



Enhancing Arabic Proficiency through Targeted Instructional Programs

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Abstract

This study investigates two interconnected approaches to improving Arabic language proficiency among undergraduate students. The first component analyzes the implementation of a public speaking and oratory program designed to enhance speaking skills. The second component evaluates the suitability of a standard Balaghah (Arabic rhetoric) textbook based on established pedagogical criteria. The research was conducted within the Department of Arabic at The New College, Chennai, India, an institution under the aegis of MEASI. A cohort of 30 undergraduate students, divided into two groups, participated in the integrated instructional program. Qualitative case study methodology, incorporating interviews, observations, and tests, was employed to assess the speaking program, while descriptive qualitative content analysis was used to evaluate the textbook. Findings indicate that focused oratory training significantly improves linguistic aspects (pronunciation, vocabulary) and presentation skills (voice control, intonation, facial expressions, body language), though grammatical accuracy and speech structuring require further attention. Concurrently, the Balaghah textbook was found to be largely suitable in terms of content, organization, presentation, and alignment with learning objectives, despite minor issues with irrelevant illustrations. The study concludes that a dual strategy combining active, skill-based oratory practice with a well-structured theoretical foundation in Balaghah is effective for comprehensive Arabic language development.

Keywords: Arabic Language Teaching, Speaking Skills, Balaghah (Rhetoric), Oratory, Teaching Materials, Undergraduate Education

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Introduction

The following is a refinement of the Introduction section with a more academic flow, tighter cohesion, and the addition of one new paragraph as requested. All original quotations are retained and strategically placed. Introduction Arabic language proficiency is a complex concept that includes four main skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these, speaking stands as a critical productive skill, serving as an essential vehicle for effective communication; consequently, it is often prioritized in pedagogical sequences following the mastery of listening (Mohamed, 2024; Mahdi, 2022). In academic contexts, the enhancement of this oral skill necessitates a synergistic integration of practical application and a profound theoretical comprehension of the language's structural complexities and rhetorical elegance (H. L. M. Mohideen, 2024). One highly effective method for fostering such speaking competence is the art of oratory, which functions as a holistic training ground for linguistic ability, psychological confidence, intonation, strategic word choice, and non-verbal communication (Cretu & Popa, 2024; Burhanuddin, 2021).

Parallel to the development of these active skills, the quality of instructional materials remains paramount in the educational ecosystem (Saed et al., 2021). Textbooks serve as the primary guide for both educators and students, and their inherent suitability directly dictates the efficacy of learning outcomes (Nair & Yunus, 2021). To be considered effective, a well-designed textbook must align strictly with curriculum goals, present material through a logical progression, and adhere to sound pedagogical principles (Rathnasekara et al., 2025). This assertion is particularly true in the discipline of Balaghah (Arabic rhetoric and eloquence), which forms a critical component of advanced Arabic studies. This field aims to equip learners with high-level linguistic, communicative, and cultural competencies, allowing them to navigate the nuances of sophisticated discourse (Leek et al., 2026).

This dual necessity for practical mastery and high-quality theoretical resources forms the core of the present research. Conducted in the Department of Arabic at The New College, Chennai, this study explores a unified approach to Arabic pedagogy. It examines the impact of a structured oratory program on students' speaking skills while concurrently evaluating the Balaghah textbook utilized in their curriculum. This research employs the extensive material suitability criteria established by scholar Rushdi Ahmad Thu'aimah to guarantee a thorough evaluation of the instructional media. The integration of oratory practice with a critical evaluation of Balaghah materials addresses a significant gap in current Arabic as a foreign language (AFL) research.

While previous studies often treat rhetorical theory and communicative practice as distinct academic silos, this study argues that the effectiveness of one is intrinsically tied to the quality of the other. By analyzing whether the current Balaghah curriculum provides the necessary linguistic foundation to support the demands of modern oratory, this research seeks to offer a new framework for curriculum optimization. Ultimately, this investigation aims to provide empirical insights that can help educators harmonize theoretical rhetoric with practical eloquence in non-native Arabic-speaking contexts.

