



Examining the relationship between teacher's theoretical beliefs and classroom practices in teaching Arabic

AIDILLAH SUJA  

MUASSOMAH MUASSOMAH  

SUTAMAN SUTAMAN  

M. ABDUL HAMID  

ABDUL WAHAB ROSYIDI  

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia

Abstract

Theoretical knowledge is crucial for effective Arabic language teaching. However, it must align with teachers' beliefs to influence classroom practices and impact learning outcomes, as teachers' beliefs and classroom practices dynamically influence one another. This study aims to explore the theoretical beliefs of Arabic language teachers regarding to the approach to learn Arabic and to examine the relationship between teachers' theoretical beliefs and their classroom practices. This study used a quantitative approach with a correlational method to investigate the theoretical beliefs of Arabic teachers regarding to the approach to teaching Arabic and the relationship between these beliefs and classroom practices. The research population consists of 37 teachers with 5 qualified teachers to be observed in their classroom practices based on the purposive sampling. Data were collected through questionnaire and observation, and Spearman's Rank Correlation analysis was used to analyze the data. The results show that 1) Arabic language teachers have three different types of theoretical beliefs there are Dominant, Dual, and Multiple Beliefs in which Dual beliefs are more dominant than the other beliefs. 2) There is a positive relationship between the theoretical beliefs of Arabic teachers and their classroom practices. This study highlights the importance of pedagogical implications for the education of Arabic language teachers. It also to recommends that teacher training programs are designed to supply necessary skill to instructors to explore diverse theoretical and methodological approaches to Arabic language teaching, with an emphasis on the importance of a positive relationship between belief and practice.

Keywords: Arabic teaching; classroom practice; language education; language teaching approaches; teacher's theoretical beliefs

Introduction

Language learning is important in global communication, cultural exchange, and economic development. Being one of the most widely spoken languages in the world, Arabic occupies a prominent position, with approximately 400 million speakers in 25 countries (Abdel-Malek, 2024). This popularity has led to the proliferation of Arabic as a foreign language studies, with hundreds of schools and millions of students worldwide seeking to improve their proficiency in the language (Abu-Melhim, 2014; Al-Nahdi & Zhao, 2022). However, Arabic language teaching has challenges that set it apart from other foreign language teaching, therefore it needs special approach by considering its linguistic, social, and pedagogical complexities (Wahba et al., 2014; Dajani, 2017; Katbi & Al-Rababah, 2017; Almelhes, 2024).

Research in foreign language teaching has identified various teaching approaches, including the Skill-Based Approach, Rule-Based Approach, and Function-Based Approach (Stern, 1986; Johnson, 1992). Each of them emphasizes a different aspect of the language teaching process. The effectiveness of these approaches, however, is strongly influenced by teachers' beliefs (Song, 2014; Borg & Sanchez, 2020; Lőrincz, 2023). These beliefs act as a cognitive filter in teachers' instructional decision-making (Pajares, 1992; Rodgers et al., 2022; Martinez et al., 2024). These beliefs influence various aspects of the educational process, including teaching planning, teacher-student interaction, and evaluation strategies. They shape instructional choices and classroom practices, whether learning will emphasize practice and repetition, grammatical accuracy, or communicative competence in real contexts (Muis & Foy, 2010; Hoffman & Seidel, 2014; Fukuda et al., 2024). In the context of teaching Arabic as a foreign language, linguistic complexity, distinctive writing systems, and dialectal diversity (Baharun, 2023; Mitrovic, 2020) have demanded a deeper understanding of teachers' beliefs to bridge the gap between teaching theory and practice (Johnson, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Wafa, 2016). This understanding is crucial as teachers' beliefs not only determine teaching approaches but also shape classroom interactions and the overall learning environment (Kasa et al., 2024), particularly in facing the challenges of teaching Arabic. Therefore, research on teacher beliefs in Arabic language teaching is important to identify more effective strategies for improving student engagement and learning outcomes (Pajares, 1992; Kasa et al., 2024; Martinez et al., 2024).

Although research on teachers' beliefs in language education has been widely conducted (Soleimani, 2020; Lie et al., 2022; Ma & Liu, 2023; Gao et al., 2024; Martinez et al., 2024; Salimi et al., 2024), but studies on specifically of Arabic language teachers' beliefs and their relationship with classroom practices are still lacking. Most existing studies focus on English language teaching, so there is still a gap in understanding how Arabic teachers conceptualize and implement effective learning approaches. This gap poses a major challenge in improving the quality of teaching Arabic as a foreign language, especially in non-Arabic countries where learners face greater linguistic barriers. To fill this gap, this study explores Arabic language teachers' theoretical beliefs regarding to Arabic language teaching approaches and examines the relationship between these beliefs and classroom practices. By examining the orientation of dominant belief orientations among Arabic language teachers, this study is expected to provide insights into the pedagogical choices that affect the quality of teaching Arabic as a foreign language. This study's results will enrich the literature on Arabic as a foreign language education while providing practical recommendations for aligning teachers' beliefs to be more effective learning approaches.

