

# The Effectiveness of Cognitive Activation Strategy in Developing Oral Classical Arabic Communication Competency Among Omani Students' Courses

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**Abstract:** This study explores the extent to which second-year students in the Arabic Language and Literature Program (ALLP) possess the competencies of Oral Communication in Classical Arabic. It also measures the effectiveness of the cognitive activation strategy in developing oral communication in classical Arabic among second-year students in the (ALLP). This study used the quasi-experimental approach to build a strategy based on cognitive activation to develop oral communication competencies in Classical Arabic. Guided by cognitive psychology, the study observed (40) students enrolled in the Abbasid Literature Course (ALC). The findings revealed that most students do not possess adequate Oral Communication skills in Classical Arabic. The study recommends updating the educational, evaluative, and instructional visions by adopting the latest scientific references in educational psychology. This would involve leveraging the various methods and approaches it provides to develop the competency of "learning to learn" and Reducing student density within lecture halls to ensure addressing all individual differences and preparing a learning path tailored for each student.

**Keywords:** Cognitive Psychology, Cognitive Activation, Emotional Specificities Mental Processes, Oral Communication, Sohar University.

## 1. Introduction

Philosophers have realized since long that 'man is by nature a social creature' [1]. Sociologists later on pointed out the shaping of an individual's social identity. The formation of the individuals' collective consciousness is fundamentally determined 'according to a system that arises from their union and changes according to their behavior in the expanse of space and according to the means of communication related to that' [2]. The social nature of human beings basically influences the need to communicate with others. Connecting and interacting socially with others is an essential and indispensable aspect of human existence and self-actualization. As mentioned by [3] "the need of some people for others is a constant feature of their human nature".

The inherent necessity of communication explains the longstanding interest of scholars and researchers. They have tried to understand its mechanisms and have explored ways to enhance its effectiveness, particularly among those engaged in learning and education [4]. Communication for them is not merely a cornerstone of a successful society being the most powerful motive of interaction between individuals and groups, but it is also the core of the success and sustainability of the learning and teaching process. Communication contextualizes the transformations brought about by the industrial, technological, and digital revolutions [5].

It is impossible to minimize the influential and effective role of communication as a tool in the process of acquiring knowledge and developing skills within educational institutions. Yet, academic achievement and communication are interdependent. Learners cannot develop their intellectual capabilities and skills unless they engage in effective communication with the sources of knowledge [6-7].

Scholars have defined various means of communication; they have categorized them into different types. The most prominent is linguistic communication, by which humans express their intentions 'using the tongue that God has distinguished humans with from all other creations [8-9]. The second type is non-linguistic forms of communication. It is realized through various non-verbal mediums such as signs, gestures, symbols, indicators, and icons. They have further sub-categorized linguistic communication into written communication and oral/verbal communication. [10] showcased that written texts can be read in any place and studied at any time, while the oral utterances do not go beyond its hearer nor exceed them to others.

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However, communication theories and cognitive psychology suggest oral communication as the essence basis of the communication process. According to [11] the written and documented forms of language are derived from the spoken aspect. This is confirmed by [12] who stated that the heard language is the first, from which the human being derives the standards of language and its lexical components.

The importance of verbal communication has been further reinforced by educational studies across various disciplines. Most researchers have emphasized the importance of mastering communication competencies, and the direct link between these competencies and proficiency in verbal communication skills [13-18]. There is no path to general existence and communication, in particular, without possessing communication competencies. These competencies can only be attained through mastering the skills of verbal communication proficiency [19-21].

Upon examining the Western literature to understand the mechanisms of verbal communication and explore ways to develop it, the researchers have observed the paradigm shift brought about by cognitive psychology after the dominance of behavioral theory in the educational field. The behavioral theory had focused on mechanical interactions and measuring outputs, while falling short in comprehending mental processes. They considered these processes to be hidden within the individual's brain and cannot be revealed in that black box [22-23].

Most educational psychologists point out that applying behavioral theory negatively impacts verbal communication. The teaching and learning process revolves around the quantity of information the student acquires without paying attention to how they acquire competencies [24-26]. This explains the tendency of teachers to rely on repetition and rote learning. They discourage creativity in learners due to the modeling of expected answers, and the reliance on punishment and reward, which limits the individual's autonomy in constructing their own learning [27].

Going beyond the confinements of behavioral theory, cognitive theory focused on the process of knowledge formation. It encourages the mental processes involved in learning within the "black box" while an individual solves a problem. Its proponents paid special attention to communicative development for attaining critical communicative skills, both verbal and non-verbal [28-29].

One of their major prominent findings was the importance of possessing effective verbal communication competence to ensure successful and sustainable education. In fact, studies have shown the necessity of proficiency in verbal communication skills for academic excellence. It was also found that proficient students in verbal communication inevitably outperform their peers in academic achievement [5, 21]. Some other studies consider verbal communication as the compass in the academic achievement process, guiding the adoption of the most appropriate strategies to address all situations in the learning and teaching continuum [26-29].