Methodology

This research employs a mixed-methods design, integrating two qualitative approaches:

1. Case Study on Oratory Program Implementation:

This component is a qualitative case study (Ade Adin Sahrudin et al.) conducted to analyze the effectiveness of a specialized Arabic oratory program. The participants were 30 undergraduate students from the Arabic department, divided into two groups. Data were collected through three primary methods: (1) Interviews with the program coordinator and participating students to gather insights on challenges and experiences; (2) Observation of training sessions and speech deliveries to assess practical application of skills; and (3) Tests to evaluate specific competencies in pronunciation,

vocabulary, and grammar. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

2. Content Analysis of Balaghah Textbook:

This component utilizes a descriptive qualitative method with content analysis techniques (Ikhwanul Habib et al.). The data source is the "Balaghah" textbook for Arabic rhetoric. The analysis is framed around the evaluation criteria established by Rushdi Ahmad Thu'aimah, which encompass four key aspects: (1) Content (accuracy, modernity, alignment with objectives), (2) Material Organization (logical sequencing, psychological appropriateness), (3) Presentation (language quality, inclusion of diverse activities and models, use of illustrations), and (4) Book Design and Layout (physical appearance, readability, conformity to publishing standards) (Ikhwanul Habib et al.).

Table 1. Oratory Program Student Competency Assessment
Student Competency Levels in Oratory Program (n=30)

Skill Category	Pre-Program (Weak/Good)	Post-Program (Weak/Good)
Pronunciation	Good	Improved
Vocabulary	Good	Improved
Grammar	Weak	Still Weak
Speech Content/Structure	Weak	Needs Improvement
Voice Control	Good	Improved
Intonation	Good	Improved
Facial Expressions	Weak	Needs Improvement
Body Language	Weak	Needs Improvement

Table 2. Balaghah Textbook Evaluation Based on Thu'aimah's Criteria

Evaluation Criteria	Score (Out of 5)	Remarks
Content	4	Aligns with objectives; accurate but not "modern" in content.
Organization	5	Logically sequenced, psychologically appropriate for learners.
Presentation	4	Clear language, varied activities; some irrelevant illustrations.

Evaluation Criteria	Score (Out of 5)	Remarks
Book Design/Layout	5	Meets publishing standards; clear typography and formatting.