Literature Review

Teacher beliefs refer to the fundamental understandings, thoughts, conceptions, or propositions that teachers considers to be true, either consciously or unconsciously (Borg, 2001;

Wafa, 2016; Minarni et al., 2018). Ku (2023) described teachers' theoretical beliefs as language teachers' ideas and theories about language teaching and learning (Ku, 2023). Meanwhile, Five and Gill (2015) and Schutz et al. (2020) considered that the beliefs of language education teachers are as beliefs about certain learning approaches and the theories underlying teachers' actions (Five & Gill, 2015; Schutz et al., 2020). Meanwhile, Stern (1986), cited by Johnson (1992), stated that teachers' conceptions of foreign language learning are grounded in their methodology (Johnson, 1992). This methodology serves as a language teaching theory that implies certain goals, perspectives on language, assumptions about language learners, and the nature of the language learning process. The beliefs of Arabic language teachers are shaped through knowledge and experience accumulated over an extended period (Cook, 2012; Alfayez, 2022).

The Relationship Between Arabic Teachers' Theoretical Beliefs and Classroom Practices

Teachers' beliefs are fundamentally connected to their classroom practices, teaching styles, instructional approaches, and classroom dynamics (Wafa, 2016). These beliefs act as cognitive filters that guide instructional decision-making, ultimately justify specific pedagogical actions within the learning process (Pajares, 1992; Dancy & Henderson, 2007; Shah, 2021). Teachers often use their beliefs to determine teaching strategies, subject matters, and approaches to students, reflecting their values and views on education (Kaniadewi, 2022). These beliefs also influence teachers' perceptions toward students, classes, and academic materials, which impact teaching strategies and expectations of student learning outcomes (Borg, 2001; Fauzi et al., 2017). Thus, teachers' beliefs determine classroom practices and significantly impact student learning outcomes (Gao, 2014; Goriot & van Hout, 2022).

Teachers' professional experiences and their interactions with students significantly shape their beliefs about teaching Arabic as a foreign language. A dynamic interplay exists between these beliefs and actual classroom practices (Minarni et al., 2018). Teachers' beliefs about Arabic language learning are underpinned by the methodologies they employ, which serve as language teaching theories. These theories imply specific objectives, perspectives on language, and assumptions about language learners and the nature of the language learning process. History's scientific analysis of foreign language teaching reveals three theoretical explanations for how languages are acquired, in which all of them have shaped methodological approaches to foreign language instruction (Howat, 1984; Stern, 1986; Johnson, 1992). The connection between teachers' theoretical beliefs and their classroom practices is depicted in Figure 1.

Language teaching approaches can be categorized into three main approaches: skill-based, rule-based, and function-based. Each of them offers a unique perspective on the language acquisition process. Skill-based approach emphasize language learning as a mechanical process involving habit formation through imitation, memorization, and repetition of language patterns, while categorizing learning into four core skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Johnson, 1992; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998; El-Koumy, 2013; Subhashini et al., 2022; Uday, 2022). The rule-based approach, on the other hand, prioritizes comprehension above language production and views language acquisition as an innate capacity that combines an intellectual grasp of intricate grammatical systems with the desire to interact in meaningful circumstances (Johnson, 1992; AbuSeileek, 2007; Ahmed, 2013). Meanwhile, the function-based approach takes place language learning in the context of social interaction, emphasizing authentic language use in everyday situations and meaningful communication with the main goal is to develop students' ability to communicate in real-life contexts (Johnson, 1992; Swanson & Schlig, 2010; Sambou, 2012).

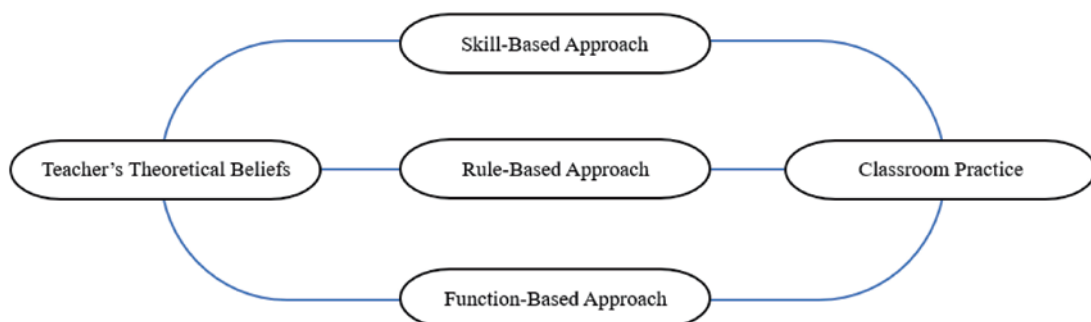


Figure 1 (Johnson, 1992): Relationship between teacher beliefs and classroom practices