Reviewing previous studies conducted in the Omani setting on the importance of verbal communication revealed the prevalence of research focused on written communication compared verbal communication. Some have highlighted the significance of written expression. To them, historical details are only known after human beings learned writing and documented their thoughts and civilization. Yet, writing takes its importance in schools and educational centers" [30]. Others have called for more efforts to focus on developing functional written competencies. [30] Proposed a program to develop functional written skills for first-year secondary school students in the Sultanate of Oman. This focus on written expressions has had its effects on the educational curricula and assessment methods in the Sultanate of Oman, as evidenced by the prevalence of written assessments compared to the scarcity of oral/verbal assessments. In fact, only approximately 7.5% of the total course grade is allocated to verbal assessment, as is the case for the study community in the current research.

## 2. Literature Review

Reviewing of previous studies focused on verbal communication in Classical Arabic in Oman revealed a predominant interest in expression rather than communication. This is because expression is an important element of success; human beings cannot progress without the process of thinking and strengthening intellectual and social ties [30]. Most of the previous research has focused on the skills of expression in the Classical Arabic language in oral performance, addressing various aspects such as grammar, phonetics, and vocabulary. [31] Highlighted the weakness of oral performance skills in Classical Arabic among students in the Educational Qualification program, and the existence of a significant gap between the cognitive and skill-based aspects of oral performance in Classical Arabic. The study reported that the percentage of linguistic errors in the oral performance of the study sample reached 54.49%. [32] Targeted oral expression skills of students, but the study did not address the cognitive activation required to address the weakness described.

Similarly, [33] study identified the impact of free reading on developing oral expression skills among tenth-grade students,

relied on the comparative causal approach without investigating oral communication. Therefore, the researchers conclude the necessity of investigating oral communication is in further studies. Some indicators have revealed that the majority of students do not possess the oral communication competencies in classical Arabic required at this educational level. Therefore, this gap prompts the researchers to observe some obstacles in oral communication in classical Arabic during our teaching of the ALC for second-year students of the ALLP.

Thus, the researchers decided to assess the extent to which students in ALLP possess competencies of oral expression in classical Arabic. The study also attempts to investigate the reasons and some ways of addressing them, armed with the gains of cognitive psychology. This study asks:

**RQ1.** To what extent do the second-year students in the ALLP possess the competencies of oral communication in classical Arabic?

**RQ2.** What is the effectiveness of the cognitive activation strategy in developing the competencies of oral communication in classical Arabic that are suitable for the second-year students in the ALLP?

### **2.1 Research objectives**

This study has a main objective which is to develop the oral communication competence in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) among second-year students of the ALLP.

### **2.2 Research Significance**

The study holds both scientific and practical significance. The formal lies in unfolding the extent to which students of the ALLP have mastered the appropriate oral communication skills in MSA. It also involves building a strategy based on cognitive activation to develop oral communication competence in MSA. Additionally, it opens avenues for in-depth studies focused on cognitive activation to enhance oral communication competence in MSA among students in ALLP. Regarding the practical significance, the study provides recommendations for decision-makers, program and curriculum developers, as well as Arabic language teachers.

### **2.3 Limitations**

- **Sample Limitations:** The research is confined to a specific group of participants, namely the Arabic Language and Literature Program students at Sohar University at the. The results and conclusions drawn may not be applicable to other student populations or different grade levels.
- **Temporal Constraints:** The study was conducted within a specific time frame, focusing on the second semester of the academic year 2023/2024. This temporal limitation may impact the generalizability of the findings to different time periods or academic terms.
- **Spatial Boundaries:** The research was carried out exclusively within the confines of Sohar University. Therefore, the results may not be representative of educational institutions with different characteristics, structures, or locations.
- **Objective Constraints:** The primary objective of this study is to the oral communication competence in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) among second-year students of the ALLP.
- **Methodological Constraints:** The study's conclusions are contingent on the tools and instruments employed, as well as their psychometric properties, specifically concerning validity and reliability. Research relies on these measures to achieve its intended scientific goals, but the limitations of these tools should be taken into account when interpreting the results.

### **2.4 Research Terminologies**

- **Oral Communication:** differs from oral expression, which means "disclosing thoughts and feelings linguistically" [34-35]. The difference lies primarily in interaction because oral communication is "a social cooperative interactive interaction where roles are exchanged between the listener and the speaker and involves the ability to use language correctly and appropriately for the situation" [36].
- **Cognitive Psychology:** is a branch of psychology that studies mental processes during information processing. It examines the processes through which sensory information enters the brain, how it is organized, stored, retrieved, and used in various aspects of daily life [37].

- **Cognitive Activation** is one of the most pivotal contributions of cognitive theory to humanity in various fields such as learning, neurological and cognitive therapy. It is one of the most basic metacognitive strategies that the learner follows to "think about thinking and knowledge of what he knows and does not know" [38].
- **Emotional Features:** studies in cognitive psychology have shown significant correlation factors between an individual's emotional features and their influence on various areas of their learning. Feelings and emotions affect the way of thinking, as well as attention and concentration abilities.

### 3. Methodologies

#### 3.1 Research Design

The study combined the descriptive approach, which was used to describe the phenomenon as it is, and the quasi-experimental approach, which was used to build a strategy based on cognitive activation to develop oral communication competencies in Classical Arabic, tailored to the needs of second-year students in the ALLP. The study focuses on addressing the key skills of oral communication competence. The study took place at Sohar University, Sultanate of Oman. It is confined to second-year students of the ALLP.