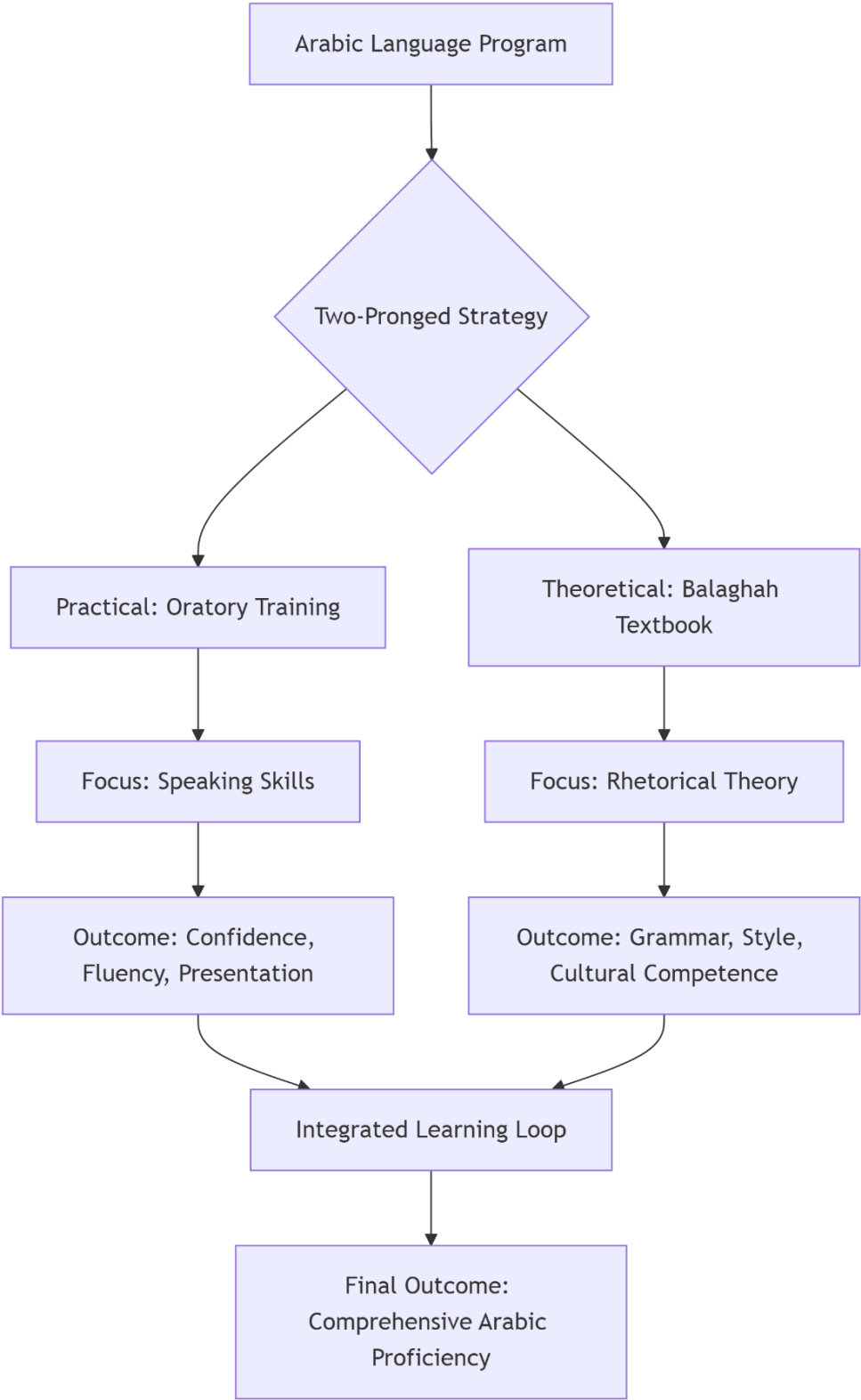


Figure 1. Integrated Recommendations for Arabic Language Department

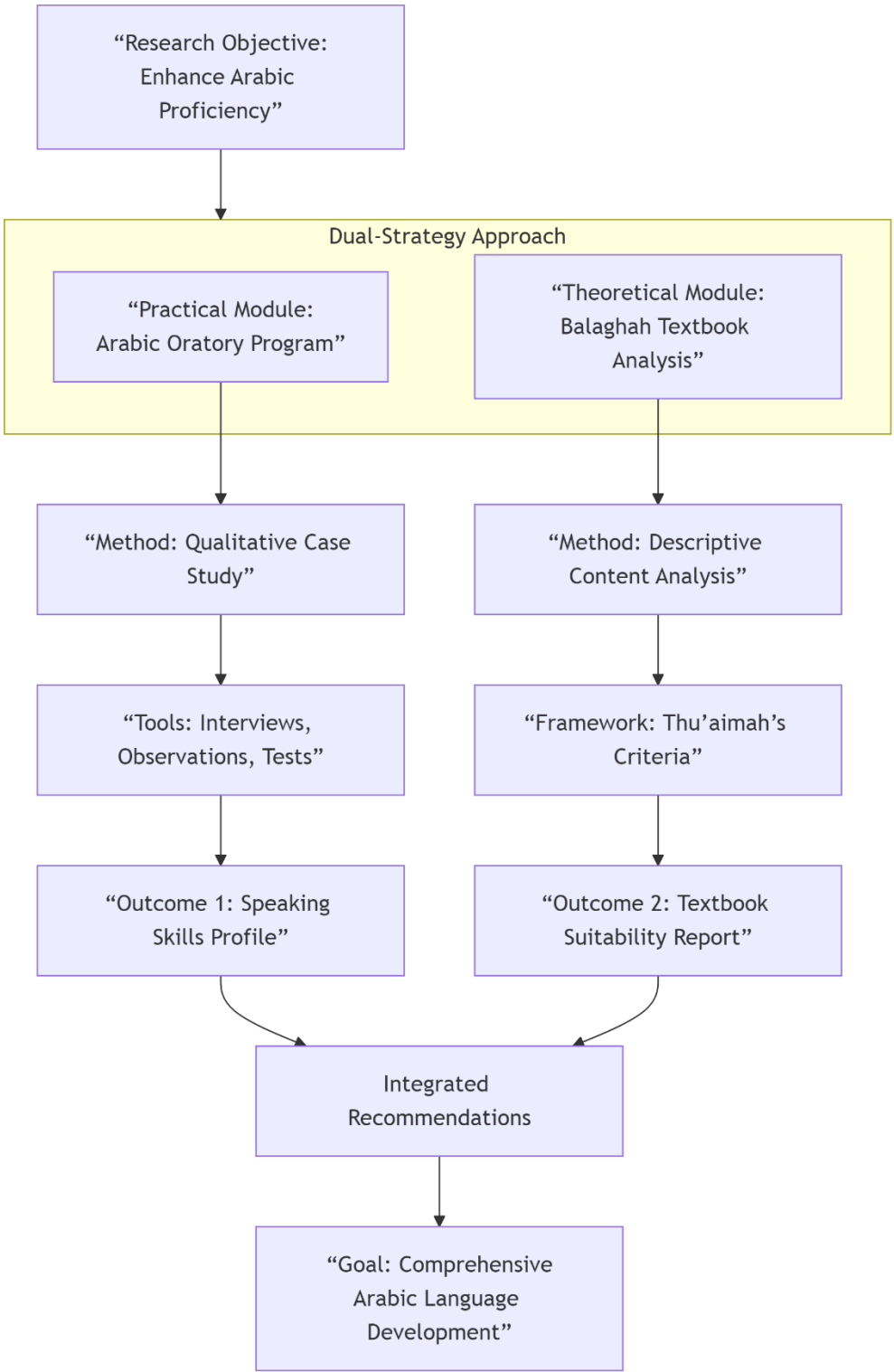


Figure 2. Unified Research Framework

