Learning and Teaching for Right to Left Scripted Languages: Realities and possibilities

Proceedings of the B.A.A.L./C.U.P. sponsored seminar

14 June 2014
Leeds Metropolitan University

Edited by Naeema Hann

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Foreword –
Learning and Teaching for
Right to Left Scripted Languages:
Realities and possibilities

Naeema Hann
Theophile Munyangeo
Leeds Beckett University

We are delighted to present papers from the first seminar about right to left scripted languages. To remind ourselves, through this seminar we had aimed to start a conversation about researching and teaching right to left scripted languages. An important aim for us was to give a voice to learners and this comes through loud and clear from several papers.

The need for the seminar came about as we felt that there is a well-established and visible body of research which informs the teaching and learning of a number of European languages from primary to tertiary levels. We could also see a growing body of research about Arabic and Persian although we feel this is less visible at practitioner level in the UK.

However, there doesn't seem to be as clear a path from research to the teaching of languages such as Persian and Urdu as foreign or second languages. At the same time, there is a growing diaspora who use these languages parallel to which lies an interest in the communities these diasporas have settled in. Anecdotal evidence shows providers of services used by diaspora communities enrolling in classes for Urdu, Persian and Arabic. Another growing group of learners is individuals in cross-cultural relationships and their families who enrol in classes for these languages. It is not clear how well the needs of these groups of learners are being met.

This set of papers adds to our understanding of issues as well as solutions in the teaching of some right to left scripted languages and hopefully reminds us of some questions too especially around materials development and teacher training for right to left scripted languages.

Languages XP – Arabic: A language and cultural experience by university students for complete beginners in schools

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Nadia Abdelaal
The University of Manchester

"Docendo discimus"
We learn by teaching (Seneca the Younger: epistulae morales 1, 7, 8)

Abstract

This paper seeks to offer an initial report of a new university project piloted during the academic year of 2013/2014 under the title "Languages XP". This project was launched using Arabic and enabled students of Arabic at the University of Manchester (UoM) to carry out language taster sessions to school pupils with no previous knowledge of the subject. In this paper three main aspects of this project are identified. Firstly, the (1) rationale and underlying language learning aims of this scheme, concentrating on the specific intention behind this initiative. Secondly, (2) the practicalities of conducting the sessions will be shared. Thirdly, (3) I will share the data and language learning outcomes which were gathered from this experience – the source of which were the students, pupils and schools which took part. This paper will conclude by evaluating the short-term and long-term benefits of this project. In addition, and as part of the appendix, an example will be offered of a first-hand account by one of those students who took part.

The LXP scheme: introduction

The LXP scheme[1] was first introduced at the University of Manchester (UoM) in the autumn of 2013[2] and provided students with the opportunity to teach Arabic language and culture to complete beginners in schools. It initially began as a pilot project for Final Year students of Arabic alone but has since been adopted by

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[1] XP is short for 'experience'
[2] It was created and introduced by the author

three additional languages at the university in the 2014/15 academic year.[3] The sessions consisted of language and cultural 'tasters' which were taught to pupils with no previous knowledge of Arabic. With the emphasis on 'no previous knowledge' as a core aspect of this scheme, LXP manages to distinctively set itself apart from other such educational ventures that offer help by university students to GCSE or AS/A Level school pupils.

The Rationale

LXP aims to benefit all its participants – this was and is its primary incentive. From the students' perspective it proves particularly advantageous; they take part in the training, production and delivery of material and tasters using the language disciplines they are enrolled in at university. The scheme is also valuable to school pupils themselves as well as their schools and the community as a whole.

The project's original aim was mainly focused on improving the student learning experience as well as providing them with the chance to offer any language they wished (especially their heritage language). This may be quite different to anything an individual was studying at university or school. The reasons here were multiple. The most important idea was to encourage the appreciation of linguistic and cultural diversity; which in turn might send a positive message to pupils whose heritage language was not English, that they should be proud of their difference (Multilingual Manchester Report 2015; Education Scotland 2015). Unfortunately, this was not viable at university for practical reasons. One reason was that this would not be an effective use of university resources, such as staffing, materials and time in relation to outcomes. This is because one of the main drives to run this programme, as far as the university is concerned, is to inspire secondary school pupils to study the languages offered at university. This is one way a potential future client-base can be built up. This rationale was also behind the decision not to opt for the Primary sector. Instead the decision was made to concentrate on the language that students were studying – namely Arabic. The aim for future years is to only offer a language that students can study at the UoM.

Benefits to university students

Academic Enrichment or 'improving the student experience' is high on the agenda in higher education establishments across the UK. When nearing the end of their degree programme students are asked to evaluate this experience in the national students' survey. Indeed, it is the second of the three main goals of the 2020

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[3] Latin Russian and Portuguese

Strategic Plan for the University of Manchester (2001) which seeks to 'promote the educational and social impacts of teaching and learning'(The University of Manchester 2020 Strategic Plan, 2001: 13). With this in mind, LXP meets the targets of 'opportunities for work experience' and 'embedding employability in the curriculum', as well as 'volunteering' (The University of Manchester 2020 Strategic Plan, 2001: 13). Students are encouraged to follow the scheme as a means of improving their future job prospects and are given recognition from the university for having completed the scheme. Since this work was entirely voluntary in 2013/14, it was counted towards the Manchester Leadership Programme hours[4]. It must also be noted that we encourage students to develop essential teacher qualities – an essential component needed for their entry into the work-place, and a factor that will render them more attractive to future employers.

The scheme, therefore, also focuses on making students more aware of the wider implications of not only teaching languages, but also of being socially responsible. Indeed, delivering 'graduates for whom social responsibility is second nature' is the third goal of the Manchester University 2020 plan (The University of Manchester 2020 Strategic Plan, 2001: 17). By engaging students in working with communities, the aim is to develop a deeper understanding of and commitment to equality and diversity, equal opportunities and accessibility. This is achieved by choosing schools from low-participation neighbourhoods, whose pupils might not normally aspire to go to university, and offering them the opportunity to have a taste of what studying a language at university could be like (The University of Manchester 2020 Strategic Plan, 2001; 13). This may in turn inspire them to consider higher education as part of their career path. We make students aware that learning a language from scratch also helps pupils succeed in learning, and as a result promotes self-confidence. After all, language learning is not simply concerned with learning words, grammar and culture. There are a number of immeasurable rewards and an array of skills to be acquired (Gallagher-Brett 2004; QAA, 2015) – especially when one learns a language without prior knowledge of it. We will return to this point further in this paper, especially in relation to the positive psychological effects to be gained by the pupil.

A final point to underline here is how a working awareness of language learning skills and teaching others can help to make our own students better learners themselves (Fiorella & Mayer 2013). In fact, "Docendo discimus" or 'we learn by

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[4] MLP is a course that develops social responsibility, leadership and volunteering in students. In 2014/15, students have been given the option of participating on either on a voluntary or bursary basis.

teaching,' became a significant and insightful reminder for us all; more than we at first envisaged. Moreover, the tasks undertaken by the students in this scheme sit comfortably within the realm of learner-centred teaching. The best way to motivate learners is to turn them into teachers. In this way, the student is guaranteed to develop a sense of value and personal accomplishment.

Of course, students as teachers is not a new concept. This role has often been utilised to either assist or replace teachers. The method of learning by teaching in order to improve learning called "Lernen durch Lehren" (LdL), also known as the LBT (Learning by Teaching) method, was developed in 1980 by Jean-Pol Martin (Kelchner and Martin 1998). He was a professor for foreign language teaching in Germany who gave it a systematic and theoretical basis. He had the idea of letting students teach their peers in his French classes leading to active research on the topic, which was then promoted on a larger scale. Teachers in Germany are trained in this method during their pedagogic studies.

Although the LdL approach relates essentially to students teaching their peers, LXP shares some important elements – student autonomy over content, methods and approaches as well as the micro-teaching practice and ensuing discussions. In LdL there are two main components: the anthropological basis (democratic, communication and socialization skills) and the subject related component. The advantages of this method are that it increases motivation by giving students autonomy. There is an increased sense of purpose in the work they are producing, as they have set their own goals.[5] It also results in solidarity between students as they are encouraged to share their ideas, planning and materials. They are given the option of conducting the tasters alone or in pairs. Students responded well to being given such choices.[6] This is a point we will return to.

Benefits to the university language disciplines

By meeting the student satisfaction target, recruitment and retention of students are enhanced. This bodes well for the language disciplines involved and the university in a number of ways. Higher student satisfaction means a better NSS outcome for Q22 and the UoM's target of reaching at least 90% by 2020 (The University of Manchester 2020 Strategic Plan 2001:13). This is also good news for

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[5] Autonomy was cited by students in 2013/14 in their evaluation of LXP, as one of the positive outcomes of the scheme.
[6] A group of them could work on the materials and approaches and each one of them could use the same taster session in their respective schools.

the retention of staff in language disciplines within the university. It should be noted that recruitment is not only that of prospective students who are about to choose their universities, but also of the pupils in the schools taking part who may go on to study languages at university in the near future. This year (2014/15) our students have been asked to emphasize to schools on their first visit that the language they are teaching can be studied at the UoM from scratch.

Benefits to the schools involved

For the benefits to pupils to be transmitted and achieved we firstly needed to establish a motivation for the schools to want to participate in the scheme. Irrespective of the language, and having begun my teaching career in schools, I was aware that language teachers would welcome an opportunity to promote the teaching and learning of languages and for the profile of languages to be enhanced in their schools. This would encourage the study of languages in general. According to Routes into Languages North West in relation to language enrichment events that include language tasters, they have measured 'a marked increase in pupils' motivation to take up a language option at GCSE, even though the tasters at these events were held in new languages which pupils did not study at school,' (Routes into Languages Consortium).The general aim is a renewed interest in the study of languages and to encourage pupils to continue with their language learning throughout school and into university (Routes into Languages Consortium). We also believed that offering languages not often taught in schools would be a motivator - it would not only be a new experience but a rare one.

With regards to Arabic in particular, we outlined among other points in 2013, the importance of Arabic and therefore the advantages of learning it. These included Arabic being reported as the second most important language for the UK and expected to remain important for the next 20 years (British Council 2013). What's more, Arabic is not only a world language, but an important community language in the UK. It is rapidly growing in demand across all educational sectors and part of our aim is to increase the teaching and learning of it further to meet this demand.

Benefits to pupils

By being involved, it was an opportunity for pupils to meet undergraduate language students and gain first-hand insight into what they could do with languages after they left school. They would be meeting students who, like them, started this language from scratch and showed them just how much they could gain. We think that this was also a factor in the pupils feeling a sense of affinity

with our students, in addition to the closeness in age. We hoped that they would be inspired to continue with languages and so improve accessibility to university.