#### 3.2 Participants

The study population comprised the entire group of students taking the ALC as part of the ALLP at the University of Sohar, Oman. The total number of students in this population was (379), see table 1.

**Table 1: Study Population**

Group	Males	Females	Total
First	42	96	138
Second	54	76	130
Third	36	75	111
<b>Total</b>			<b>379</b>

The sample study consisted of 40 students, selected randomly at a rate of 10% from the study population. The sample was drawn proportionately, with 10% from each group, to assess the sample's possession of the criteria for oral communication competency in Classical Arabic and to attempt the implementation of the cognitive activation-based strategy, see table 2.

**Table 2: Study Sample**

First Group	Second Group	Third Group	Total
14	13	13	40

#### 3.3 Instruments

In order to answer the research questions of the current study, the researchers designed an observation and evaluation grid to record the indicators of the criteria for oral communication competency in Classical Arabic. These criteria were distributed across four main domains:

- **Mental process competency** includes effective listening and understanding the context of the topic, analyzing information and synthesizing connections and self-evaluation
- **Emotional competency** includes self-confidence and motivation.
- **Proficiency in classical Arabic language** includes clear and articulate expression, grammatically correct language structure, and appropriate vocabulary selection.
- **Positive interaction** with the group includes effective communication and mutual support, openness to change and distinction and creativity.

The four main competency domains have been further divided into indicators to measure the extent to which the participants possess these competencies, as shown in Table 3. To so do, an evaluation was prepared to measure each standard by designing an indicator grid for each standard as shown in Table 3. The observation was filled in each cell as appropriate in the following manner:

**Table 3:** Scale for Evaluating Oral Communication Competencies in Classical Arabic

No response	Inappropriate response	An insufficient or convincing response	Moderate response	Good response	Excellent
×	- -	-	+ -	+	+ +
0	1	5	1	15	20

This measure was prepared by the researchers and conducted two assessments: the first was a pre-test and the second was a post-test, after implementing the cognitive activation strategy which took about 10 weeks. In each evaluation, the scale of competency attainment was converted to measurable values with scores ranging from 0 to 20. The initial pre-test was conducted in the third week of teaching, which corresponds to the first week of the implementation of the cognitive activation, while the post-test observation was conducted in the 12th week.

### 3.4 Procedures

The study was based on initial observations recorded by the first researcher through her experience in teaching Abbasid literature to students in the ALLP at the University of Sohar, Sultanate of Oman during the second semester of the academic year 2023/2024. These observations indicated the presence of some indicators suggesting that the majority of students did not possess the required oral communication competencies in Classical Arabic at this educational level. These two indicators were not in line with the overall graduate specifications at the University of Sohar, as stipulated in the course learning outcomes, and documented in the course descriptions of Abbasid Literature and the ALLP, all of which emphasize the importance of communication and social interaction.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 RQ1. To what extent do the second-year students in the ALLP possess the competencies of oral communication in classical Arabic?

The results of the pre-test showed that the overall average of competency attainment does not exceed 8.65/20, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Pre-test evaluation of the sample's possession of oral communication competency

Sub-competences	Level of possessing competencies before the intervention
Mental processes	8.46
Emotional peculiarities	8.32
Arabic	8.95
Positive interaction	8.89
<b>Average</b>	<b>8.65</b>

Table 4 reveals the detailed possession rates for each of the sub-competencies. Table 4 shows that the students scored less than the average in mental processes and Emotional peculiarities. The following provides a detailed breakdown according to each of the four main competencies:

Evaluating the students' possession of *mental competence*, Table 5 reveals a general weakness in the effectiveness of mental processes. The overall average of attainment of this competency did not exceed 8.46/20 despite its importance and its horizontal involvement in any learning activity.

**Table 5:** Indicators for students' possessing of mental processes

Standard Indicator	Active listening			Understanding the topic context			Analyzing and synthesizing information			Self-reflection assessment		
	Summarizing the main points	Demonstrating understanding through verbal or physical expression	visual focus	Expressing a lack of understanding of the topic	Suitability of phrases and vocabulary	Suitability of summary	Expressing critical thought and drawing a conclusion	Summarizing ideas logically	Understanding coherence	Knowing your strengths and weaknesses	Strategy amendment	Evaluating goals achieved and modifying decisions
Pretest /20	9.12	8.1	8.48	10	8.35	8.71	7.71	7.05	9.23	9.25	8.74	8.46



Table 5 shows that the attainment rates of mental processes range between 7.5 and 10 out of 20. The students' weakness also encompasses the overall mental processes, such as visual focus. Mental process does not require higher-order thinking skills and indicates a lack of ability to focus, concentrate attention, and be meticulous in the subject matter to be studied, memorized, or worked on. Furthermore, more than half of the students are unable to control the energy of their visual focus and express their understanding and ability to identify and summarize what is essential.

For instance, misunderstanding the context of the subject is due to the lack of relationship between the response and the question, as the answers are general. There was a query about the meanings of some expressions, such as "the conservative current prevailed" by saying "I don't understand what 'prevailed' means." This rate indicates the existence of problems that limit perception in both its sensory and cognitive dimensions. The weakness in effective listening is one of the most obstacles.