Research Objectives and Hypotheses

Research on Arabic language learning, particularly regarding to teaching approaches, highlights the need to explore further about the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices. Based on the view Pajares (1992) that emphasizes that individuals' beliefs strongly influence their behavior (Pajares, 1992). This study seeks to fill the gap in the existing literature by examining Arabic language teachers' theoretical beliefs and to know how those beliefs influence classroom practices. Although there are many studies on teachers' beliefs at different levels of education (Soleimani, 2020; Lie et al., 2022; Ma & Liu, 2023; Gao et al., 2024; Kasa et al., 2024; Martinez et al., 2024), the repertoire of research specifically links Arabic teachers' theoretical beliefs to their classroom practices is still very limited. Therefore, this study aims to explore the Arabic language teaching approaches teachers believe and examine relationship between the dominant teachers' theoretical beliefs and classroom practices. The following are the research hypotheses put forward:

Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between Arabic language teachers' theoretical beliefs and their classroom practices.

Method

Research Design

A non-experimental quantitative approach using a survey design was used to achieve the research objectives and answer the following research questions:

1. What are the theoretical beliefs of Arabic language teachers about the Arabic teaching approach?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the dominant teachers' theoretical beliefs and classroom practices?

This method aims to provide a quantitative overview of teachers' beliefs and opinions regarding to Arabic learning approaches and to investigate the relationships between variables within a population (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The study employs a cross-sectional survey design, which utilizing a questionnaire adapted from Johnson's (1992) instrument on language teaching beliefs and practices, with modifications to align with the context of Arabic language instruction. This design collects self-reported data on teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and self-described practices from a single target population (Arabic teachers in Islamic High

School) at a specific point in time. This survey aims to explore teachers' theoretical beliefs about Arabic teaching approaches (Cohen et al., 2007; Ary et al., 2010). Additionally, correlational methods are applied to evaluate the relationship between teachers' theoretical beliefs and classroom practices (Ary et al., 2010; Fraenkel et al., 2012).

Sample and Sampling Technique

This research used a two-stage participant recruitment process. In the first stage, we recruited all 37 Arabic teachers from 25 from Islamic High Schools under the Ministry of Religion Affairs in Riau Islands Province Indonesia, using WhatsApp as the primary communication platform. The purpose of this stage was to ask participation from respondents who want to share their theoretical beliefs about teaching Arabic as a foreign language. All 37 teachers were contacted, and 34 agreed to participate. Three teachers could not participate because they were in remote areas with limited internet access.

In the second stage, purposive sampling was used to select teachers based on predetermined criteria directly tied to the research objectives. To be qualified for selection, teachers had to demonstrate a dominant theoretical orientation—defined as $\geq 80\%$ alignment with one of the three frameworks (skill-based, rule-based, or function-based approaches)—as evidenced by their questionnaire responses. This sampling strategy ensured the inclusion of participants whose beliefs most clearly represented the theoretical frameworks under investigation. By focusing on these cases, the study enabled a targeted analysis of the relationship between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Leavy, 2023).

Data Collection

The questionnaire was adapted from Johnson's (1992) validated instrument on language teaching beliefs to assess theoretical orientations "skill-based, rule-based, and function-based approaches" (Johnson, 1992). This instrument was chosen to prove reliability in measuring the connectivity between belief and practice in prior studies. The questionnaire was distributed electronically via WhatsApp to 34 agreed teachers. From this amount, 32 valid responses were obtained, as 2 respondents submitted incomplete surveys and were excluded from analysis.

Classroom observations were conducted by the primary researcher. Using a structured observation checklist aligned with the three theoretical frameworks, each teacher was observed five times during Arabic lessons.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis was applied to describe Arabic language teachers' theoretical beliefs about learning Arabic as a foreign language (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Teachers' questionnaire responses were assigned a percentage score reflecting their endorsement of statements aligned with the three learning approaches: skill-based, rule-based, and function-based. Each selected statement contributed 20 points to the corresponding approach's total score, with the final percentage calculated relative to the maximum possible score for each category.