Learners learn better and relate better to the teacher when the age range is closer (Greenberg 1995). This was an advantage to choosing university students to teach the pupils. An extreme example of this is the Sudbury Schools experiment, which was based on pupil autonomy (see Greenberg 1995). The findings were that children like to learn from other children. In our case, the student is closer in age to the pupil and, having gone through similar challenges in learning this (language) more recently, is better placed than an adult teacher to deal with pupils. Explanations are usually simpler and so better and more in keeping with the age of the pupil. There may also be an incentive to learn faster to keep up with the student teacher.

The pupils would be learning a completely new language and culture. We emphasised to the schools that all pupils attending must not have any prior knowledge of the subject. This was as much for the sake of the students, so that they were not unnerved by the prospect of being challenged, as it was to fulfil the aims and objectives of the scheme. Pupils would be reminded that Arabic can be picked up from scratch at university and that all students started studying Arabic as complete beginners.

Building positive associations with languages is high on the agenda. The emphasis is on fun for both the pupils and the students teaching them. Therefore the activities to be used in the tasters had to be enjoyable. We cannot forget the main aim – motivation to learn languages.

Benefits to the wider community

Part of the aim of this project was to make our students aware of the wider implications of language learning and therefore of what they were undertaking. For example, the schools that have been offered this project have been mainly 'widening participation' schools, from low-participation neighbourhoods to 'improve accessibility by increasing the impact of our interactions with local, regional and international communities, especially those that are disadvantaged or have limited access to the University,'(The University of Manchester 2020 Strategic Plan, 2001: 13)

The Practicalities
Planning

I began in 2013, by presenting the scheme to the Outreach officer in the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures at the University of Manchester. We then began a series of discussions to examine its viability, logistics and potential. Outreach dealt mainly with the administrative matters. Support from Outreach was fundamental to the success of the scheme. They have the background experience and are the bridge between us and the schools. This also allowed us to focus on the language learning and tasters themselves.

The students

Participants are usually final year students, as they have just returned from their year abroad and will have first-hand cultural knowledge to add to the taster. Also, their level of language will be the highest that it can be and so puts them in a better position to handle any language queries. It would hopefully also make them more confident. In 2014/15 students of Latin do not need to be in final year, as they do not have the same Year Abroad requirement as other languages.

Ethos

I was keen that students be made to feel part of the process. They were invited to planning meetings and their opinion taken into account. They were given opportunities for autonomy and choice of topics, how to work and schools (where possible), as well as feedback comments.

Time-saving strategies

Students were encouraged to ask for any material they would like for their teaching. I made it clear to them that I was mindful they were final year students and that the scheme was flexible and had been planned with this in mind. The students would be able to put in as much or as little time as they wished. All guidance and hand-outs were in electronic copy for ease of access and use. And a sharing approach was encouraged (joint emails / student material on Blackboard / working in pairs) to save time.

Numbers

In 2013/14, we had 11 students. In 2014/15 we have 20. Schools chosen would be within approximately a one hour radius of university to cut down on travel time. This year there will be one initial visit to the school by the students, followed by four taster sessions. These are normally spread over a 4-week period

in March. Schools are given the choice of having them as either a lunch-time club or after-school activity. The pupils would be from either Year 8 or 10, with a maximum of 10-12 pupils per group. We chose these two years as they are not involved in national examinations and would have time to enjoy the tasters. They were also in sufficient proximity to future path considerations.

Materials and funding

This is a low-budget scheme that does not present any extra costs to either the students or the schools. Students are not expected to pay for anything and all travel expenses are reimbursed. In 2014/15 Outreach have kindly offered a bursary (fee) to each student. The reference materials for 2013/14 have been provided by the author and any additional material is to be funded by various sources. LXP has a dedicated area in the university language centre library.

Students prepare their own teaching materials, hand-outs etc at the university. They may need to ask the school to provide material for their own pupils such as paper or pens, but we do not expect it to be excessive.

Health & Safety

All students are DBS-checked. They are also reminded about issues related to dealing with young children and health & safety measures. They are instructed not to bring food for the pupils and must ensure that the equipment they use and the classroom is safely laid out. So, the students are mindful of these matters, although the schools are ultimately responsible for the safety of their pupils.

Practicalities – Outline Semesters 1 & 2

September	Meeting to introduce the scheme to language tutors.
October	Meeting to introduce the scheme to students. An initial meeting is set up for anyone who may be interested in participating. The presentation includes what language learning is about and the wider aims and benefits of language study (Gallagher-Brett 2004; QAA 2015). Students have received information in advance and confirm participation at the end of the meeting. Flyers are sent to schools and students placements allocated.
November	Training workshop Follow-up tutor/student guidance and meetings as required Email correspondence with students

December	Students choose topics and these are sent to schools
	De-brief meeting for updates/final questions
Xmas break	Students prepare tasters
February	Micro-teaching practice at university with peers
	Feedback and discussion of materials and approaches
March	Tasters in schools
	Feedback forms completed by students, pupils & schools
April	Feedback & evaluation meeting; tutors, students and Outreach. All suggestions are taken on board for the following year. We have already incorporated most of the changes suggested in the pilot.

The training workshop
Preparation & delivery of language tasters

Students are trained to develop and deliver these taster sessions. This is not a complete teacher training course, but it is still structured. They are given the basics in lesson planning, time-management, content and delivery & pace setting, as well as assessment of learning and the importance of self-evaluation. Homework and classroom management is also covered. They are guided on choice of topics and material sources and design. We also consider the characteristics of a good teacher. However, since these are essentially language taster sessions, the focus is to maximize and highlight the motivational activities and techniques needed to grasp pupils attention in a short time.

Focus on Motivation

Students were reminded of the need for the tasters to be fun for both themselves and the pupils, as motivation is one of the prime objectives of the scheme. By enjoying the activities, pupils will develop positive associations with languages and see that they are enjoyable and accessible. Students were alerted to the effect of these activities and techniques such as, lifting of moods, helping to remember words and grammar (Chambers 1999).[7]

Motivational techniques

It was important to differentiate between actual motivational activities and the techniques, such as a good atmosphere, rewards and succeeding in the tasks they are given. Some of the rewards encouraged are using praise and giving stickers and badges for success as well as effort. So, if a team game is played, both teams

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[7] For a comprehensive study of motivation

can be rewarded with stickers, although they can be differentiated (e.g. winning team gets 'excellent', losing team gets 'very good').

Cajkler and Addelman (2000) list useful elements that increase motivation. Most of these have been incorporated into the LXP scheme. Some of the sources of fun they listed which we use are: smiles; language games; competition which anyone can win; competitions which the 'best' can win; making things; moving about; the unexpected; relaxing now and then; success in learning. Some of the motivators we use are: rewards; praise; a special visitor; relevance of the task.

Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) talk of motivation as being one of the most important factors in language learning when explaining that "high motivation can make up for considerable deficiencies both in one's language aptitude and learning conditions." They developed a set of 'ten commandments' for motivating learners. The following are eight out of the ten we covered in our language tasters:

1. Set a personal example with your own behaviour.
   Students were themselves complete beginners only 3 years prior.
2. Create a pleasant…atmosphere in the classroom.
3. Present tasks properly.
   We have given the students guidance in lesson planning and delivery.
4. Develop a good relationship with the learners
   Students go for an initial visit to get to know the pupils. They are also encouraged to be patient and sympathetic to learners.
5. Increase the learners' linguistic self-confidence.
   Pupils will be given opportunities to use the target language and succeed by being given manageable tasks. They will be praised even if they get things wrong. Sympathetic correction of error is encouraged.
6. Make language classes interesting.
7. Personalize the learning process.
   Activities are planned to encourage pupils to talk about themselves. The tasters were used to give them language that they could use for themselves. For example, some wanted to know how to say 'parents not allowed' and similar phrases for their bedroom doors. They were also shown how to write their names in Arabic.
8. Familiarize the learners with the target language culture.

Regarding cultural awareness, some students from 2013/14 introduced this to pupils giving examples of their own Year Abroad experience. This both

introduced pupils to the culture and made them realise that they too could have the same experience if they decided to study this or another language at university. Some students not only introduced but also compared cultures, to highlight the similarities and differences. Indeed, 'the behaviour and the way of life of others from an outsider's perspective can be stimulating and fun' (Pachler, Barnes, Field 2009).

Focus on Motivational activities

Students were given a practical introduction to as many motivational activities as possible to generate ideas. We practised a song from a book by Steven Fawkes showing how songs can be made up using the language in question. This is best carried out using a tune the pupils will already know (Fawkes 1995).

So, to let the students have first-hand knowledge of how the pupils would feel, we covered a song using German, a language that hardly any of the students would know. The song was entitled 'Neben' using German prepositions to the tune of 'Neighbours' and included actions. The students enjoyed it immensely. Most of the activities discussed and demonstrated were Speaking activities (Abdelaal 2013).

In 2013/14, since this was the first year of the scheme, we had not yet received feedback on the most popular activities. However, because they were language tasters, the obvious ones to cover were mostly Speaking ones. And in actual fact, at the end of the pilot, the feedback received indicated that Speaking activities were indeed the most popular. So, in 2014/15 (the second year of the scheme), most of the activities discussed and demonstrated were Speaking ones.

It was also pointed out that these activities were not only for practising new vocabulary, but also grammar. For example, activities involving any type of survey and reporting back were particularly good for practising verb conjugations. Popular writing activities included transliterating pupil names in non-Roman letters and drawing using calligraphy (Arabic).

The Outcomes

All those involved were asked to fill in evaluation forms, namely the university students, pupils and schools. These were made up of a table to be ticked and space to comment. We collated the responses and recorded them as a percentage.

University Student Evaluations (2013/14)

These were mostly positive. In line with the LdL method outcomes mentioned previously, students found that they gained key skills, such as self-confidence by being given a group of pupils to teach on their own for the first time.

	Yes	Partially agree	Not sure	No
The programme was a positive experience	100%			
I feel I have learned something new during this experience	100%			
I feel this experience will improve my future employability	64%		36%	
The programme was well organised	82%		18%	
I would recommend Languages XP to students next year	100%			

Table 1: University Student Evaluations

Which aspects of the programme were most useful?
1. Fun
2. Being in full control
3. Independence – teaching a class on own
4. Passing on knowledge of Arabic & culture
5. Engaging with Arabic in a different way
6. Learnt a lot about teaching
7. Training session
8. Planning & designing own material
9. Sharing resources
10. Micro-teaching
11. Teaching children a new experience
12. Good for CV

Which aspects of the programme did you find least useful?
1. Half an hour is quite short.
   For 2014/15, we have extended each session to 45 minutes.
2. Prepare one of the sessions before Xmas.
   We decided not to do this in 2014/15 for a number of logistical reasons. Firstly, there would not be sufficient time to train the students, allocate schools and find time for a session before Xmas. Also, by starting in December, there would then be a big gap before the second session in January and pupils may forget or lose interest.