The researchers explain this weakness by the fragility of the construction of previous acquisitions, especially since a large part of students entered the university in the second semester of the academic year and registered to study Abbasid literature, without having studied the literature of the pre-Islamic era and the Umayyad period. This may call for reviewing the course requirements in a way that made pre-Islamic, early Islamic, and Umayyad literature courses as pre-request to enroll in the Abbasid literature course. The results also reveal the connection between the performance of higher mental processes and the weakness of the results of lower mental processes. More than half of the students lack the ability to analyze information, synthesize it, and demonstrate a significant weakness in the ability to evaluate their own thinking.

Their weakness was severe in the ability to summarize ideas in a logical manner, as well as in expressing their self-reflection assessment and their ability to make sound inferences. Evaluating one's own thinking is considered the highest mental process. It enables the students to excel and distinguish themselves. The indicators show that students lack higher-order thinking skills, as more than half of them were unable to evaluate the achievement of their goals and, consequently, are unable to modify their strategies and decisions.

Students expressed spontaneous self-evaluation, especially after taking the test, such as saying, "Oh my God, we're in trouble", "Forgive us", "They didn't teach us", "We just scribbled", and "We got the holiday, please help us, Professor."

### Emotional Competency

The competency of emotional/affective features witnessed an average attainment rate of 8.32. It is a very weak rate which places it in the last position compared to the rest of the competencies. The details of the standard indicators are summarized in Table 6.

**Table 6:** Indicators for standards related to emotional/affective features

Standard	Self Confidence			Motivation		
	Effective participation	Facing pressure and criticism	Expressing oneself without shame or fear	Expressing interest	Desire to challenge and achieve success	Expressing commitment and responsibility
Pre-test/20	8.15	7.9	8.65	8.5	8.15	9.12

Table 6 shows the attainment rates of the students for the sub-competencies of motivation and self-confidence. These sub-competencies are considered the most important standards for possessing emotional/affective peculiarities. Table 6 also reveals that most of the students do not have self-confidence, which weakens their participation in the activities. They are also unable to face pressure and negative criticism, and most of them could not challenge the obstacles of expression in the group without shyness or fear. The students' fear of criticism can be explained by previous negative experiences or a lack of practice in expression in a supportive educational environment, or by the individual's strong desire to maintain a positive image in front of the group members. In addition to the lack of self-confidence, the students exhibited little motivation evidenced by their lack of interest in challenging, achieving success and their lack of responsibility. These results were confirmed by qualitative findings that highlight the lack of interaction and initiative in participation. Responses are often collective, using scattered words rather than forming a useful sentence to answer the question, in addition to hesitation and filling the answers with general words such as "okay, what else, this is that..." or some saying: "Professor, I can't organize my thoughts" or "I do study and memorize, but I don't get good grades" or "Professor, why don't you give us the complete [answer]" or direct questions from the course material "I only know how to memorize".

### Arabic Language Competency

Regarding the attainment of the Arabic language competency, the level of attainment did not rise to an appropriate level required by second-year students in the ALLP. The overall average of competency attainment did not exceed 8.95/20, Table 7.

**Table 7: Students' attainment of the Arabic language competency**

Standard	Expressing in a clear language			Expressing in well-formed language			Choosing appropriate vocabulary		
	Indicator	Avoiding redundancy and complexity	Accuracy in expression	Using clear words and phrases	Arranging words according to their function in the sentence	Pronouncing words correctly	Adapting words according to gender, number, tense, definition, and indefinite article	Using words that fit the context	Relevance of statements to the intended purpose
Pre-test/20	9.15	10.02	8.4	8.62	8.15	10	7.65	10.5	8.4

Table 7 reveals the results of the low level in the students' abilities in terms of expressing themselves in a clear and well-structured language with proper grammar, as well as their lack of using appropriate vocabulary according to the situation. A closer examination of the results shows that there are 6 out of 9 indicators that reflect a weakness in the attainment of Arabic language competency. This is due to disability to use words that are appropriate to the context or the intended purpose, the ability to pronounce them correctly, as well as the use of clear vocabulary and expressions, avoiding redundancy and complexity, and controlling the arrangement of words according to their function in the sentence.

The researchers have identified the most significant indicators of the students' low average attainment of Standard Arabic language skills like the use of many words in Omani dialect.

This aligns with what [39-42] reported as the lack of utilization of the Standard Arabic lexical wealth. Examples are (ainzin, baedin, also "the poet was yaba", i.e., wanted; they did it because, " faqaluu 'iinuw zindiġ, i.e., they said he is a heretic", kanat ammah, i.e., she was slave," "kan almamun yhib alelm kathirin", i.e., "Al-Ma'mun loved knowledge a lot"; "kan lah min 'asmu majlisi", i.e., "he had a noble council", "wsh 'iilaa sar fi easrihim fi dhalik alfatrati", i.e, "what happened in their era during that period"). This showed the diversity morphological errors due to the use of words in contradiction with what is mentioned in Arabic dictionaries, such as the inappropriateness of the words with the associated agreements of gender, number, and tense, and changing the structure of the verb, especially when the subject of the verb is a plural, as in their saying "qamuu alkhulafa'i", "the caliphs made", and "ahtamuu alebaasiuna", "the Abbasids cared".