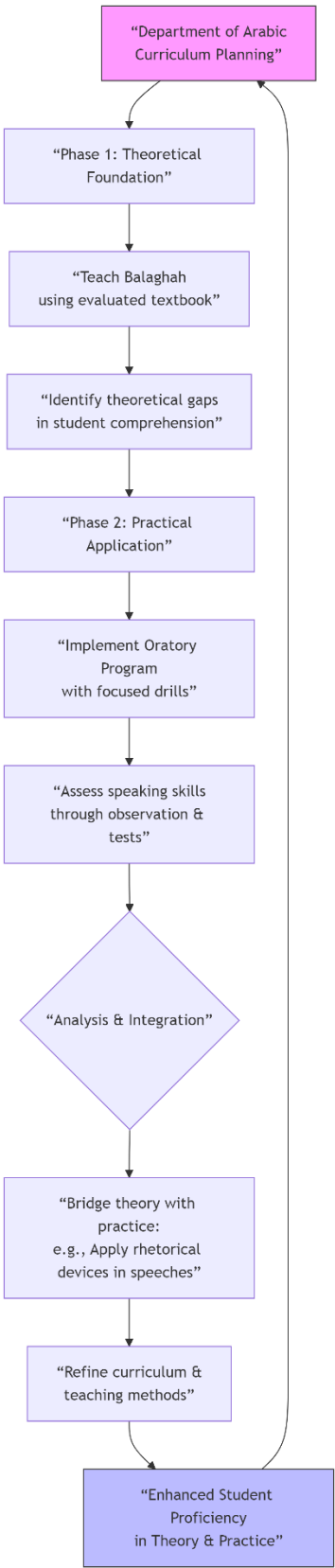


Figure 3. Integrated Intervention Model for Arabic Departments

Table 3. Key Challenges & Proposed Solutions Matrix.