Can you suggest any improvements? Do you have any further comments?

1. Visit school before starting
   We have included this for 2014/15.
2. Have it earlier in the semester
   As with the above, we cannot have it in semester 1. Nor could we make it any earlier in semester 2. The reasons are that there needs to be micro-teaching practice at university for all students to trial their material. Then there is a half-term holiday in February. We will, however, bring it forward by one week to start in the last week of February, as Easter is early this year.
3. Extend the period of time for the tasters to one semester (*not all students agreed*)
4. Thank you for the opportunity. I would even consider a career in teaching.

School pupil Evaluations (2013/14)

These were extremely positive. We were very interested to see much mention of key words, such as 'fun', 'enjoyable', 'interesting' and 'loved it!' They also mentioned 'good / friendly / helpful teacher', We were encouraged by comments such as 'more fun than I thought it would be', 'good to learn other languages' and especially 'I would like to continue with Arabic'.

		Completely agree	Partially agree	Not sure	Partially disagree	Completely disagree
1	I enjoyed Languages XP	92%	8%			
2	I found something out about the language/culture that I didn't know before	94%	6%			

Table 2: School pupil Evaluations

Which aspects of the programme were most useful?

1. Learning to start basic conversation / speaking Arabic
2. Learning to write Arabic
3. Culture

4.   Games/bingo
5.   Learning numbers and greetings
6.   Learning about jobs and countries
7.   Learning Arabic words and phrases
8.   Finding out about a new language
9.   Entire experience

Is there anything you found less useful/enjoyable?

Most of the replies came back as 'Nothing' - 90%. The remaining 10% mentioned such points as – 'not winning at bingo!'.

Can you suggest any improvements? Do you have any further comments?

Most of these came back asking for longer sessions and more of them. There were no negative comments.

School Staff Evaluations (2013/14)

We had no negative comments at all from the schools' staff. And most of them have joined up again for further language tasters in 2014/15.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
The programme was a positive experience	100%		
The content was suitable for the targeted students	100%		
The event has provided students with valuable information	100%		
The programme was well organised	100%		
I would take part in Languages XP again	100%		

Table 3: School Staff Evaluations

Unexpected Outcomes

The area of improving their own language was not high on the agenda for students or myself, when planning this scheme. This was because they were in their final year and the level of language they would be teaching was quite basic. So, it was not initially expected that they had anything new to learn in the area of language or grammar.

However, it became apparent during the micro-teaching sessions that there was room for discussion here. And it was through preparation to teach and practise that the opportunity to discuss some very important aspects of lexis and grammar came to light. These included spelling and the choice and use of certain words and phrases for different purposes. It was an ideal arena to discuss the structure and use of the Arabic Language.

The other main area was that of skills. Firstly, the use of IT in non-Roman script was used by students before to type up assignments. However, this was a new and more extensive use of the keyboard: that of designing materials for teaching purposes. This was a new challenge for some students, especially when trying to put both Arabic and English on the same line, when they are starting from different sides of the page. So, they were able to share tips in best practice.

The students also found that the way they learned Arabic best could be put to good use. They put into practice approaches that helped them and that may also help the pupils in question.

I found that the students were extremely accepting of peer review comments, which were given immediately and verbally. I had prepared them for this and had highlighted to them that acceptance of constructive (with an emphasis on constructive) criticism was a key characteristic of a good teacher. I am very pleased to say that the students were very mature in their evaluations (remembering to start with the positive) and these were very well received. It was a very collegial atmosphere.

Goals for 2014/15

It was suggested that the micro-TP at university (before going out into schools) follow a different approach. In 2013/14 this only involved students of Arabic, as there was no other language on offer. However, now that we have other languages, we could organize the teaching to be to students of a language other than that being taught.

Whilst this would make the taster more effective, we are bound by factors that need to be taken into consideration. Timetabling issues may make it logistically difficult to have a sufficient number of students available at the same time. In 2013/14, this was a challenge. Also, we must bear in mind the aim of the teaching practice for these tasters. It is more of a checking and feedback session on the planned activities and materials, than an actual lesson and it is shorter than the

45 minutes they will have for each taster. Also, tasters are a fun activity with more emphasis on enjoying the language and less on the extent of the actual language learned. So, it is not actually the ability to teach in the normal sense that we are evaluating.

In 2013/14 there had been a plan for us to set up some groups of learners from the School of Languages, so that our students could practise their tasters in full. This was not pursued, but could be considered as an addition to the content of the scheme, and an opportunity for additional practice, rather than it being an obligatory part of the scheme. In fact in 2013/14, three of our LXP students took part in events organised by the university and presented taster sessions for schools.

At this point, the scheme is still in its infancy and it is still too early to deviate too much from current boundaries. So, in the short-term, it is sufficient to add languages to the current model. And since the long-term plan is to apply for it to be considered as an accredited course, any plans for expansion to the current arrangements would be best placed within the course. And an expansion of teaching opportunities, such as the above would be considered.

Conclusion: 2015/16 and beyond

It is planned to apply for the scheme to become an accredited School-wide course at the UoM. We also plan to offer it to more languages. Japanese and Chinese have already expressed interest. We had initially wanted to offer the model and training to other universities and this was conveyed at the BAAL conference in June 2014. We had planned to offer the model and training to other HE institutions who were interested. The British Council has also expressed an interest in funding a 'best materials produced by students' prize. We are examining all these potential developments.

The aims of LXP were achieved and all participants gained from this experience. The level of interest, evaluation results and outcomes for 2013/14 surpassed expectations. We look forward to evaluating and comparing the outcomes for 2014/15, with the additional languages now on board.

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Appendix
First-hand account by an LXP student from 2013/14

Elizabeth Linsley, an Arabic Language finalist in 2013/14 reviewed her experience with LXP. In summary, she explained that she had benefited from the free choice of topics to teach, the opportunity to plan and prepare and develop materials. This included gauging material to the correct level of the student. She had been very pleased at how much the experience had boosted her confidence. Keeping everyone interested, dealing with special needs and having to 'think on her feet' were some examples she cited. It had also been an opportunity to use simple Arabic language not normally covered at degree level.

Elizabeth noticed that pupil confidence was enhanced through learning a completely different language and they learned where the countries were in the Middle East. The school had asked if Elizabeth would return after her exams.

Here, Elizabeth gives us a first-hand account in her own words:

> "I benefitted hugely from the LXP experience. Teaching on my own, even to a relatively small group of students, improved my confidence, particularly as I saw the pupils enjoy the lessons and materials I had spent time creating. It also forced me to think on my feet, as some tasks took a lot longer or shorter than I had planned so I had to rearrange my lesson plans. I was also asked questions about Arabic language and culture that I hadn't prepared for and had to explain in a way that answered the question but also that was easy for them to understand. Because I only had three teaching sessions it made me think about the most important aspects of the Arabic language and culture that I wanted the students to learn. It also made me think about how I would teach the language as the students couldn't read the Arabic script, so I transliterated everything which then helped me to think more about the pronunciation of the Arabic language. Surprisingly it also improved my spelling of simple words and phrases which I hadn't written since I was beginning to learn Arabic myself."[8]

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[8] Elizabeth Linsley (2014). *Account of experience with LXP – Arabic.*

Tools for Searching and Analysing Arabic Corpora: An evaluation study

2

Abdullah Alfaifi & Eric Atwell

Al Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU), Riyadh & University of Leeds
ayjfaifi@imamu.edu.sa
e.s.atwell@leeds.ac.uk

Abstract

There is a growing need for processing tools that support as many features as possible of the Arabic language, and provide users with a greater number of functions. The aim of the present paper is to evaluate seven existing tools based on seven criteria which seem to be the most essential for searching and analysing Arabic corpora. The results of the evaluation revealed that Sketch Engine has met all the evaluation criteria and achieved the highest benchmark scores. The paper concluded that consideration of the linguistic features of Arabic was the most significant factor behind the superiority of some tools.

Introduction

As the potentials and functions of corpora tools differ in terms of handling Arabic, choosing the most suitable tool seems to be difficult and requires a comparison based on specific criteria. This paper thus attempts to present a fundamental comparative evaluation of seven tools which support multiple languages including Arabic. Such evaluation may also help the tools' developers for further improvement and better support Arabic text.

Background

Tools that are used for searching and analysing corpora provide some basic functions such as frequent words and concordances, whereas some of these tools have more functions and statistics. A number of these searching and analysing tools are web-based, e.g. The Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al., 2004), IntelliText Corpus Queries (Sharoff, 2011), CQPweb at Lancaster (Hardie, 2012). Other

tools are PC-based such as the KACST Arabic Corpora Processing Tool "Khawas" (Althubaity et al., 2014), aConCorde (Roberts, 2014), AntConc (Anthony, 2005), WordSmith Tools (Scott, 2012). The newest versions of these tools were included in this evaluation.

In terms of corpora uses in the field of language learning and teaching, researchers use corpora for Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis, which enables researchers to observe a wide range of instances of underuse, overuse, and misuse of various aspects of the learner language at different levels: lexis, discourse, and syntax (Granger, 2003). Analysing errors also enables researchers and educators to understand the interlanguage errors caused by First Language (L1) transfer, learning strategies, and overgeneralization of L1 rules. Learner corpora were – and still are – used to compile or improve learner dictionary contents, particularly by identifying the most common errors learners make, and then providing dictionary users with more details at the end of relevant entries. These errors may take place in words, phrases, or language structures, along with the ways in which a word or an expression can be used correctly and incorrectly (Granger, 2003; Nesselhauf, 2004). Also corpora are useful resources to measure the extent to which learners can improve their performance in various aspects of the target language (Buttery and Caines, 2012; Nesselhauf, 2004). Analysing corpora may function as a beneficial basis for pedagogical purposes such as creating instructional teaching materials. It can, for instance, help in developing materials that are more appropriate to learners' proficiency levels and in line with their linguistic strengths and weaknesses.

Methodology

In this paper, seven tools were selected to be evaluated against seven criteria. Each of these tools was evaluated separately against each benchmark. One of the tools, IntelliText Corpus Queries, was not available when the evaluation was conducted, so it has no result in this paper. A sample of Arabic corpus texts was used in two formats, UTF-8 and Unicode.

Tools investigated

This paper includes seven tools:
1. The KACST (King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology) Arabic Corpora Processing Tool "Khawas" 3.0 (Althubaity et al., 2014)
2. aConCorde 0.4.3 (Roberts et al., 2006)
3. AntConc 3.4.0 (Anthony, 2014)
4. WordSmith Tools 6.0 (Scott, 2012)

5.   The Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al., 2004)
6.   IntelliText Corpus Queries (Sharoff, 2011)
7.   CQPweb at Lancaster (Hardie, 2012)

The websites, manuals, or other resources of these tools indicate that Arabic is one of the languages supported; therefore, those seven tools were selected, we included the newest versions in this review.