Additionally, signs of weakness in the attainment of the Arabic language include incorrect pronunciation of words such as "al-huzn" (the sadness), "an-nuzā'āt" (the conflicts), "al-majūn" (the frivolity and amusement), "al-khiṭābah" (the rhetoric), and "'ilm al-'arūḍ" (the prosody). There is also a lack of constructing sentences with clear subject-verb agreement, as evidenced by responses to questions like "What is al-Shu'ūbiyyah and what is the significance of its emergence in the Abbasid era?" where the answer would be "al-Shu'ūbiyyah, yeah, yeah, they are... in that they attack the Arabs." There are also the prevalence and diversity of grammatical errors; the most notable of which include a tendency towards vowel elision, raising the (object) accusative and lowering the nominative (subject), such as " tammaza Abā al-'Alā'," instead of "tammaza Abū al-'Alā'", " aintamaa 'aba nwas 'iilaa almualidin," instead of "aintamaa 'abu nwas 'iilaa almualidin' and they the preced Khabar Kana before Ism Kana of the verb 'to be' as in saying, kan yakhruj 'abi tamam." In general, their responses are hardly free from grammatical mistakes and violations of the rules of Arabic grammar.

**Positive Interaction Competence with The Group**

This competency is considered an extension and culmination of the results of the previous competencies, and it reflects the weakness or strength of its attainment by the students in the sample. Table 8 shows the clear weakness of the students' performance which averaged (8.89) for the attainment of the competency of positive interaction with the group.

**Table 8: Students' competency of positive interaction with the group**

Standard	Effective Communication			Mutual Support			Openness to Change			Excellence and Creativity		
	Indicator	Interacting with others' opinions	Listening to others' opinions	Contributing regularly to discussion	Respecting others' opinions	Encouraging others	Collaborating with the group	Accepting other opinions	Breaking the chains of prejudice	Flexibility to modify opinion	Taking responsibility for leading the group	Encouraging positive interaction with dissenting opinions
Pre-test/20	9.4	10.02	8.4	8.75	7.9	9.27	8.75	8.27	10.12	7.77	9.62	8.52

Table 8 reveals the difficulty the students face in effective communication with group members. They find it difficult to contribute regularly to discussions and interact with the opinions of others. More than half of them do not master the culture of discussion which is based on respecting the opinion of others and mutual support within the group. They also did not exhibit behaviors of encouragement and cooperation with others. The openness to change seems rigid due to the difficulty in accepting the opinion of others and their weakness to free from preconceived judgments and to modify their opinions. It is obvious that such results do not qualify the student to become an effective, responsible, and inspiring leader for others.

This is evidenced by the weak average indicator of 7.77 which student scored in their responsibility to leading the group. This weakness erodes the individuals' sense of belonging to the group and, consequently, reduces the chances of developing oral communication, regardless of the language used in general. It is logical that the results of attaining this competency are related to the results of the previous competencies, especially in terms of the interaction of these behaviors with the degree of attainment of higher mental processes, in addition to the student's level of motivation and self-confidence.

#### ***4.2 RQ2. What is the effectiveness of the cognitive activation strategy in developing the competencies of oral communication in classical Arabic that are suitable for the second-year students in the ALLP?***

After analyzing the results of test and understanding the extent to which the Omani students possessed the competency of oral communication in Standard Arabic, the researchers proceeded to implement the cognitive activation strategy. The starting point was to declare the decision to change the current situation and to strive to ensure that each student benefits from cognitive activation, regardless of their abilities and performance. The researchers then declared the value of awareness of self-reflection and the decision to control it, announcing a new situation that does not rely on mere rote learning embodied by reading slides and having students follow along, as if the content is material to be memorized for the exam.

At the beginning, the course instructor faced some resistance from the students, who expressed their preference for relying on memorizing the course materials. This went so far that two students intervened on two separate occasions to ask about the location of what the instructor was saying in the course material, with one of them asking, "on which page is what you're saying?" and the other saying, "Can you display what you're saying on the screen so we can follow along with the reading of the course handout?"

The two students' enquiries reflect the entrenched culture of lecturing and transmission, and the associated exclusion of the learner and the focus on the course content represented in the course materials. However, the instructor tried to convince them of the importance of their role in the learning process and the effectiveness of the interactive communication situation, so that she listened to them and trained them to express their thoughts, as well as identified and corrected their mistakes. At this stage, it was necessary to reassure them, reduce direct criticism, and provide positive reinforcement through praise and encouragement, conveying that they are all alike, and that there is no harm or shame in making mistakes, as they are in a learning situation [43-44]. The instructor went so far as to thank each student who attempted to interact and made a mistake, saying, "Thank you for providing us with this mistake, so that we can correct it, so that those who are still in the stage of shyness can also benefit from it."

Some students came to the professor's office, requesting to be exempted from participation in the class. One student said, "I'm shy to speak in front of the boys," and we documented a student saying, "it's no use for me to speak and make mistakes in front of the boys and girls." It was necessary to remind them of the difference between shyness from committing a mistake or a sin, which is a required matter, and shyness in seeking knowledge, which is unreasonable, as the learner, to [6, 33, 45], needs a dynamic participatory communication that allows learning a set of skills and experiences, such as the courage to take the floor and control behavior, and acquire a methodology of inference.