Challenge Area	Identified Problem	Proposed Solution
Grammar Competency	Weak sentence construction and grammatical accuracy	Integrate focused grammar workshops into oratory training
Speech Structure	Difficulty creating logical arguments and flow	Use textbook rhetoric models as speech outlines
Non-Verbal Communication	Rigid facial expressions and excessive body movements	Mirror exercises and video feedback sessions
Textbook Engagement	Irrelevant illustrations reduce connection	Supplement with curated, context-relevant visual aids
Practice Consistency	Reliance on native language during informal practice	Designated Arabic-only speaking zones and activities

Table 4. Research Design Overview

Aspect	Component 1: Oratory Program	Component 2: Textbook Analysis
Research Type	Qualitative Case Study	Descriptive Qualitative (Content Analysis)
Objective	To analyze the impact of oratory training on Arabic speaking skills	To evaluate the suitability of the Balaghah textbook based on Thu’aimah’s criteria
Sample / Data Source	30 UG students (divided into 2 groups)	“Balaghah” textbook for Arabic Rhetoric
Data Collection Methods	Interviews, Observation, Skill Tests	Document Analysis, Content Evaluation
Theoretical Framework	Interactive Model (Miles & Huberman)	Thu’aimah’s Evaluation Criteria
Key Metrics	Pronunciation, Vocabulary, Grammar, Voice, Intonation, Expression, Body Language	Content, Organization, Presentation, Design

Results and Discussion

1. Findings from the Oratory Program:

The analysis of the speaking skill program revealed strengths and areas for improvement across linguistic and performance domains (Qiao & Zhao, 2023).

- **Linguistic Aspects:** Student competency was good in pronunciation (mastery of basic letter articulation) and vocabulary (appropriate use of topic-specific words) (Utami & Morganna, 2022). However, it was weak in grammar, with difficulties in constructing syntactically correct sentences and applying grammatical rules (Tilahun et al., 2022).
- **Oratory Performance Aspects:** Competency was good in voice control (clarity, use of emphasis) and intonation. Performance was adequate but requiring improvement in speech content/material, where students struggled to structure logical and engaging arguments. Facial expressions and body language were often rigid or excessive, weakening non-verbal communication.

The study identified that a lack of regular practice in Arabic (as opposed to the native language) and insufficient focused training were key constraints. Recommended interventions include expert-led training, structured exercises in grammar and composition, and regular practice sessions with immediate feedback (Ebadi et al., 2025).

2. Findings from the Textbook Analysis:

The evaluation of the Balaghah textbook based on Thu’aimah's perspective yielded largely positive results (Lai, 2026).

- **Content:** The book's content is generally appropriate, aligning with national educational philosophy (Pancasila) and stated learning objectives (Babayiğit, 2022). It connects theoretical concepts with real-world contexts, such as Quranic examples. However, due to the classical nature of Balaghah, the content is not "modern" in terms of new discoveries, though it is accurate and conceptually sound.
- **Organization:** The material is excellently organized in a coherent and sequential manner (Demir & Topcu, 2022). It progresses from basic concepts (e.g., definition of Balaghah, simile) to more complex rhetorical figures (e.g., metaphor, assonance, rhyme), considering the psychological and cognitive development of learners (Ida Ayu Oka Purnami, 2024).
- **Presentation:** The presentation is strong, using correct and clear Classical Arabic language. It incorporates varied learning models (Genre-Based Approach, Discovery Learning) and includes exercises catering to different learning styles (auditory, visual, kinesthetic). References are well-documented using authoritative sources. A minor weakness was noted in some illustrations and pictures that were not directly relevant to the discussed topics (Pituxcoosuvrn et al., 2025).
- **Book Design:** The physical design of the book conforms to the publishing guidelines of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Samsul Hady et al., 2025). It features a clear layout, appropriate typography, and proper diacritics, with no significant grammatical or spelling errors found (Stankevičius et al., 2022).
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Table 5. Thu’aimah’s Textbook Evaluation Framework
Thu’aimah’s Evaluation Framework for Teaching Materials