Evaluation criteria

Given the fact that functions of the tools examined here differ from one to the next, most of the criteria used were based on linguistic features, particularly those related to Arabic. While many benchmarks could be examined in an evaluation of these tools, seven points were selected that seemed to be the most essential criteria for searching and analysing Arabic corpora.

Reading Arabic text files in UTF-8 format

This point examines whether the tools being tested are able to read Arabic text files in UTF-8 format and show the characters correctly. According to Burnard (2005), the Unicode Standard has three UTFs: UTF-16, UTF-8 and UTF-32 (in chronological order). He indicates that UTF-16 is known in Microsoft applications as "Unicode", and demonstrates that UTF-8 is superior to the other two, as UTF-16 and UTF-32 are more complex architecturally than UTF-8. Burnard recommends using UTF-8 as a universal format for data exchange in Unicode, and for corpus construction.

Reading Arabic text files in Unicode format

This is to examine whether the tools are able to read Arabic text files in UTF-16 format and show the characters correctly. UTF-16 is one of the formats that Microsoft applications use to save files containing characters in Unicode format. Notepad is one application in particular upon which many people rely to create and save their corpus files. However, when a user tries to save a text including Arabic characters in different encoding formats such as ANSI, Notepad shows a message about how to keep the Unicode information with an advice to select one of the Unicode options. Thus, corpora tools may or may not be able to handle the UTF-16 encoding format besides the UTF-8 format that is most widely used in corpus construction. For this reason the ability to read Arabic characters in UTF-16 was included in this evaluation.

Displaying diacritics correctly

Diacritics are small symbols that optionally written above or below a letter "providing a more accurate indication about how a word is pronounced" (Samy and Samy, 2014). There are three types of diacritics, Vowel, Nunation and Shadda: Vowel diacritics represent Arabic's three short vowels, Fatha /a/ [َ], Damma /u/ [ُ], Kasra /i/ [ِ], and the absence of any vowel (no vowel) Sukun [ْ].

Nunation occurs only on the final positions in nominals (nouns, adjectives and adverbs). In addition to helping in the word pronunciation, they indicate indefiniteness as well, Fathatan [ً], Dammatan /u/ [ٌ], Kasratan /i/ [ٍ]. Shadda is a consonant doubling diacritic, it typically combines with a vowel or Nunation diacritic, [ًّ / ّ]. See Habash (2010, pp 11-12) for more details about these three types and how they are written and pronounced.

The ability to show Arabic diacritics – if there are any – is tested under this point, e.g., "هِمَّةً". Displaying diacritics might be essential in some cases, particularly with similar forms that cannot be distinguished if they have no diacritics, e.g., ذهبَ (past tense of the verb "went") and ذهبْ (noun: "gold").

Displaying Arabic text in the correct direction (right to left)

As Arabic is written from right to left, the tools were examined to ascertain whether they can show Arabic text in the correct direction, particularly in concordances, where the contexts must also be ordered correctly.

Normalising diacritics

This is to check if the tool is able to normalise the diacritics, so that the user has an option to search Arabic texts which include diacritics using a single word form in the query. For example, if a text includes the word "هِمَّةً" (with diacritics) and the word "همة" (without diacritics), is the user able to search for both using the single form "همة"? This is significant in searching Arabic corpora, as one form may have several sub-forms with diacritics. Unless the diacritics are normalised, the user may face difficulty in counting them, and accordingly in combining them into a single query.

Normalising Hamza "ء"

Normalising Hamza is similar to the previous benchmark. Here, we check to see whether the tool has the ability to normalise words that have Hamza, so the user has an option to search Arabic texts, which include Hamza using a single word form in the query. For example, if a text includes the word "إلى" (with Hamza)

and the word "الى" (without Hamza), is the user able to search for both using the single form "الى"?

Enabling users to upload or open their Arabic personal corpora

Researchers may desire to use particular Arabic corpora, or even build their own corpora from scratch and use some tools to search and analyse these resources. Therefore, the tools here are examined to see whether they accept external data files.

Evaluation sample

The current evaluation was based on a sample from the Arabic Learner Corpus (ALC)[9]. This open-source corpus was developed at Leeds University, and is comprised of 282,732 words collected from learners of Arabic in Saudi Arabia over the course of 2012 and 2013. The corpus includes written and spoken data produced by 942 students from 67 different nationalities studying at pre-university and university levels (Alfaifi et al., 2014).

Results and discussion

Each tool will be explored in detail with its benchmark results, which will then be followed by a brief overall comparison that has been provided at the end of this section.

The KACST (King Abdulaziz City for Science & Technology) Arabic Corpora Processing Tool "Khawas" (Althubaity et al., 2014)

Khawas was able to read Arabic texts in UTF-8 format; however this was not the case with texts in Unicode, as nothing readable was displayed. Khawas is set to remove diacritics by default in order to normalise the text, but they can be shown by changing the settings. Khawas displays words in the correct right to left orientation (Figure 1). This tool has an option to normalise Hamza, which enables both those words that have, or should have but are missing Hamza, to be included in the search results. Khawas was developed to open external data, i.e. users are able to open their personal corpora on Khawas. This tool garnered 6 points out of 7 in the benchmark evaluation (Table 1).

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[9] The ALC may be accessed here: http://www.arabiclearnercorpus.com

Figure 1: Khawas Shows Arabic words in a right-to-left order

Evaluation criteria	Applicability
1. Reading Arabic UTF-8 files	Yes
2. Reading Arabic Unicode files	No
3. Displaying Arabic diacritics	Yes
4. Displaying Arabic text in a right-to-left direction	Yes
5. Normalising diacritics	Yes
6. Normalising Hamza	Yes
7. Enabling Arabic personal corpus	Yes
Score	6/7

Table 1: Benchmark score of the Khawas tool

aConCorde (Roberts et al., 2006)

aConCorde was able to read Arabic texts in both UTF-8 and Unicode formats. It also correctly shows Arabic diacritics as well as words in a right-to-left direction (Figure 2). However, diacritics and Hamza cannot be normalised, so the search results will literally match the query word. aConCorde enables users to open their personal corpora. It achieved 5 points in this evaluation (Table 2).
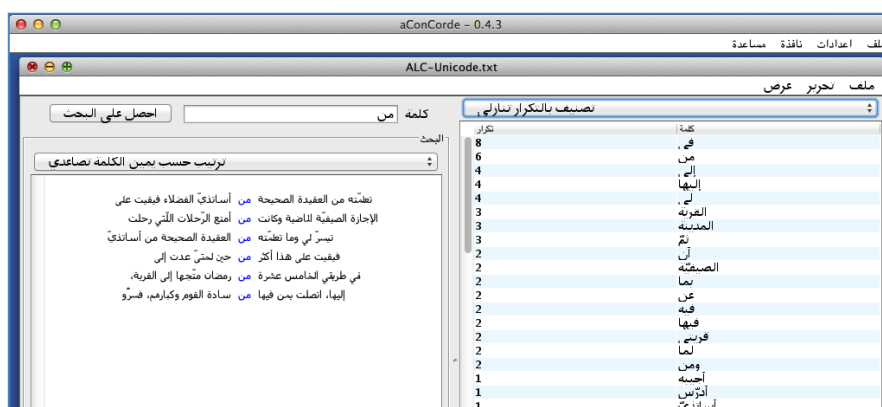

Figure 2: Frequency and concordances in aConCorde

Evaluation criteria	Applicability
1. Reading Arabic UTF-8 files	Yes
2. Reading Arabic Unicode files	Yes
3. Displaying Arabic diacritics	Yes
4. Displaying Arabic text in a right-to-left direction	Yes
5. Normalising diacritics	No
6. Normalising Hamza	No
7. Enabling Arabic personal corpus	Yes
Score	5/7

Table 2: Benchmark score of the aConCorde tool

AntConc (Anthony, 2014)

Although AntConc reads Arabic texts in UTF-8 and Unicode formats, it behaves unexpectedly when the user clicks on any of the text words. Diacritics were displayed within the texts; however, AntConc does not normalise diacritics or Hamza. Additionally, columns in the concordances screen were shown in the opposite direction, as the right side should be the left and vice versa (Figure 3). Users are able to open their corpora on this tool. AntConc was awarded four of seven points in this benchmark evaluation (Table 3).
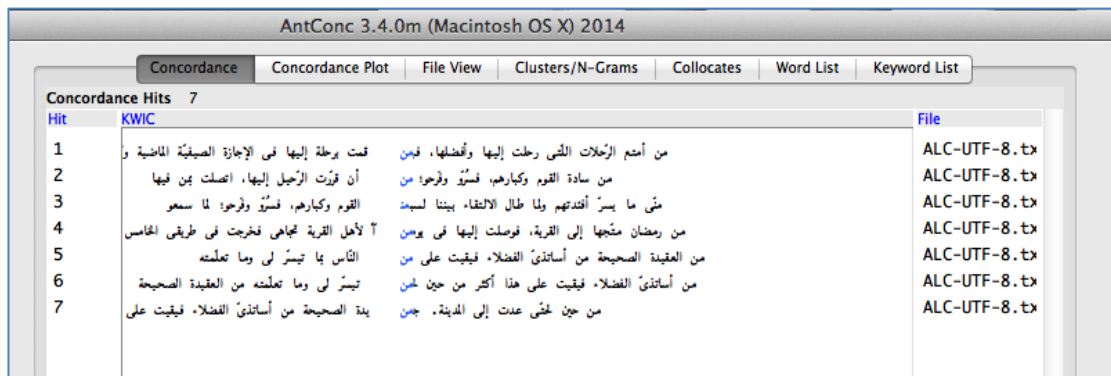
Figure 3: Columns of Arabic concordances in AntConc were shown in the opposite direction

Evaluation criteria	Applicability
1. Reading Arabic UTF-8 files	Yes
2. Reading Arabic Unicode files	Yes
3. Displaying Arabic diacritics	Yes
4. Displaying Arabic text in a right-to-left direction	No
5. Normalising diacritics	No
6. Normalising Hamza	No
7. Enabling Arabic personal corpus	Yes
Score	4/7

Table 3: Benchmark score of the AntConc tool

WordSmith Tools (Scott, 2012)