It was also emphasized that their success on the course is related to the degree to which they acquire oral communication skills. In this way, the course material gradually transformed from knowledge that can only be memorized and stored, to contextualizing it and to provide mechanism for thinking, and building ideas. This transformation indicates that the student's mind as [46-47] showed out, has become "growing cognitively and intellectually in the midst of their cognitive and educational communication within the classroom

Each class session was transformed into a learning situation by employing open-ended questions that stimulate research, comparison, and imagination. For example, the instructor started the lesson on "Social and Cultural Life in the Abbasid Era" with the following question: "Based on what we perceived in the previous lecture about the Persians, how you envision the social and cultural life of the Arabs after their contact and proximity with the Persians?" This utilizes the course material available on Sohar University Learning Management System (SULMS) platform. In this way, the researchers tried to create a learning environment in which the students can invest their previous experiences in personal thinking, then attempt to search for new information to test their ideas. These findings match what [48] motioned, that due



to social communication with others, problems are solved, discrepancies are arranged, and classifications are made. During this process, diverse experiences interacted according to the differences among the students, which provided teachers with valuable opportunities to identify individual differences among our students and to control the learning processes. The researchers tried to provide a complex communication based on multiple and diverse elements interaction, including the physical educational media represented in the course material, videos, mind maps, and documentaries. The researchers also used the vocabulary and linguistic styles in their comments and responses, and the exchange of information and experiences that occurred among the students. By so doing, students were providing with knowledge through this exchange, to organize their thoughts through proof and reasoning, and to raise questions, in addition to developing social adaptation through the ability to communicate and accept the opinions of others.

The researchers focused on implementing the cognitive activation strategy to oscillate between the cognitive strategies aimed at consolidating, storing, retrieving, and effectively utilizing the acquired knowledge, and the metacognitive strategies aimed at self-evaluation. [49-50] Pointed out that controlling and correcting errors during the storage and retrieval of information represents a model for these strategies.

The researchers also tried to achieve an enjoyable learning experience by integrating technology with internet research at times. [35, 46, 51] found that learners retain information for longer when using cooperative learning. After about 10 weeks of attempting to implement the cognitive activation strategy, another post-assessment was conducted using the same observation and evaluation network that was used in the pre-assessment to record indicators of the adequacy criteria for oral communication in Standard Arabic.

**Table 9:** Pre- and post-assessment of the students' adequacy of oral communication

Sub-competences	Competency Level pre to the Experiment	Competency Level post to the Experiment
<b>Mental processes</b>	8.46	9.78
<b>Emotional Peculiarities</b>	8.32	9.51
<b>Competence in Arabic Language</b>	8.95	11.53
<b>Positive Interaction</b>	8.89	10.14
<b>Average</b>	<b>8.65</b>	<b>10.24</b>

The overall results of students' having oral communication competence in the pre-test and post-test evaluation show that the post-test performance of the students exceeds the pre-test performance, although with small percentages in some sub-competencies.

**Mental Processes**

Table 10 compares between students to the mental process at the pre and post-test. Some improvement in all the competencies of mental processes.

**Table 10:** Indicators of the standards related to students' mental processes

Standard	Active Listening			Understanding the Topic Context			Analyzing and Synthesizing Information			Self-Reflection Assessment		
	Summarizing the main points	Demonstrating understanding through verbal or physical expression	Visual focus	Suitability of summary	Suitability of phrases and vocabulary	Expressing a lack of understanding of the topic	Understanding the coherence	Summarizing ideas logically	Expressing critical thought and drawing a conclusion	Knowing your strengths and weaknesses	Amending a strategy	Evaluating the achieved goal and modifying decisions
Pre/ 20	9.12	8.1	8.48	8.71	8.35	10	9.23	7.05	7.71	9.25	8.74	8.46
Post/ 20	10	8.84	8.58	10.25	10	10.76	10.25	9.23	8.46	11.41	10	9.61

Table 10 reveals an improvement in the rates of the sub-competencies of the mental processes competence, particularly with regard to the evaluation of self-reflection. The rate of identifying strengths and weaknesses increased from 9.25/20 to 11.41/20, which is a significant development. One of the results of this improvement is the enhancement of the competence of modifying strategies, as evidenced by some students' questions about what activities they can engage in to enrich their summer vacation.

This relative improvement can be explained by the enhancement of the sub-competencies of effective listening and understanding the context of the topic, as well as the efficacy of the cognitive activation strategy. Identifying the students' weakness in the sub-competencies of mental processes among the students attributed due to the numerous distractions

surrounding the students in recent years, such as the use of mobile phone and its associated social media tools. Signs of weak effective listening include holding the phone and looking at it from time to time, as well as side conversations, especially among students sitting at the back of the classroom, in addition to a lack of interaction and responses indicating inattention, such as "I didn't hear you, professor."

Cognitive activation emphasizes the importance of self-reflective thinking evaluation, yet the researchers investigated the causes of its weakness especially since its rate did not exceed 8.81/20. This was done by analyzing the situations and reactions of some students, explaining their fear of classroom interaction and the judgments they express to evaluate themselves, particularly after taking the test, such as saying "allah allah fina" "by God, help us," "raeayna " ma ealimuna" "We weren't taught," "bis hibaruna " "We just wrote," "jabna aleid saeidina dukturnatan "We got the holiday, help us, professor." Such responses reveal weakness of cognition self-appraisal among students. This weakness causes them to demand grades and not search for appropriate strategies and the amount of time, effort, and work required to solve a cognitive problem. The second interpretation is attributed to weakness of self-management of cognition skills. [47, 52] Stated that self-management helps students organize their self-behavior and their self-awareness, through processes of self-control and self-regulation, including planning, organization, and evaluation.

