be able to move beyond simple interaction to create tasks that activate the Output Hypothesis, thereby forcing students to adjust their output, and utilize the Sociocultural perspective by requiring collaborative construction of meaning. This approach is crucial to overcome the low readiness observed in the Comparisons and Cultures domains. By intentionally aligning task design with specific acquisition mechanisms and factoring in student characteristics, teachers can ensure that Arabic language instruction transitions from mere content delivery to a complex, analytic, and interdisciplinary learning process, fulfilling the complete vision of TBLT in the 21st century.

Conclusion

The present study concludes that the overall readiness of Indonesian Arabic language teachers to facilitate and implement Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is moderate (3.01), placing them decisively in the *"not yet ready"* category. This index provides a crucial reference standard for 21st-century language learning based on the ACTFL framework. The detailed findings reveal a critical imbalance: while teachers show moderate preparedness in fundamental communication skills, they exhibit significant deficiencies in the Cultures (2.87) and comparisons (2.85) domains.

This requires an immediate and focused response from all stakeholders, including the government, Arabic language professional organizations (IMLA), and educational institutions. The central implication is the urgent need for targeted professional development programs aimed at integrating intercultural competence and comparative linguistic analysis into TBLT pedagogy. Furthermore, curriculum improvement and resource development must shift from passive language transfer to active task design that requires students to apply Arabic in interdisciplinary contexts, reflecting the connections aspect, and authentic global communities. Ultimately,

overcoming the readiness gap is essential to transforming the Arabic language learning system and meeting the genuine communicative demands of the 21st century. For future studies, employing a mixed-methods design is recommended to qualitatively explore the specific pedagogical challenges and teacher training needs required for successful TBLT implementation in diverse Arabic contexts.

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