WordSmith Tools were able to read Arabic texts in both UTF-8 and Unicode formats, and they also display Arabic text correctly in the right-to-left direction. However, WordSmith Tools did not put the diacritics in their correct positions (Figure 4). Instead, they are put on small circles, e.g. ٌ, ٌ, ٌ or ٌ. Diacritics and Hamza were not normalised in this tool, so similar words with differences in diacritics and/or Hamza will not be retrieved in the results. Users can open their corpora files on these tools. The evaluation resulted in 4 out of 7 points for WordSmith Tools (Table 4).
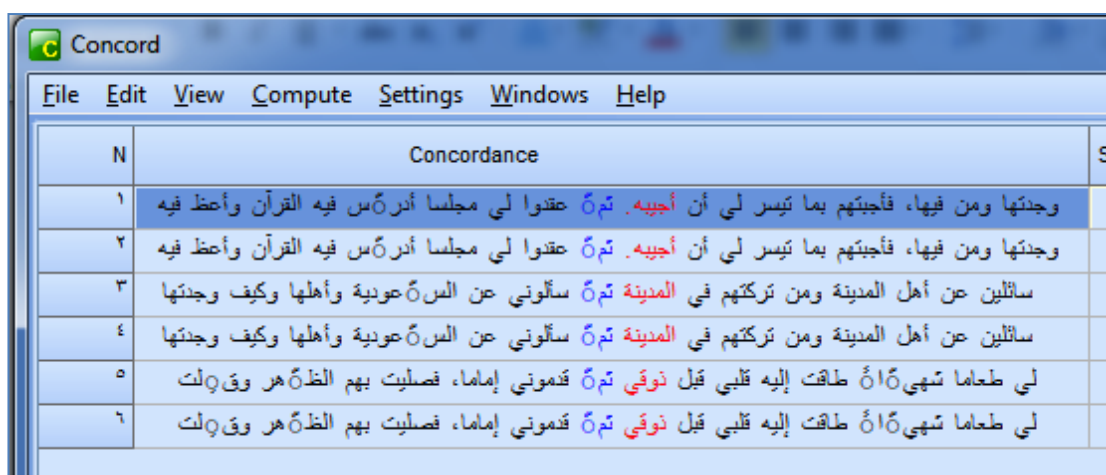

Figure 4: Diacritics do not appear in their correct positions in WordSmith Tools

Evaluation criteria	Applicability
1. Reading Arabic UTF-8 files	Yes
2. Reading Arabic Unicode files	Yes
3. Displaying Arabic diacritics	No
4. Displaying Arabic text in a right-to-left direction	Yes
5. Normalising diacritics	No
6. Normalising Hamza	No
7. Enabling Arabic personal corpus	Yes
Score	4/7

Table 4: Benchmark score of the WordSmith Tools

Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al., 2004)

The Sketch Engine correctly read Arabic texts in both UTF-8 and Unicode formats, and displayed Arabic texts in the proper right-to-left direction. Diacritics and Hamza were normalised when using the built-in Arabic Segmenter and Tagger (Figure 5). Sketch Engine provides users with a large number of corpora in many languages, and also accepts personal corpora via upload in several file formats.

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When it came to the criteria of this evaluation, Sketch Engine obtained 7 out of 7 possible points (Table 5).

Figure 5: Sketch Engine removed the diacritics when normalising the texts

Evaluation criteria	Applicability
1. Reading Arabic UTF-8 files	Yes
2. Reading Arabic Unicode files	Yes
3. Displaying Arabic diacritics	Yes
4. Displaying Arabic text in a right-to-left direction	Yes
5. Normalising diacritics	Yes
6. Normalising Hamza	Yes
7. Enabling Arabic personal corpus	Yes
Score	7/7

Table 5: Benchmark score of the Sketch Engine web tool

IntelliText Corpus Queries (Sharoff, 2011)

This web-based tool was not available when this comparison was undertaken, so there is no result for IntelliText Corpus Queries.

CQPweb at Lancaster (Hardie, 2012)

CQPweb is a general toolkit for corpus access, for computer administrators to download and install on their websites (Evert 2010); we evaluated the CQPweb website installed at Lancaster University by Andrew Hardie (Hardie 2012). The CQPweb software reads corpora from UTF-8 (not UTF-16). However, uploading own corpora is restricted to administrators and those users who have this privilege. CQPweb at Lancaster does have some built-in Arabic corpora. Searching in these corpora revealed that diacritics were shown correctly (Figure 6), and it correctly displays right-to-left text. Diacritics and Hamza cannot be not

normalised by this tool. This means the tool meets just 3 out of 7 benchmarks in terms of evaluating its suitability for searching and analysing Arabic corpora (Table 6).

Figure 6: Diacritics displayed correctly in CQPweb at Lancaster

Evaluation criteria	Applicability
1. Reading Arabic UTF-8 files	Yes
2. Reading Arabic Unicode files	No
3. Displaying Arabic diacritics	Yes
4. Displaying Arabic text in a right-to-left direction	Yes
5. Normalising diacritics	No
6. Normalising Hamza	No
7. Enabling Arabic personal corpus	No
Score	3/7

Table 6: Score of CQPweb at Lancaster

Comparing the results

Comparing all results of the evaluation reveals that the scores of the tools were varied, however only Sketch Engine fulfilled all the evaluation criteria and achieved 8 points (Table 7).

	PC-based tools				Web-based tools		
Evaluation criteria	Khawas	aConCorde	AntConc	WS Tools	Sketch Engine	IntelliText	CQPweb
1. Reading Arabic UTF-8 files	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	--	
2. Reading Arabic Unicode files		✓	✓	✓	✓	--	
3. Displaying Arabic diacritics	✓	✓	✓		✓	--	✓

	PC-based tools				Web-based tools		
Evaluation criteria	Khawas	aConCorde	AntConc	WS Tools	Sketch Engine	IntelliText	CQPweb
4. Arabic text in R-to-L direction	✓	✓		✓	✓	--	✓
5. Normalising diacritics	✓				✓	--	
6. Normalising Hamza	✓				✓	--	
7. Arabic personal corpus	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	--	
Score	6/7	5/7	4/7	4/7	7/7	--	2/7

Table 7: Comparison of the tools included in this evaluation

The tools with the highest scores paid more attention to the features of Arabic such as diacritics and Hamza.

Khawas and aConCorde are PC-based software while Sketch Engine is a web-based tool. While there is no difference in terms of the basis of the tools (PC or web) with regard to handling Arabic language, taking Arabic features into consideration when developing these tools may help to make them more appropriate for Arabic corpora.

Conclusion

Seven tools for searching and analysing Arabic corpora were covered and evaluated against seven criteria. The results showed that Sketch Engine met all the evaluation criteria and achieved the highest scores. The paper highlighted the need to improve the current tools, as well as create new tools more appropriate for use with Arabic corpora, that provide more functions compatible with features of the Arabic language, such as diacritics and Hamza. It revealed also that in principle there are no significant technical differences between PC-based and Web-based tools in terms of handling Arabic language.

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Adult Arabic learning in the UK: fidelity in adversity

3

Saadia Gamir
Leeds Beckett University
s.gamir@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Abstract

This paper summarises the findings of one area in a pilot study of a current part-time EdD research into the teaching of Arabic to intermediate and advanced adult learners with a focus on developing teaching strategies aimed at improving their speaking skills and intercultural communication capabilities using film. Findings suggest that Arabic learning and teaching in non-Arabic speaking environment presents many challenges both to the learners and the teacher. However, despite the complexity of these challenges, learners show engagement with the course. To understand the psychology of this learning behaviour, the paper explores the following research questions: What are the challenges that the participants face? What motivates them despite these challenges? What combination of motivational conglomerates is driving their continued engagement with the course? Data comes from a questionnaire, classroom discussions, observations and participant reflections. A review of the different meanings of motivation in literature of L2 motivation research and teaching of Arabic as a second or foreign language literature proposes a principled understanding of Arabic learners' challenges and motivations for learning and engagement, in an attempt to bridge the gap between research and pedagogical practices in Arabic Second Language Acquisition. Some of the findings resonate with what is in the literature, while others highlight learning constraints and motivations specific to the current research context. Finally, the paper discusses the potential instructional significance of the findings for the tutor's role in maintaining motivation to maximise learning.

Keywords: Arabic teaching/learning challenges, diglossia, motivation, engagement, second language acquisition

Introduction

A broad range of Arabic acquisition issues are discussed here by exploring data-driven findings on a learning behaviour characterised by a complex set of challenges on one hand, and an unwavering sense of engagement and strong motivation for learning on the other. To understand such learning behaviour, the paper adopts Plotnik and Kouyoumdjian's (2011) four approaches of *describing*

the learning challenges and *explaining* their nature to highlight the reasons why they constitute a challenge. These two processes have very important instructional implications as they will enable the future stages of the research to *predict* the occurrence of the challenges, then *control* the instructional means developed to eradicate them, by making adequate provision in the design of the learning tasks and teaching strategies that are aimed at maximising opportunities for success in the learning.

But first, a review of what has been researched in the literature about the challenging realities of Arabic learning is pre-requisite to any discussion of possibilities to manage them.

The position of Arabic teaching in Second Language Acquisition Literature

Initial review of the literature on second language acquisition (SLA) research shows that there is evidence of teaching Arabic as a foreign language in certain parts of the Arab world, particularly Dubai and the UAE (Khan, 2013; Hilali, 2014); however, it appears to be mostly concentrated in the United States of America through the works of researchers such as Alhawary (2003, 2009); Al-Batal (1992, 2006) and Zouhir (2013). Readings from this literature review suggest that research in Arabic applied linguistics is underrepresented in the literature of main stream SLA, perhaps "because it [Arabic] is a less commonly taught language" (Mohamed, 2013: 22 and Zouhir, 2013), even though recently it has experienced a growing popularity in the US (Al-Batal and Belnap 2006; Rabiee 2010; Ryding 2013) making it "the eighth most studied foreign language at US colleges and universities" (MLA survey, 2010:1). Such mounting demand for the language is triggered particularly by the current socio-political developments in the Middle East and America's military involvement in it, according to the Modern Language Association. What is worth highlighting here is that even though such popularity may be recent; a long-standing history connects America to the Arabic language. According to Riding (2006), Harvard University added the teaching of Arabic to "Semitic languages (Hebrew, Chaldaic, and Syriac) between 1654 and 1672" (cited in Zouhir, 2013: 6). Nonetheless, on an international scale, the studies cited here are few in number and limited in scope, which makes any contribution to SLA research highly significant to understanding the realities and challenges of Arabic as a second or foreign language (ASL/AFL). It is also hoped more understanding, through the present paper, will contribute to providing teachers of Arabic as a second or foreign language with possibilities for a better understanding of issues related to the learning and teaching of their subject.