Criterion	Sub-Criteria
Content	Alignment with educational philosophy, learning objectives, accuracy, relevance.
Organization	Logical sequencing, psychological appropriateness, coherence.
Presentation	Language clarity, use of illustrations, learning models, individual differences.

Criterion	Sub-Criteria
Book Design	Layout, typography, paper quality, adherence to publishing standards.

Table 6. Oratory Program – Student Competency Assessment (Pre- & Post-Program)

Skill Category	Pre-Program Level	Post-Program Level	Key Findings
Pronunciation	Good	Improved	Strong in basic articulation; difficulty with similar-sounding letters
Vocabulary	Good	Improved	Appropriate topic-based use; limited lexical range
Grammar	Weak	Still Weak	Struggles with sentence structure, case endings (i‘rāb)
Speech Content/Structure	Weak	Needs Improvement	Difficulty in logical flow, introduction, conclusion
Voice Control	Good	Improved	Good clarity; needs work on stability and projection
Intonation	Good	Improved	Lacks variation for emphasis and emotional tone
Facial Expressions	Weak	Needs Improvement	Often rigid; lacks alignment with speech emotion
Body Language	Weak	Needs Improvement	Stiff or excessive; low awareness of gestures

Table 7. Balaghah Textbook Evaluation Based on Thu’aimah’s Criteria

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Rating (✓/X/~)	Remarks
CONTENT	Aligns with educational philosophy (Pancasila)	✓	Integrates national values and Islamic ethics
	Matches learning objectives	✓	Clearly stated goals per chapter

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Rating (✓/✗/~)	Remarks
ORGANIZATION	Relevant to local context	~	Links to Quranic examples; less connection to Indian context
	Accurate and up-to-date	✓	Theoretically sound; classical subject with little change
	Feasible within allotted time	✓	Well-paced across two semesters
	Logical sequencing and coherence	✓	Chapters progress from basic to advanced concepts
	Psychologically appropriate	✓	Moves from concrete to abstract; supports cognitive development
	Uses inductive/deductive approach	✓	Genre-Based Approach (GBA) applied
PRESENTATION	Balanced in quality and quantity	✓	Clear explanations, appropriate length per topic
	Uses correct and clear Arabic	✓	Classical Arabic with diacritics; simple style
	Caters to individual differences	~	Varied exercises but limited adaptive resources
	Includes teaching models	✓	Discovery Learning, Problem-Based Learning incorporated
	Includes relevant illustrations	✗	Some images unrelated to topics
	Properly referenced	✓	Uses authoritative sources (e.g., <i>Al-Balāghah al-Wāḍiḥah</i>)

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Rating (✓/X/~)	Remarks
BOOK DESIGN	Follows publishing standards	✓	Complies with Ministry of Religious Affairs guidelines
	Clear layout and typography	✓	Standard size, clear fonts (Traditional Arabic, Times New Roman)
	Free of grammatical/printing errors	✓	No significant errors found