In the second step, Spearman Rank Correlation analysis was utilized to determine the degree and direction of the association between instructors' theoretical beliefs and classroom practices. This procedure involves converting data values into ranks and calculates the correlation between the ranks (Ary et al., 2010; Deshpande et al., 2018). Observation data were scored on a 20-point scale for each item. These scores, along with the percentage scores from the teacher belief analysis (questionnaire), were analyzed for correlation using Spearman Rank Correlation analysis through the IBM SPSS Statistics 27 Software.

Results

Demographic Profile

The respondents of this study were Arabic Language Teachers in Riau Islands Province of Indonesia. Their profiles are listed in Table 1. From total amount of 34 questionnaires, 32 meet the criteria for analysis.

As shown in Table 1, the age distribution of participants in this study varied across three groups: 25% were aged 20–30, 28.2% were aged 31–40, and the majority (46.8%) were aged 41 or older. This demographic characteristic was factored by the analysis and interpretation of the results, as teachers’ age may influence their theoretical belief profiles, particularly in relation to language instruction approaches.

Most respondents had above 10 years of teaching experience, comprising 56.3% of the total sample, while those with below 10 years of experience accounted for the remaining 43.7%.

This study also looks for to understand the background of the respondents (Table 1). Teachers’ educational backgrounds, which may shape their pedagogical perspectives and classroom practices, varied among participants. Of the 32 respondents, 1 teacher (3.1%) held high school, 1 teacher (3.1%) held vocational diplomas, 24 teachers (75%) held Bachelor’s degrees, and 6 teachers (18.8%) held Master’s degrees. No participants reported doctoral qualifications.

Profile of Arabic Language Teachers’ Theoretical Beliefs

Based on the first research objective, this study focuses on exploring the beliefs of Arabic teachers regarding to the theory of learning Arabic in Islamic high schools in Riau Islands Province, Indonesia.

Table 1 Distribution of respondents based on demographics

Demographic aspects	Frequency	N (%)
Age		
20–30	8	25
31–40	9	28.2
41 and above	15	46.8
Teaching Experience		
< 10	14	43.7
> 10	18	56.3
Last Education		
High School	1	3.1
Diploma	1	3.1
Bachelor	24	75
Master	6	18.8
Doctoral	0	0

Table 2 Results of theoretical orientation analysis of Arabic language teachers’ beliefs

No	Name	Teacher theoretical belief score			Belief profile
		Skill %	Rule %	Function %	
1	AB*	100	0	0	Dominant (Skill Based)
2	MY*	80	20	0	Dominant (Skill Based)
3	MRH*	0	100	0	Dominant (Rule Based)
4	TS*	0	20	80	Dominant (Function Based)
5	AW*	0	20	80	Dominant (Function Based)
6	NY	40	40	20	Dual (Skill/Rule Based)
7	MK	40	40	20	Dual (Skill/Rule Based)
8	MLHT	40	40	20	Dual (Skill/Rule Based)
9	MYT	40	40	20	Dual (Skill/Rule Based)
10	NL	60	40	0	Dual (Skill/Rule Based)
11	MYN	60	40	0	Dual (Skill/Rule Based)
12	IS	60	40	0	Dual (Skill/Rule Based)
13	HS	40	60	0	Dual (Rule/Skill Based)
14	RD	40	60	0	Dual (Rule/Skill Based)
15	BH	40	60	0	Dual (Rule/Skill Based)
16	ZD	40	60	0	Dual (Rule/Skill Based)
17	FA	0	60	40	Dual (Rule/Function Based)
18	I	20	40	40	Dual (Rule/Function Based)
19	SH	20	40	40	Dual (Rule/Function Based)
20	NA	20	40	40	Dual (Rule/Function Based)
21	QR	40	20	40	Dual (Skill/Function Based)
22	DO	20	60	20	Multiple
23	AZ	60	20	20	Multiple
24	DR	60	20	20	Multiple
25	SSH	20	60	20	Multiple
26	AH	20	60	20	Multiple
27	FA	20	60	20	Multiple
28	NH	20	60	20	Multiple
29	MWR	20	60	20	Multiple
30	F	20	60	20	Multiple
31	YD	20	20	60	Multiple
32	JP	20	20	60	Multiple
33	MPR		20		Invalid
34	RS		40	20	Invalid

*Participate in the second step.