Challenges of Arabic learning and teaching

On a 1 to 4 ascending scale of difficulty, the US Foreign Service Institute (FSI) ranked Arabic fourth, together with Chinese, Japanese and Korean (Liskin-Gasparro, 1982). According to this FSI ranking, native speakers of English were found to encounter phonological and morphological difficulties due to wide differences between Arabic and English sound systems and structures, which, according to Zouhir (2013) seemed to increase their level of anxiety. Asfoor (1982) corroborated the FSI claims when he researched the Arabic sounds that challenged most American speakers of English and found that those Arabic sounds which do not exist in the English sound system were most difficult for them to pronounce and took longer to learn. Following the same line of thought, Hamdaoui (2006; cited in Zouhir 2013: 7) argued that L2 learning skills of languages cognate to English did not seem to benefit Arabic learners, because Arabic was "a non-cognate language". Six years before Asfoor's research, however, Kara (1976) attributed such difficulties to inadequacies in the Arabic teaching process and content rather than to intrinsic complexities and differences of the language. Thirty years later, such inadequacies in Arabic instruction were justified by the fact that the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language was still in its infancy compared to "other, more commonly taught languages" (Stevens, 2006: 61). It is interesting to find out that even today, calls for ASL/AFL teaching reforms continue to be made (al-Hawary, 2013; Chalker and Wahbe, 2013; Nazzal, 2013[101]), which indicates that the challenges of Arabic teaching are complex and still present. Whether the challenges originate from the intrinsic difference of the Arabic language compared to what the learners are accustomed to, or whether they are due to the way it is being taught, research evidence from Elkhafaifi (2005) seems to suggest that there is a correlation between learners' anxiety and their perception that Arabic is one of the most difficult foreign languages to learn. It is worth mentioning here that eight years on from Stevens' observation, and despite a noticeable increase in the demand for and provision of Arabic teaching through a proliferation of language programmes in various academic institutions, and online material in the UK, USA and the Arab World, research into this field is still in its infancy compared to mainstream SLA research. However, there appears to be some consensus that difficulties at the phonological and morphological level are challenging learners of Arabic. This is demonstrated also by current research evidence, which will highlight below further challenges.

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[10] The 2014-2017 Strategy for 'Modernisation of Teaching Arabic' in Dubai & UAE schools introduced in June 2013 at the orders of His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai.

Another type of challenge documented in the literature is Arabic diglossia. This phenomenon of co-existence of standard Arabic for formal contexts and different varieties of colloquial Arabic native speakers use in informal situations for communication compound the difficulties faced by non-speakers of Arabic. These informal varieties of spoken Arabic are spread across a complex formality spectrum (see Blanc, 1960; Badawi, 1973). Table (1) below, summarises 5 levels of formality identified by Badawi:

Transliterated term	Arabic script	English meaning
Fusħa al-turath	فصحى التراث	Classical Arabic (language of the Qur'ān and literary texts)
Fusħa al-ʕasr	فصحى العصر	contemporary Fusħa
ʕammiyyat al-muthaqqafin	عامية المثقفين	vernacular of the educated
ʕammiyyat al-mutanawwiriin	عامية المتنورين	vernacular of the enlightened, literate
ʕammiyyat al-ummiyyin	عامية الأميين	vernacular of the illiterate

Table 1: Badawi's 5 levels of formality in the Arabic language

Arabic is one among 30 diglossic African-American, Asian, European and Semitic languages identified in the world (see Wikipedia.org for the whole list), offering to their users two varieties, one formal to use mainly in formal situations, and a spectrum (namely for Arabic) of less formal varieties used mainly to communicate in a variety of everyday spoken interaction contexts. For ease of description, rather than effective explanation, the typology "High/Low" first introduced by Ferguson in 1959 continues to be used by many researchers. Ferguson used this dichotomy to describe the Arabic diglossic linguistic reality in which the Arabic native speaker interactions evolve between formal and informal situations. However, this reality is too complex, as demonstrated by Blanc and Badawi (see above), to be encompassed by these two terms. Moreover, such varieties do not exist only within one country; they are in fact noticeable across countries, through accents that indicate where the speaker comes from. Also, the term "low" for example does not reflect the intellectual level of its users, as every educated person is raised to become a competent user of their local/regional vernacular. The opposite is not necessarily true, though, as the standard version of Arabic, which is every Arab country's official language, must be learned formally at school. So when we consider that the high rate of illiteracy in the Arab world, in 2008 was "70 million illiterates ; 40% of those over the age of 15" (Magin, 2010: 2) then Standard Arabic becomes the prerogative of the educated elite. This poses a challenge to the learners who, after learning Arabic in a formal non-Arabic speaking environment, such as the UK or the US, may wish to gain firsthand

experience of the Arabic culture through watching a film or visiting (when they can afford it) the Arab world and communicate with the locals. The latter, regardless of their education status, communicate in their vernaculars in everyday situations. And to make matters even more complex, given the fact that Arabs tend to use the standard form of the language (fusħa) for reading and writing and a wide spectrum of local spoken vernaculars (al-'Amiyah): literally meaning "the popular" version of Arabic to communicate among each other, it remains very hard to decide which form of Arabic to teach, despite a few attempts from textbook writers and researchers in the field (see Alosh (1992), Al-Batal (1992), Younes (2006), and Alhawary (2013: cited in Zouhir, 2013:4).

Due to this real challenge, I personally do not believe that attempting to reach a consensus over one uniform version of Arabic to teach would be either achievable or even realistic as usually the choice depends on where the Arab teacher comes from and what position he or she holds with regards to the debate, within or outside the Arab world, over which variety of Arabic to promote for teaching. Zouhir (2008) argues that advocates of Standard Arabic associate it with pan-Arab nationalism, whereas supporters of colloquial Arabic view it as the symbol of national identity. Here again the debate presents a wide range of views going from accepting the coexistence of the two varieties, in other words diglossia, on one end of the spectrum, to the purist and protectionist position which views both diglossia and bilingualism as "the inveterate enemies of literary Arabic" which not only "try to annihilate it" but "create a weak, hesitant, indecisive anxious individual, with limited horizons" (Ibrahim Kayid Mahmoud, 2002: 108). Interestingly enough, such purist positioning is not unique to Standard Arabic advocates, as it parallels views in Europe on English; the chosen global language (see Jürgen Trabant (2003) on European views on the merits of a monolingual European society).

Attached to the above challenges faced by both learners and teachers, there is a further one faced particularly by the teachers. It is the lack of textbooks that cater adequately for the needs of the learners. In fact, those books in the market are either found "to be not well organized in material presentation" or have been "predetermined" (Zouhir, 2013: 11) for the teachers by others who are not necessarily aware of their students' particular needs. This challenge is sometimes compounded by limited numbers of qualified teachers of Arabic, limited classroom contact time and limited financial resources leaving unqualified teacher assistants and part-time teachers of Arabic struggling with large mixed-ability classes of learners (Zouhir, 2013). This last fact resonates with a similar situation

in the part-time Arabic programme where the current research is based. In this situation, whether the teachers are language specialists or not, limited budgets and overcrowded mixed ability classes, seen once a week for two hours, are not recipe ingredients for a successful learning experience for many learners. Because of various combinations of such conditions, those classes usually overcrowded at the start of the academic year, tend to shrink dramatically by Christmas. A small number of students tend to finish the year and the whole programme, due perhaps to some kind of motivation. This phenomenon has been the subject of various psychological and SLA studies, some of which will be reviewed in the following sections. But to start with, what is motivation?

Defining motivation

The socio-psychological phenomenon that is 'Motivation' may be hard to define because it can only be visible through the various factors that cause it to manifest itself. Psychologists, Gardner & Lambert (1972) being the earliest, have identified two types of motivation: intrinsic or extrinsic, according to the nature of factors driving it. An intrinsic motivation underpins a desire to perform and accomplish an activity for sheer personal reward, so one would engage in an activity or a task because it is enjoyable, interesting, and fun or exciting (Plotnik & Kouyoumjian, 2011, cited in Cherry, no date). On the other hand, an extrinsic motivation comes from outside the individual performing the activity, which may not necessarily be enjoyable, but accomplishing it can lead to satisfaction, usually represented by money or a grade in the case of students (Brainbridge, 2014), or research and professional qualification in the case of some of the participants in the present research.

Dörnyei (no date) summarises the difficulty of defining motivation in the following statement: "I don't know what motivation is but it definitely keeps me going." In the teaching/learning context for instance, the term is commonly used to explain what underpins perseverance, success or failure. According to L2 motivation researchers, such as Dörnyei (2009), the sources of motivation may reside within the learner and his/her personal "cognitive, motivational... emotional factors" and surrounding social circumstances; the overall "learning situational factors", specific "task-related factors", or "other [surrounding] factors" that may not be directly related to the learning task or the learner themselves. But before being able to tease out this constellation of motivational factors that give a broad picture of what shapes the motivated "L2 self", L2 motivation research went through various phases, reviewed below, during which it attempted to capture the essence of motivation.

Five Decades of L2 motivation research: 3 Phases

A brief review of these phases will provide a theoretical background for the learning challenges and motives identified in the present research. The social psychologist period was led by Robert Gardner with his students and associates in Canada, for three decades (1959-1990), Dörnyei's (2005) explanation of Gardner's theory of L2 motivation is summarised in the following terms: Living in a society split ethnographically and linguistically, Gardner argued that the key factor in bringing together the francophone and Anglophone communities might reside in the interest to learn the other community's language. Such interest would be driven by the learner's 'language attitudes', i.e. perceptions of L2, its speakers and the 'socio-cultural and pragmatic benefits/values' attached to target language acquisition. Such positive language attitudes that aim for an ethnoliguistic identification with the target language community are what guaranties L2 language learning success. The proponents of this theory also argued that the desire to communicate with the L2 community or even become part of it, i.e. have an integrative motivation for it, gives L2 motivation an interpersonal/affective dimension, when it is 'reflecting a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture of the other group (Gardner and Lambert, 1972:12). The discussion of the findings, below, will show how such motives and attitudes to L2 learning have emerged in this research.

Despite the significant contribution of the Canadian social psychological approach to explaining L2 motivation, by the early 1990's sounds of dissatisfaction began to emerge outside Canada, arguing that there was more to motivation than what Gardner's theory proposed. This dissatisfaction started what is known as the cognitive-situated period where L2 motivation research moved from the ethno sociological approach, focusing solely on the psychology of interaction between L2 learner and the target community, to the educational approach situated in the L2 learning classroom environment and its interactional triangle; the teacher, the curriculum and the learner group. Although this approach may provide a useful opportunity to explore the motives of classroom learning, it does not appear to take into account the motives of learning that may take place outside the classroom; i.e. with the broader target language community, which may be similar to the environment within which the present research participants are evolving. Thus, in an ironic way, the cognitive-situated period appears to expose itself to the same criticism it directed to its predecessor: L2 learning motivation transcends the boundaries of the L2 classroom interaction triangle: the teacher, the curriculum and the learner group.