Students resort to the easiest solutions to obtain the grade, not out of a sense of entitlement, but rather by simply requesting "Help us, professor, for the sake of your good deeds. [47] Mentioned that students did not attempt to identify the strengths or weaknesses in their performance or whether the experience they have gone through would help them when facing similar situations in the future. The researchers believe that students' rates do not align with what is expected of second-year students in the ALLP. They attribute this weakness to the poor previous acquisitions. [48, 53] Pointed out that students move from one stage to another without being subjected to a test of linguistic abilities. Yet, this weakness leads students to begin the educational process with the quality of their oral performance remaining unknown [41, 49, 51].

### Emotional Peculiarities

The rates of students' competence of emotional peculiarities increased in the manner shown in Table 11.

**Table 11:** Students' rate of emotional peculiarities in the pre and post evaluation

Standard	Self confidence			Motivation		
	Effective participation	Facing pressure and criticism	Expressing oneself without shame or fear	Expressing interest	Desire to challenge and achieve success	Expressing commitment and responsibility
Pre-test/20	8.15	7.9	8.65	8.5	8.15	9.12
Post-test/20	8.3	8.42	9.35	10.2	10	10.82

Table 11 reveals some improvement in students' emotional peculiarities, particularly in the competencies of expressing interest, which increased from 8.5/20 to 10.2/20. Initially, the researchers did not find much responsiveness due to a lack of motivation and self-confidence. Therefore, the researchers tried to work on cognitive activation by providing an atmosphere characterized by reassurance and comfort, based on cooperation and mutual respect, with the understanding that mistakes are not a problem. They also worked on convincing the students of the importance of dialogue and mutual respect, evaluating the course of the dialogue and providing feedback, as there is no learning without making mistakes.

### Competency in Arabic Language

With regard to mastery of the Standard Arabic language, the percentages of indicators increased, as highlighted Table 12.

**Table 12:** Students' attainment of the Arabic language competency

Standard	Expressing in a clear language			Expressing in well-formed language			Choosing appropriate vocabulary		
	Avoiding redundancy and complexity	Accuracy in expression	Using clear words and phrases	Arranging words according to their function in the sentence	Pronouncing words correctly	Adapting words according to gender, number, tense, definition, and indefinite article	Using words that fit the context	Relevance of statements to the intended purpose	Using verification vocabulary
Pre-test/20	9.15	10.02	8.4	8.62	8.15	10	7.65	10.5	8.4
Post-test/20	10.42	12.27	12.02	12.52	12.62	11.07	10.4	11.7	10.75

Table 12 shows an improvement in the sub-competencies rates of mastering the standard Arabic language. This increase can be explained by the cognitive activation strategies the instructor has adopted, starting with identifying the main signs of the weak rate of mastering standard Arabic language skills and attempting to find the reasons for it in order to begin the treatment.

In the context of investigating the reasons for the decline in the rate of mastering the standard Arabic language competencies, the researchers agree with what [31, 42, 50] who found a deficiency in allocating a course for practicing the language and training on using it in dialogue and conversation.

There is also a lack of oral practice, perhaps due to the large number of students in the groups on the one hand, and the short duration of the academic semester on the other. An example is that many students want to know the rules of the language, some even memorize Ibn Malik's Alfiyyah, but they still make mistakes in communication in the standard Arabic. This agreed with [38, 45] who confirmed that because memorizing rules does not mean learning the language. If the learner memorized the roles of a language, whether English, French, or others, they would not become proficient in speaking it. Despite the emphasis of scholars and experts on the importance of oral communication, it must be recognized that speech is the most important factor in the educational process, and yet we ignore it, and the result is that the student/teacher graduates with memorized snippets of the history of the language and its literature, but they are not proficient in using and performing it, and these results reflect the depth of the gap between the theoretical and the practical [16, 40, 51].

Perhaps the most important reason for all of this is the dominance of memorization. This result is consistent with the result of [33], study, which found the weakness of the oral performance of the students of the Educational Qualification at the University of Sohar. The study reported that teaching grammar rules theoretically does not yield the desired results, which is the mastery of the Arabic language and its proper performance. The finding is also consistent with the study of [33], which affirmed the need to pay attention to developing oral expression skills and proposed conducting experimental studies to improve the oral expression skills of students [33].

### Competency of Positive Interaction with The Group

The indicators show the students possessing the competencies of positive interaction with the group reveal a relative improvement in the rates of all sub-competencies, as indicated by Table 13.