Table 9. Recommendations Matrix – From Research to Implementation

Focus Area	Challenge Identified	Recommended Action	Responsible Party
Grammar & Structure	Weak grammatical accuracy in speech	Integrate weekly grammar drills using textbook examples	Instructor + Language Lab
Speech Preparation	Poor logical flow and argument development	Use Balaghah models (e.g., <i>tashbīh</i> , <i>jinās</i>) in speech outlines	Oratory Trainer + Students
Non-Verbal Skills	Ineffective facial expressions and body language	Conduct mirror sessions & peer video feedback	Oratory Club Coordinator
Textbook Utilization	Irrelevant illustrations reduce engagement	Replace generic images with context-relevant visuals (e.g., Indian Arabic heritage)	Curriculum Developer
Practice Environment	Over-reliance on native language outside class	Create “Arabic-Only Zones” and conversation circles	Department Head + Student Leaders
Assessment & Feedback	Lack of integrated theory-practice evaluation	Combine oratory performance rubrics with Balaghah theory tests	Examination Committee

Table 10. Participant Profile & Program Structure

Demographic	Details
Institution	Department of Arabic, The New College (MEASI), Chennai, India

Demographic	Details
Participants	30 Undergraduate Students (Arabic Major)
Group Division	Group A (n=15), Group B (n=15)
Program Duration	12 Weeks (3 sessions/week)
Oratory Session Components	1. Warm-up (Pronunciation Drills) 2. Theory Input (Balaghah Concept) 3. Speech Writing 4. Delivery Practice 5. Peer Feedback
Textbook Used	<i>Balaghah</i> (KSKK, 2020) – Adapted for UG level
Evaluation Tools	Pre-test, Post-test, Rubric-based Observation, Interview Transcripts

Table 11. Summary of Integrated Outcomes

Aspect	Oratory Program Outcome	Textbook Analysis Outcome	Integrated Insight
Strengths	Improved pronunciation, voice control, confidence	Strong content organization, classical accuracy, good design	Practical skills + theoretical foundation = balanced learning
Weaknesses	Poor grammar, weak non-verbal communication, rigid structure	Irrelevant illustrations, less local contextualization	Gaps in applied grammar and contextual relevance
Recommendation	Regular expert-led drills, video feedback, grammar-integrated practice	Update visuals, supplement with local examples, link to oratory tasks	Merge textbook rhetoric with speech writing; use theory in practice

Conclusion

This unified study demonstrates that enhancing Arabic proficiency, particularly speaking skills, requires a multifaceted strategy. The oratory program proves effective in building confidence and practical communication skills, addressing the productive use of language. Simultaneously, a robust, well-structured textbook like the analyzed *Balaghah* text provides the essential theoretical

foundation and linguistic depth necessary for comprehensive mastery. For optimal results in similar educational contexts like The New College, Chennai, the following integrated recommendations are proposed: Sustain and Enhance Oratory Training: Continue structured oratory programs with a focus on regular practice in Arabic. Incorporate expert trainers to provide specialized coaching on weak areas, particularly grammatical accuracy and speech structuring; Utilize and Supplement the Textbook: Adopt the analyzed Balaghah textbook as a core theoretical resource due to its overall suitability. Instructors should supplement it by providing context or alternative examples for any irrelevant illustrations and bridging theoretical concepts with practical oratory exercises; Implement Integrated Feedback Loops: Combine the practical feedback from oratory sessions (on performance, pronunciation, body language) with theoretical assessments based on textbook content. Encourage self-evaluation through audio/video recordings of speeches; Focus on Holistic Skill Development: Design activities that explicitly link the rhetorical devices learned in the Balaghah course (e.g., simile, metaphor, assonance) to the preparation and delivery of speeches in the oratory program, creating a cohesive learning experience; By integrating dynamic skill-based practice with solid theoretical instruction, educational institutions can significantly advance the Arabic language competency of their students, preparing them for both academic and real-world communicative success.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Author contribution

For research articles with several authors, a short paragraph specifying their individual contributions must be provided. The following statements should be used: Conceptualization; Methodology; Software.: Data curation; Writing-Original draft preparation.: Visualization; Investigation.: Supervision.: Software; Validation.: Writing -Reviewing and Editing;K. M. A. Ahamed Zubair.

Declaration of generative AI in scientific writing

During the preparation of this work, the author used ChatGPT in order to improve the language and readability of the manuscript / refine the abstract / assist in paraphrasing technical literature]. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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