The global geo-political, technological and linguistic changes that accompanied the new millennium moved the L2 motivation research towards a process-oriented period. This paradigm shift draws on a number of psychology research theories on self and identity (e.g. by Dörnyei, 2005; Noels, 2003; Norton, 2001; Ushioda, 2001). In this perspective L2 motivation focused on the learner self and as such was presented as a dynamic phenomenon of continuous fluctuation in strength and growth (Dörnyei, 2000, 2001). Looked at from this perspective, motivation is a reflection of the learner's self constantly changing and growing psychologically, socially and professionally to reach his perception of his "ideal L2 self" (Dörnyei, 2009), and this is what the findings seem to suggest when describing both the challenges and motives of the research participants.

The second part of this paper presents and situates, within the context of SLA theory, current research evidence of learning challenges and sources of what motivates learners to remain engaged with the course despite these challenges.

Methodology

The paper draws on a set of oral and written data collected from a mixed ability group of 10 adult learners of Arabic (see profile in table 2, below), all participating in a pilot study over a period of 23 weeks during the 26-week long academic year of 2013-14. The collected data are the outcome of a mixed method approach that consisted of a questionnaire given at the start of the academic year, classroom discussions and activities, students' answers of written and oral assessment tasks, tutor observations and participants' reflections (one given at the end of the first 10 weeks and the second one at the end of the second 10 weeks). The analysis and interpretation of the selected data was completed by searching for regularities, patterns and topics. Such topics were grouped into coding categories that emerged from the participants' responses and which highlight their learning challenges and sources of motivation that underpin their engagement.

Table 2, below, gives an abbreviated profile of the participants:

Code name	Nationality	Age Group	Proficiency level	Academic/Professional Status
'Robert'	English	35-45	B1 (Upper Intermediate)	French Language &History University teacher
'Abu Andrew'	English	55-65	B minus (Lower intermediate)	Retired EFL teacher

Code name	Nationality	Age Group	Proficiency level	Academic/Professional Status
'17'	British of Pakistani origin	25-35	B minus (Lower intermediate)	Medical Doctor
'Wolfgang'	English	70+	B2 (Year 1) Advanced	Retired reader in Applied Mathematics & active consultant at 3 universities and a major research company
'Nabil'	English	55-65	C1 (Proficient)	Professor of English literature
'EM 24'	Irish	Not ticked	B minus (Lower intermediate)	Retired professional (Scientist: Research & Development) & Academic in business management & IT
'8'	English	55-65	B2 (Year 1) Advanced	Medical doctor – hasn't received any formal Arabic tuition since 2005
'Cornwall'	English	55-65	B2 (Year 3) Advanced	Civil servant – Educated to A Level only
'07Sargon1113'	Scottish	70+	B1 (Upper Intermediate)	Freelance tutor/ translator
'Claudia 23'	Polish	45-55	B1 (Upper Intermediate)	Interpreter

Table 2: The Arabic Learner Group Profile

Arabic learning challenges

The current research data on the participants' Arabic learning challenges show that these are experienced in complex combinations by each participant at different stages of their learning experience, and while most of them echo research findings identified in the literature, others appear to be specific to the present learning context. Their complexity not only arises from the nature of the language itself, but it is also compounded by the socio-professional circumstances and ASL experiences of the learners who struggle to fit their learning within and around their own personal lives and professional commitments. The findings suggest that these challenges can be language-related, family-related or profession-related, or learning facilities-related. The following analysis of quotes from participants' responses demonstrates this complexity:

'Robert', a French language and history university teacher, faces challenges that are related to his target language (Arabic); target culture (bilingualism and diglossia) and his professional circumstances. Thus, he struggles with "retaining new vocabulary" mainly because of the "differences between MSA and the forms of Arabic with which [he comes] into contact when in Algeria and Morocco". Moreover, he finds "it difficult to navigate between French and Arabic when in North Africa". Finally, while he "can make the time to keep [his] Arabic language skills where they are" he finds it difficult "to find the extra time needed to make

substantial progress" because his "job is very time-consuming, in particular during the academic year, which is also when [the Arabic classes] are naturally."

'Abu Andrew', a retired EFL teacher, faces difficulty in speaking MSA, as his former professional life exposed him to the Egyptian and Omani vernaculars, which he picked up while working overseas and continues using when he travels back there. Because of his unfamiliarity with MSA and struggle with diglossia, his "reading of Arabic and use of Arabic dictionaries is still very slow, which makes reading a long passage like some of the ones we have studied a daunting prospect. Encountering too much new vocabulary has the same effect" as this can make him "… easily lose the thread of a long listening passage."

'17', a medical doctor, is fairly fluent but struggles with the grammar, which he finds very complex. His struggle is made worse by his many absences, as he is almost always on call.

'Wolfgang', a retired academic and professional, finds non-vocalised text affects his ability to process [script]…at a reasonable speed" which in turn results into his "lack of fluency". It is not very clear whether only the non-vocalised script is the cause of this learner's difficulties as he admits he also suffers from dyslexia. This participant struggles particularly with "listening exercises [that] had too much new vocabulary and were rather too long for assimilation of copious unfamiliar words." This raises a very important issue that is related to the difficulty of designing listening tasks that are adequate to the learners' abilities, especially because at the B1 level the participants are expected to listen to authentic audio material.

'Nabil', another academic and professional, says that his "main problem … has been, and continues to be, the distance of Arabic from the other languages which I know. When I learnt French and Latin at school I was aware of the semantic and etymological links between English and these foreign languages, but with Arabic there are virtually no such links, so every element of vocabulary is strange." Like 'Wolfgang', he also finds "unvoiced texts make pronunciation difficult, and therefore it is harder to remember words, because ideally one learns a word as a visual shape and a sound simultaneously." Another frustration he faces is "the lack of a good dictionary". He describes such frustration in the following terms: "I find that I spend a lot of time trying to find words in the dictionary and often fail, whereas I cannot remember ever being defeated when looking up words in

French or Latin." Finally, like for the other active academics and professionals in the group, lack of time to learn is an additional challenge.

'EM24', a retired science researcher, faces challenges on three fronts: he has limited vocabulary, and his knowledge and understanding of the Arabic grammar is "insufficient". This makes him very insecure in speaking the language. It is, however not clear whether his difficulties are not in fact made acute because he is learning two other languages (French and Russian) in parallel, which gives him very little time to focus on learning Arabic. My speculation is based on the learner's repeated promises to spend more time over the summer holidays to try and "plug those holes" in his learning of Arabic, which he blames on the other language commitments during term time.

'8', another medical doctor identifies a "shaky grammar" as one of her major challenges; the other one being difficulty to remember vocabulary. In addition to her busy professional schedule, this participant had to face other very difficult personal problems this year, as she had to take time out of her learning on several occasions to look after her ailing mother who unfortunately passed away at the end of the academic year. These challenges and distractions led to a sense of frustration she expressed in these terms: "I never spend enough time to master the new vocabulary and grammar or do some revision before the next lesson brings more new material."

'Cornwall', a civil servant, struggles with the grammar terminology (perhaps because, as she admits it herself, she was "educated up to A-level only"). She also complains about forgetting vocabulary most probably because, as she says, she has" not been able to consolidate on vocabulary or grammar this year because I have not been able to allocate time to do this." This inability to allocate "time for independent learning" is due to her full time work. She usually commutes from London, where she works, to attend her evening Arabic class.

'07 Sargon 1113', a retired teacher and freelance tutor/translator, identifies "struggling with the multiplicity of Arabic grammar terminology", but this affects her targets of "Memorising vocabulary, listening skills, speaking fluently". Because of the grammatical challenges, these targets become themselves challenges.

'Claudia 23', an interpreter finds"speaking", especially "in MSA", to be her major challenge. However, because like 'Cornwall' she is a commuting professional, she had to miss many lessons of the already limited learning time (26 weeks in total).

Being an interpreter she is bound to be called at any time for an interpreting assignment, which reduces her chances of completing the course without any gaps. Also, her Arabic learning history is informal like, 'Abu Andrew's. She learned Arabic through "interacting with native speakers, mostly Egyptians and listening to popular Egyptian music".

Table 3, below, summarises the challenges the students themselves identified in their questionnaire responses and reflections as well as those challenges emerging from classroom observations, discussions and online communications with individual participants.

Challenge category	Challenge type
Language-Related	Dealing with Bilingualism (listening and understanding)
	Coping with Diglossia (speaking and comprehending)
	Struggling with complex grammar terminology
	Struggling with the range and volume of new vocabulary
	Reading and comprehending unvoiced script
Family-Related	Coping with ailing relatives
	Coping with various domestic emergencies
	Coping with bereavement
	Prioritising learning or pre-arranged family commitments, such as trips
Profession-Related	Lack or insufficiency of time for independent learning
	Frequent absences because of professional commitments
Learning Resources	Lack of adequate dictionaries
	Lack of appropriate textbooks that answer the needs of the learners
Other Learning Difficulties	Dyslexia
	Vision difficulties (age-related in the case of this group)
	Hearing difficulties (age-related in the case of this group)

Table 3: Arabic Learning Challenges

Arabic learning motivational conglomerates

To cope with the above challenges, the participants display firm engagement with their Arabic course. This learning behaviour, the findings suggest, is activated by a number of factors each exerting a certain degree of influence on the learner and creating "a number of different motivational contingencies, resulting in dynamic motivational processes underlying task completion" (Dörnyei, 2002, cited in 2009:1). Some of these factors are learner-specific, others are learning context specific or task-related, while others fall outside the boundaries of these.

The responses collected from the second reflection in which they were asked to list the different factors that motivate their engagement[11] show that rather than being either intrinsically or extrinsically motivated to learn Arabic, the participants' engagement is a result of a complex and dynamic set of motivational factors.

'Robert' is interested in Algerian culture and wants to "learn MSA for academic and research purposes". His desire to learn MSA is also driven by reasons to interact with the locals in informal situations because he says he wants to "speak MSA in formal and informal situations". His engagement in the course is activated by additional motivational factors. Thus, describing what he likes about the tasks he says it is "good to have focussed debates based on texts / films etc." He also likes working in a group because he says: "Seeing how other people make progress is always helpful and inspiring. "He also finds that the tutor "Creates a learning environment conducive to speaking in front of the group." She "does not over-correct errors, while ensuring everyone has understood what has been said by other students" and "[is]...always encouraging us to improve."

'Wolfgang's engagement is driven by his desire to improve "fluency of speaking, writing and understanding in detail of text and speech.", which he sees as a tool to facilitate his "cooperation with Arab research community" and to use in his "holiday travel" to the Arab World. The reward for the latter motive can be argued to be both intrinsic, providing personal satisfaction when achieving communication and enjoying contact with the locals as well as extrinsic if it leads to closing deals during such cooperation. As an academic who "work[s] in natural language processing by computer" he finds the role of the tutor, whom he describes as "Native Arabic speaker with good grasp of fine grammatical points" very helpful in giving "suitably disconcerting counterexamples" of Arabic "to expose the wildness of ... claims" "of generality on evidence" made by "the international research community" he works with. Based on his reflections, the course is not only providing him opportunities to improve his language skills, it is also help him correct misconceptions made about the language.