**Table 13:** Students' competency of positive interaction with the group

Standard	effective communication			Mutual support			Openness to change			Excellence and creativity		
	Interacting with others' opinions	Listening to others' opinions	Contributing regularly to discussion	Respecting others' opinions	Encouraging others	Collaborating with the group	Accepting other opinions	Breaking the chains of prejudice	Flexibility to modify opinion	Taking responsibility for leading the group	Encouraging positive interaction with dissenting opinions	Strengthening individuals' belonging to the group
Pre-test/20	8.4	10.02	9.4	8.75	7.9	9.27	8.75	8.27	10.12	7.77	9.62	8.52
Post-test/20	8.6	12.65	9.72	9.75	12.47	10.42	9.1	9.3	11.12	8.72	9.67	10.82

Table 13 presents the pre- and post-intervention results for positive interaction with the group. The results showed some improvement in the rate of possession of the competencies, including the creative distinction, as the rate of enhancing the individuals' belonging to the group increased from 8.52/20 to 10.82/20. This is attributed to the improvement of the other competencies, especially mental processes and emotional peculiarities, in addition to our efforts to invite all students to join a research group. [40] Emphasizes the positive role of contacting with others, the learner discovers new facts, develops his/her training process, and acquires competencies, skills, and abilities, which may be latent within him/her, and the interactions with the class group members can uncover them. Lacking these competencies has proven its relationship to the dominance of dictation and reliance on memorization and the assigned textbook, and to the weakness of the previous acquisitions starting from primary education. [30, 44] Have also proven the general neglect in teaching the expression branch in general compared to the other branches of the Arabic language. The reviewed studies have emphasized the importance of communication. For example, [54, 55] states that communication enables the teacher to identify the students' needs and know the differences that separate them in order to conduct a more effective didactic analysis and provide

educational situations appropriate to the learners' level.

The instructor involved students in research projects and seminars that enhanced their interest in the lesson and took them out of the circle of meaningless comprehension and mechanical memorization. This technique is guided by what [46] pointed out that activating the students' prior knowledge by making prior knowledge the main axis on which learning is based, linking it to current knowledge, and reinforcing teamwork and increasing the student's self-confidence and sense of benefit from what he/she has learned and acquired. This plays a major role in developing thinking, addressing the weakness of achievement, and increasing students' motivation to learn [20, 46]. Therefore, started each session by drawing a table that divides our activities into: What do I know, what should I know, and what have I actually learned about the topic.

Table 13 also reveals that the sub-competency that witnessed the most improvement is "identifying strengths and weaknesses", which was developed from 9.25/20 to 11.41/20. One of the effects of this on the students was that some came to the office inquiring about some activities they could practice during the vacation to improve their competencies. This initiative indicates an improvement in the student's awareness of the responsibility of their own learning, as they have engaged in self-learning, started monitoring their performance, and viewed problems as challenges they wish to confront. [52] Confirmed that through self-monitoring during the learning process by recording their strengths and working to reinforce them and their weaknesses and working to modify and eliminate them, in addition to their ability to identify the educational strategies that are appropriate to the nature of the study material.

During these various activities, the students acquired a set of skills, perhaps the most important of which is the courage to take the floor and make inferences. The instructor did not present knowledge as ready-made information that can be stored, but she mixed knowledge with cognitive contexts, thinking mechanisms, and methods for producing perceptions and ideas. The researchers are guided by what [48] reported to focus on individual differences and focus on the receiver's reactions, which differ according to the previous knowledge about the topic being communicated and the time it took to listen.

To sum up, the learning process requires teamwork and interaction with others, in order to compete and be motivated to express opinions, and to engage in the class group to achieve a shared project or accomplish integrated tasks. This is aligned with [40] who stated the learner's self becomes able to understand what is going on around it, it only needs someone to illuminate the way for it in order to provide it with confidence and motivate it to face the obstacles of learning.

## 5. Conclusion

This study examined the extent to which students of the ALC in the ALLP possess oral communication skills in classical Arabic. The study found a weakness in the rate of Omani students' possession of oral communication competencies. The study highlighted the effectiveness of cognitive activation in developing these competencies among students of the ALC in the ALLP, by addressing individual differences and obstacles to these competencies. The cognitive activation enabled the researchers to try to present the appropriate educational situations for the students, away from dictation, towards opening the door for dialogue and discussion and respecting the students' interventions, which led them to become active elements contributing to the class activities. This strategy allowed the instructor to liberate the students from dependence on the teacher and adherence to the assigned textbook, which made many of them strive to improve their achievement by controlling their training process and learning how to learn. The study also showed a notable improvement in oral communication competencies due to the application of the cognitive activation strategy, but it remains a limited improvement due to the shortness of the academic semester on the one hand, and the pressures of previous acquisitions on the other hand.

## 6. Recommendations

- Modifying the programs and assessment methods in a way that allows for the development of oral communication competencies
- Reviewing the level determination exams and integrating oral assessment within them, while providing opportunities for remedial intervention before weaknesses become exacerbated as students' progress through their academic path.
- Reducing student density within lecture halls to ensure addressing all individual differences and preparing a learning path tailored for each student.
- Necessitate that certain courses be prerequisites for other courses, in order to mitigate gaps in prior acquired knowledge, such as pre-Islamic literature, early Islam, Umayyad era, and Abbasid era.
- Providing workshop and training opportunities for Arabic language and literature faculty in the domains of curricula and teaching methodologies,

- Updating the educational, assessment, and instructional visions through motivating drive, building self-thinking, strengthening self-confidence, and enhancing effective communication skills, excellence, and innovation, in fulfillment of the Oman Vision 2040 and the strategies it has outlined for inclusive education and sustainable learning.

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