Based on Table 2, it was found that there are three distinct profiles of “dominant, dual, and multiple” theoretical orientations were operationally discovered through an investigation of the findings of teachers’ theoretical beliefs. 5 of 32 Arabic language teachers (15%) had a dominant theoretical orientation. Two out of 32 teachers (6%) were found to have a dominant “skill based” theoretical orientation. Two out of 32 teachers (6%) had a dominant “function based” theoretical orientation, and one teacher (3%) had a dominant “rule based” theoretical orientation. 16 out of 32 Arabic language teachers (50%) were found to have theoretical orientations that reflect two methodological approaches. Meanwhile, 11 out of 32 Arabic teachers (35%) were found to have theoretical orientations that reflect multiple methodological approaches. 2 out of 34 teachers were ineligible because they did not select a minimum number of 5 statements from the 15 statements of the inventory of Arabic language teachers’ theoretical beliefs towards learning Arabic as a foreign language, so they were not included in the analysis. For more details, see Figure 2.

Variations in age and teaching experience are clearly visible between profiles (Table 3). Teachers with dominant beliefs were aged 25–53 with 5–18 years’ experience. Those with dual beliefs were younger (24–47 years) and less experienced (2–19 years), while teachers with multiple beliefs were 25–49 years and had 1–21 years of experience.

Teachers’ educational backgrounds also varied across theoretical orientation profiles. Among teachers with dominant theoretical orientations, one held a Diploma qualification, while four held Bachelor’s degrees. In contrast, those with dual theoretical orientations included one high school graduates, 12 Bachelor’s degrees, and three Master’s degrees. Meanwhile, teachers with multiple theoretical orientations comprised eight Bachelor’s graduates and three Master’s graduates.

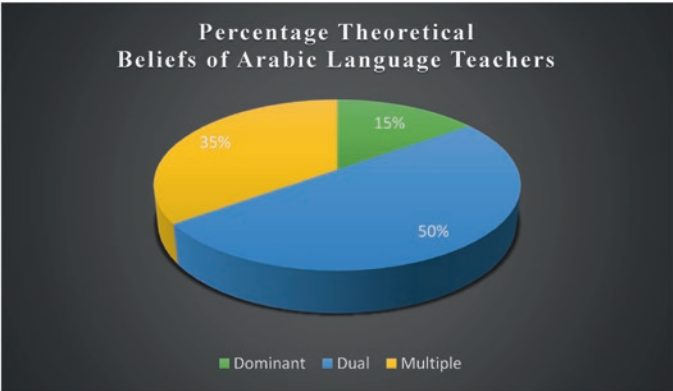


Figure 2 Graph of the percentage of Arabic language teachers’ beliefs

Table 3 Teachers’ beliefs based on age and teaching experience

Category	Dominant	Dual	Multiple
Age	25–53	24–47	26–49
Years Teaching Arabic as Foreign Language	< 10 = 3 > 10 = 2	< 10 = 8 > 10 = 8	< 10 = 4 > 10 = 7

The Relationship Between Arabic Language Teachers’ Theoretical Beliefs and Their Classroom Practices

One of the challenges in establishing the connection between teachers’ beliefs and their classroom practices in teaching Arabic as a foreign language lies in the interconnected nature of foreign language teaching methodologies (Johnson, 1992). These instructional techniques are not isolated but rather integrated and influence one to another. For example, skill-based approaches focus on practice, teaching culture, and simulating social contexts. Some function of based approaches accept teaching grammar, while others consider its minimum role (Johnson, 1992). Therefore, the type of teacher’s implementation approach is determined by how often Arabic language teachers demonstrate the instructional practices of a particular approach. Based on questionnaire data and observations, it was found that teachers’ belief scores and classroom practices can be seen in detail in Table 4 below:

Table 4 *Score of teacher theoretical belief and classroom practice*

No	Name	Belief profile	Score	
			Teacher’s beliefs	Classroom practices
1	AB*	Dominant (Skill-Based)	100	100
2	MY*	Dominant (Skill-Based)	80	84
3	MRH*	Dominant (Rule-Based)	100	92
4	TS*	Dominant (Function-Based)	80	92
5	AW*	Dominant (Function-Based)	80	84

Based on the data presented in Table 5 above, the significance value (2-tailed Sig.) is 0.030. Because this value is less than the 0.05 threshold, it indicates a significant relationship between the teacher belief and classroom practice variables. In addition, the correlation coefficient is 0.913, which indicates that the relationship between teacher belief and classroom practice is very strong, as it is in the range of 0.76 to 0.99.

Table 5 *Analysis of spearman rank correlation*

Correlations			Teacher’s beliefs	Classroom practice
Spearman’s rho	Teacher’s Beliefs	Correlation Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.030
		N	5	5
	Classroom Practice	Correlation Coefficient	.913*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.030	.
		N	5	5

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

The Dominance of Dual Theoretical Beliefs

This study found that a dual theoretical orientation dominates teachers' theoretical beliefs. As many as 50% of the surveyed teachers indicated that they combine more than one teaching approach, such as skill and rule-based (33%), rule and function (14%), and skill and function (3%) approaches. The dominance of this dual orientation can be understood in the context of the dynamics changing of language teaching approaches that have evolved over the past few decades: the skill-based approach of the 1950s and 1960s, the rule-based approach in the 1970s, and the function-based approach in the 1980s (Johnson, 1992). This finding reinforces the results of research (Achieng, 2023; Shaikh et al., 2023; Peng, 2024), which emphasizes that teachers today do not only rely on one approach but rather choose to utilize the advantages of various teaching approaches to achieve greater effectiveness in language teaching. Moreover, the studies of Semião et al. (2023) and Zhao et al. (2023) highlight that this dual orientation is an adaptive response to the challenges and diversities in the teaching and learning process, which indicate that language teaching requires greater methodological adaptability to students' progressively varied needs. Recent studies have also shown that multidimensional approaches in foreign language teaching are increasingly relevant in meeting students' various learning needs as integrated approaches provide greater flexibility in adapting teaching methods to students' contexts and needs (Chen, 2018; Ellis et al., 2019; Jingyi & De Dios, 2024).

Thus, the predominance of multiple theoretical orientations among Arabic language teachers in Riau Islands Province - Indonesia reflects a broader pedagogical adaptation that recognizes and accommodates the diversity of Teachers' Arabic language teaching and advances in language teaching theory. By combining multiple approaches, these teachers demonstrate an understanding that there is no single approach is ideal for all teaching situations and that the integration of multiple approaches provides greater effectiveness in achieving teaching goals (Harr et al., 2015; Vashe et al., 2019; Zach, 2020).

The dominance of theoretical beliefs in one learning approach among Arabic language teachers is low, with only five out of 32 teachers showing a clear belief in a particular methodological approach to foreign language teaching. Of these five teachers, two chose a skill-based approach the most, two others preferred for a function-based approach, and one teacher had a dominant belief in a rule-based approach. This finding contrasts with foreign language education in South Africa, where the communicative approach has gained a large following in recent years (Maartens, 1995). This difference may be due to weaknesses that reduce the effectiveness of the function-based approach in teaching foreign language. However, the advantages of this approach can be maintained if it is combined with formal grammatical teaching through a rule-based approach and critical language awareness programs. In addition, teaching methods should include strategies to reduce anxiety in oral communication (Maartens, 1995).

The More Experience the Teachers Have, the More Diverse Their Beliefs Become

The correlation between teaching experience and educational background with theoretical belief profiles shows that younger aged (20–53 years) and less experienced (<10 years) teachers tend to have dominant beliefs. In comparison, older aged (above 50 years) and more experienced (>10 years) teachers are more likely to have dual or multiple theoretical beliefs. Regarding to educational background, teachers with dominant beliefs are generally Diploma and Bachelor Degree graduates, while Master Program graduates tend to have dual and multiple theoretical beliefs. More teaching experience allows teachers to develop more diverse and flexible perspectives in their teaching approaches, which contributes to teaching effectiveness and student

learning outcomes (Soleimani, 2020). In addition, higher education levels often result in more diverse beliefs, which allow teachers to adopt wider and adaptive teaching approaches, such as skill-, rule- and function-based methods (Brauer & Wilde, 2018; Francis et al., 2014; Lunn et al., 2014). Cultural background, curriculum, and contextual variables also play an important role in the diverse teaching approaches of teachers (Santoro & Forghani-Arani, 2015; Deed et al., 2020; Turner et al., 2024). This can change teachers' beliefs from dominant to dual and multiple (Windschitl, 2002). Moodie (2016) also observed that foreign language teachers reevaluate their understanding of how knowledge is acquired and actively work to improve their professional skills and adjust their teaching methods to align with curriculum changes in language education. In addition, Alfayez (2022) explained that experienced teachers were found to be able to adapt their practices more effectively to fulfill students' needs.

This finding shows that the understanding of teachers' theoretical beliefs in teaching Arabic as a foreign language is not monolithic but diverse and is influenced by factors of age, teaching experience, and educational background. This is in line with previous literature, which states that teaching experience, age, and educational background play an important role in determining teachers' theoretical beliefs (Berger et al., 2018; Brauer & Wilde, 2018; Francis et al., 2014; Lunn et al., 2014). In addition, this study supports theories that emphasize the importance of teaching experience in developing a more diverse and flexible pedagogical perspective (Soleimani, 2020). Thus, it enriches the literature regarding the relationship between teaching experience and educational background with the development of theoretical beliefs and the relevance of teaching approaches in Arabic language teaching.

On the other side, teachers should play an important role in promoting students' intercultural learning and integration and implementing culturally sensitive teaching in their daily work (Abdel-Malek, 2024; Ghaemi & Boroushaki, 2025). The diversity of Arabic language teachers' beliefs towards foreign language teaching approaches is influenced by the need to respond carefully and sensitively to diverse learning styles while recognizing the strengths and limitations of students from different cultural backgrounds. This response includes an understanding of the learning needs which is insightful of culture, therefore it encourages more adaptive approaches to support student learning (Awang-Hashim et al., 2019; Markey et al., 2023).

Hence, this emphasizes the importance of teaching experience in developing approaches responsive to students' needs, especially in different cultural contexts. Therefore, professional development programs, cultural sensitivity training, and further education for teachers should be encouraged to improve teaching effectiveness and support diverse approaches to learning.

Teachers' Theoretical Beliefs and Classroom Practices are Positively Correlated

Spearman's rank correlation analysis shows a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.913$) between teachers' beliefs and classroom practice. This shows that Arabic teachers' teaching approaches are largely shaped by their theoretical beliefs, with different beliefs leading to diverse classroom practices. The study's results identify a consistent relationship between teachers' beliefs about Arabic teaching theories (Skill-Based, Rule-Based, and Function-Based Approaches) and classroom practices. The findings show that teachers with strong theoretical beliefs – such as emphasizing habit formation (Skill-Based), understanding grammar (Rule-Based), or social interaction (Function-Based) – align with their practices well, thus it strengthens the correlation between beliefs and actions. The stronger a teacher's theoretical beliefs, the more consistent their classroom practices are with those beliefs. This is in line with previous research that shows how teachers' beliefs influence their classroom practices in the classroom and supports research in the field of language education (Aliakbari & Heidarzadi, 2015; Chien, 2020; Rodgers et al., 2022; Xu & Krulatz, 2023).

Analysis of the responses from the five Arabic teachers in this study revealed that practices were driven by different beliefs. Two teachers (AB and MY) adopted the Skills-Based Approach, prioritizing imitation, repetition, and skill separation. In contrast, one teacher (MRH) used the Rule-Based Approach, which viewed proficiency as an innate grammar-related ability. Two other teachers (TS and AW) preferred the Function-Based Approach, which focuses on authentic communication. This variation reflects different theoretical orientations, but all practices are aligned with the teachers' core beliefs, which relate to methodologies such as habit formation, language structure understanding, and social interaction. This consistency determines the important role of teachers in determining learning outcomes and highlights the need to understand their beliefs to improve the quality of Arabic language education. These findings also have implications for teacher education curricula and professional development, which encourage the implementation of effective and belief-aligned approaches.

These findings enrich the literature on the influence of teachers' beliefs on language teaching, in line with Kesevan's (2016) assertion that teachers no longer view teaching as a structured and planned activity but as a spontaneous decision-making process based on situations that arise during lessons (Kesevan, 2016). This decision-making is strongly influenced by the beliefs which are held by teachers, which have been shown to affect their choices regarding to teaching materials, teaching methods, and to know how to deal with student behavior (Borg, 2003). Xu & Krulatz (2023) also found similar findings in the context of multilingual teaching in Norway, where their research confirmed the reciprocal correlations between teachers' beliefs and practices. In addition, research by Martinez et al. (2024) corroborates these findings by showing how teachers' beliefs influence classroom practices in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms.

However, although research shows a strong positive relationship between beliefs and practices, there are opposing arguments. For example, regardless of the beliefs professed by teachers, traditional methods such as grammar translation often dominate classroom practices in Arabic classrooms. Kawafha and Al Masaeed (2023) found a difference in which teachers advocated for limiting English use but often relied on it during teaching (Kawafha & Al Masaeed, 2023). These inconsistencies come from external factors such as exam pressure, institutional constraints, and limited resources (Chali et al., 2020; Hos & Kekec, 2014). Even teachers who have positive beliefs about integrating grammar or authentic communication face obstacles such as rigid curricula, administrative demands, and inadequate training (González-Martín & Nseanpa, 2021; Li & Ai, 2023). This gap highlights that while teachers theoretically believe in certain learning approaches, their implementation in practice still faces various complex barriers. External factors such as a rigorous curriculum, limited resources, and administrative pressures can also affect classroom practices (Gemmink et al., 2021; de Jager, 2023). Limited resources, such as a lack of teaching materials and support, block teachers' ability to implement effective teaching strategies and adapt to the needs of diverse students (Mavroudi & Divitini, 2017; Polesel et al., 2014). Administrative pressures, including accountability and examination demands, often force teachers to focus on test preparation rather than broader educational goals, which leads to only test-oriented teaching (Sheldon, 2015). The interaction between these factors points to the complexity of the teaching environment and the need for supportive policies and resources to improve classroom practices and student learning outcomes (Nieswandt & McEneaney, 2009; Tóth & Csapó, 2022). This all underscores the complexity of translating beliefs into practice, which is influenced by various external factors.

Although teachers' beliefs are fundamental, the educational context and cultural expectations may facilitate or hinder the application of these beliefs in the classroom. On the other hand, practical reflection and direct classroom experience have a greater influence on promoting

meaningful changes in teaching methods (Mehrpour & Moghadam, 2018; Sun & Zhang, 2024). Reflective practices like observation and self-evaluation allow teachers to critically assess and align their teaching strategies with real classroom needs, to improve teaching quality (Valdez et al., 2018; Tay et al., 2023). Moreover, practical classroom experiences, including fulfill students' needs and classroom management, provide concrete feedback that encourage teachers to adjust their methods more effectively compared to only rely on theoretical beliefs (Cheung & Wong, 2017; Forrest et al., 2019; Lefebvre et al., 2023). Practical experiences during teaching also often trigger significant changes in their beliefs and practices, which is supported by social interactions and dynamic challenges in the school environment (French, 2017). This adaptation process involves phases of awareness, experimentation, and fine-tuning, in which teachers continuously refine their methods according to the evolving needs of the classroom (Deed et al., 2020; Alzaanin, 2025). Therefore, ongoing reflection and direct experience are keys to improving teaching effectiveness by going beyond the role of theoretical beliefs as the primary drivers of change (Cheung & Wong, 2017; Valdez et al., 2018; Kılıç, 2022).

Conclusions and Implications

Conclusion

This study provides an in-depth insight into the relationship between Arabic language teachers' theoretical beliefs and their classroom practices in Indonesian Islamic High School. There are three main profiles in teachers' theoretical beliefs, namely dominant, dual, and multi, which shows that teachers do not just stick to one teaching approach but are more likely to adopt various methods to suit students' needs. The strong correlation between theoretical beliefs and classroom practices emphasizes that the stronger a teacher's beliefs, the more consistent his or her classroom practices are. This supports the idea that teachers' beliefs serve as a filter in instructional decision-making. This study also highlights the importance of teaching experience and educational background in shaping the diversity and flexibility of theoretical beliefs. Teachers with more experienced and higher educational backgrounds tend to develop multidimensional approaches to teaching, while younger and less experienced teachers are more likely to have dominant beliefs.

This study adds a contribution to teaching Arabic as a foreign language, especially in Indonesia, which has not been widely researched. It enriches the literature on the relationship of teaching experience and educational background with the development of theoretical beliefs and the relevance of teaching approaches in the context of Arabic language teaching. Furthermore, until now on, research on teachers' beliefs and practices in foreign language contexts has been dominated by teaching English as a second and foreign language (Désirée Lange & Polat, 2024; Lee & Zhang, 2023; Lie et al., 2022; Ma & Liu, 2023; Martinez et al., 2024; Soleimani, 2020). This study also makes an important contribution to the research literature by using the theory of approaches to teaching Arabic as a foreign language to show how teachers' beliefs are positively related to teachers' classroom practices. This study strengthens our understanding of the relationship between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices. It highlights the importance of investigating teachers' beliefs across teaching contexts, given the changing nature of beliefs from dominant, dual, and multiple.

Implications

This research highlights crucial pedagogical implications for Arabic teacher education. Teacher training programs can better equip teachers to explore diverse theoretical and methodological approaches to Arabic language teaching by emphasizing the strong connection between beliefs and practice. This includes fostering greater self-awareness regarding to how

personal beliefs influence teaching actions and information processing. Moreover, the study advocates for collaborative learning and integrating relevant learning theories to enhance the understanding and application of Arabic language concepts, which potentially stimulate future innovations.

Practically, the results of this study show the importance of continuous training and professional development for teachers, especially for those just starting the teaching profession. This training should cover a variety of teaching approaches, including skill-, rule- and function-based approaches, to enrich teachers' perspectives and teaching strategies (Moodie, 2016). This finding supports previous research recommendations that emphasize the need for professional support and development to improve teaching quality and teacher adaptability in the face of evolving educational challenges (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). Thus, implementing a comprehensive training program can help teachers to develop more flexible and effective teaching approaches, to improve student learning outcomes.

However, some limitations in this study need to be acknowledged, including the use of a quantitative survey approach that may not be sufficient to explore the more complex nuances of teachers' beliefs, as well as the cross-sectional design that only collect data at one point in time. Further research with a longitudinal design and a larger sample of Arabic language teachers in various contexts is needed to provide deeper understanding and more meaningful generalizations.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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