'07Sargon1113' wants to learn Arabic for "professional reasons". She is "a languages tutor and translator" who hopes "to improve [her] literary translating skills" because she belongs "to the Banipal Book Club, a magazine for Arab

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[11] Participants were asked to reflect on the contribution of: What they hope to achieve, the learning and assessment tasks they do, the learning group they work with, the role of the tutor and any other reason that may contribute to their motivation and engagement.

Literature." She is learning Arabic because she "would like to be able to read a novel or watch a film and understand 80% instead of 20% of the text/dialogue". She enjoys "Classwork, homework, listening and working together" and also draws a lot of motivation from the tutor who she says "encourages us to speak Arabic in class; helps us with listening practice; enthuses us when we get discouraged; has sound knowledge of grammar; extends our vocabulary".

'Abu Andrew' is driven by a different motivation. He says "I am not studying Arabic with the aim of achieving any formal qualification, but rather to maintain and hopefully improve on the basic grasp I acquired when I lived in the Arab world... 26 years ago". He continues: "I am more interested in informal /conversational language than formal, grammatical language". Having said this, he has found other reasons in the classroom context that have enhanced his engagement. He says: "I have found a lot of the tasks we have done in class this year stimulating, well thought out and useful", and even though he "sometimes find[s] that the tone of the class becomes quite intellectual and academic ", he feels he is learning within a group that is "nevertheless ... fairly cohesive ... and is a manageable size." He finds "the tutor has done a great job in catering to everyone's needs.", and "is knowledgeable and authoritative about the subject and explains points clearly as they arise." Thanks to all these factors he feels his "improving grasp of the written language is opening up a new approach to learning and has rekindled my interest to some extent."

'17' did not complete either of the two reflection tasks due to his workload, but in his initial questionnaire he lists three personal motives, which are: "Travelling to Arabic countries, love of the culture, and understanding the Qur'an". Despite his frequent absences, he managed to attend consecutively the last 3 classes of the academic year.

'Nabil', like the other participants, is also driven by a number of motives that justify his engagement with the course. He says his "previous contact with the Middle East through holidays" resulted into his desire of "getting closer contact with the culture through knowledge of the language", and also he enjoys the "challenge of hearing a non-European language". He aims to achieve "A comfortable reading knowledge of the language, with some ability to speak and to understand the spoken language." Although he finds "the assessments challenging and even terrifying", he feels they are "essential in making [him] focus on learning." Moreover, he says: "I value the opportunity to choose my own topics for the writing and speaking." Students are given the opportunity to choose

the topics for their assessment tasks from their subjects of interest. On the role of the tutor in motivating and maintaining his engagement he says: "My current tutor is the best tutor I have had at Leeds Metropolitan (I have had seven over the years in different languages). The tutor's role is crucial in setting interesting tasks which are challenging but also rewarding, and in creating an environment in which each individual is stretched but not exposed uncomfortably. Over the years in different language classes I have learned a lot about teaching techniques from the student's point of view, and this has significantly changed my own practice as a tutor." But behind all these motivational factors one driving force underlying his engagement is the fact that as he puts it: "I don't like giving up once I have committed myself to something."

Apart from "doing something intellectually challenging" like learning Arabic so that he can "stay mentally agile during retirement", 'EM24' says his main purpose in joining the course is "to become sufficiently competent in Arabic, in order to help [him] to do business there." By "there" he means the UAE. The other motivating factor that keeps him engaged in the course is the tutor's role, which he sees as "organiser and facilitator. The former is to organize class tasks, and to integrate them for different levels of students. .Re. facilitator – this is to make easy difficult points of meaning for the students, (e.g. to translate complex sentences), and also complicated issues of grammar."

'8' says what activated her desire to learn Arabic was an "interest in the medieval Islamic world" and while reading "passages of printed editions of medieval sources, [she] tackled articles in Arabic". Such interest led her to "speak and write on the history of Islamic Spain." However, she says: "Although I am an amateur, I have been invited to speak on my work and publish it." By joining the course, she hopes to increase her "fluency in reading and understanding Arabic and begin to make [herself] understood when speaking." The driving force behind her engagement with the course is the hope to reach the standard of her peers in the field of the History of Islamic Spain who "are professionals, many of whom studied Arabic to degree level." Reaching this goal, she argues, will make her "feel less of an interloper." Despite the many distractions she has had this year, she says "working in groups has been helpful, especially if someone else in the group already knows part of the answer/vocabulary etc." Perhaps what kept the momentum of her engagement was "the tutor's enthusiasm and availability" for individual contacts "in spite of the grumbles of her mainly elderly students that we will never master Arabic" and "the amount of written and recorded learning

material that we have received", which she "appreciate[s] it very much"and admits "must be very time consuming".

'Cornwall's motivation stems from an "interest in languages", a desire "to have a hobby outside work" and the fact that her "children's father is Egyptian". For these reasons she "would like to achieve greater fluency in Arabic and more of a natural response without thinking too much." She feels a sense of achievement, which boosts her motivation "when [she] can understand phrases and sentences from news items, films or internet articles." Although she feels less academic than some members of the group, she finds the latter useful to keep her going; she says: "The group is great and we support and encourage each other. Sometimes if someone is having a bad day then others will step in to contribute, and that takes some of the pressure off. Everybody welcomes and respects the others' contributions. It is great that we do out of class activities too (like the film group)." She gets similar support from the tutor whom she finds good at "Letting people go their own pace, encouraging without putting pressure on. Respecting different interests and strengths – using a variety of subject matter and mediums -these all help to make the classes an enjoyable experience." Finally, the reason for her engagement with the course, despite her work and travelling constraints , is that "it is just so different to work, and makes me feel I am doing something positive and worthwhile– without it I would just sleep in front of the television on Thursdays."

Like 'Cornwall', 'Claudia 23's desire to learn Arabic is a "general interest in languages" and a "desire to learn a non-European language". Unfortunately, she has not been able to complete her reflections due to her work commitments which kept her away from her classes on numerous occasions.

Table 4, below summarises the motivational conglomerates that shape the engagement of these Arabic learners:

Motivation Category	Motivational factors
Learner-specific factors	Cognitive stimulation and development
	Communicative skills development
	Professional development
	Inter-cultural communication development
	Business cooperation opportunities development
Learning-context factors	Group interaction
	Supportive and cohesive learning group
	Supportive, encouraging and facilitating role of tutor
	Sound tutor subject knowledge

Motivation Category	Motivational factors
Task-related factors	Stimulating communicative learning tasks
	Varied class work
	Opportunities for independent learning through homework
	Ability to choose own content for assessment tasks
Additional factors	Sheer personal determination to complete a task
	Intellectual challenge for mental agility
	A means to facilitate communication for the completion of cooperation project in the target environment
	Having a stimulating hobby
	Gaining a sense of achievement

Table 4: Learning Arabic Motivational Conglomerates

The above findings show that the participants' interest in learning Arabic is triggered by academic, cultural, social, psychological, and recreational factors. These operate as bundles of motivational conglomerates, rather than single strands of motives, which may explain why the many challenges they encounter do not seem to dampen their engagement.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to describe and explain the Arabic learners' challenges as well as identify the motivations underlying their engagement. Evidence from the pilot study has revealed a complex array of language-related, learner-specific and extra-curricular challenges that these learners encounter, but seem to negotiate thanks to a complex set of motivational factors that strengthen their determination, such as the cooperative and supportive atmosphere within their learning group and the subject knowledge and facilitating role of the tutor. Some learning and teaching challenges in the findings resonate with data already available in the ASL/AFL researches reviewed in this paper, while others are specific to the context of the current research.

The questionnaire, classroom discussions, observations and reflections have helped explain how motivational conglomerates enable the learners to control the impact of the challenges on their learning experience. Such findings could be useful in raising tutors' awareness to predict the occurrences of some challenges, anticipate the contexts in which these may occur and how they may hinder progress in participants' learning. While such awareness may not enable tutors to control all the challenges, the awareness gained from the pilot stage of the current study could be useful for future instructional and research design, but this will be the subject of another paper. To conclude, three key features describe the atmosphere in which the learning of Arabic evolves, based on the evidence

collected from the pilot study. These are: *awareness* of the challenges, *motivation* for improvement, and *engagement* with the learning experience despite the challenges; hence the title fidelity in adversity.

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Languages in Context in the UK: broadening the range and changing the brief

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Sharon Handley
Manchester Metropolitan University
s.handley@mmu.ac.uk

Introduction

The sharp decline in language take-up in schools and universities in the UK over the last two decades has become a matter for concern for a variety of reasons and from a range of perspectives. There have been a number of initiatives and interventions to foster language learning in schools, including the creation of a nation-wide portfolio of outreach activities by Routes into Languages.[12] Although the work of Routes into Languages has demonstrated that activities and events can have a positive impact on student attitudes towards languages,[13] the UK is still witnessing an unprecedented decline in languages uptake in schools, particularly at 'A' level. The purpose of this paper is to explore some of the reasons for this decline and evaluate how the introduction of a wider range of languages, including some community languages, could form part of the solution.

The Languages Conundrum

There are several paradoxes in relation to Language Policy and Practice in the UK today. We live in a multicultural country, with many multilingual communities, yet the languages spoken by those communities are not widely taught in mainstream

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[12] Background on the Routes into Languages initiative can be found at:
http://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/index.html.

[13] Angela Gallaher Brett (2012). *Routes into Languages first-year undergraduate survey in England and Wales: students' prior engagement with languages outreach and enrichment activities.*
https://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/sites/default/files/1st_year_ug_survey_2011_report_england_and_wales_final.pdf

schools[14] or universities, and many pupils leave school without knowing any language other than English.[15] The potential language and cultural resource within our multilingual communities has never been harnessed, yet several of the languages spoken by these communities are also of strategic importance to the Government and the business community (Chen and Breivik 2013), and the cultural knowledge within these communities could enrich the learning experience of many pupils. We are part of the European Union which has for some time promoted multilingualism as a key objective,[16] yet our Language Policy is based on the premise that mono-lingualism is the norm with the result that this is becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy, particularly in light of the myth that everyone speaks English.

Language policy still operates on the assumption that everyone has a first language and that people will acquire a second language (a foreign language); the focus is on European languages, with opportunities to learn a slightly broader range of languages in higher education. This is no longer necessarily the appropriate paradigm, with many multilingual communities living within the UK and a range of non-European languages rapidly increasing in global importance. The decline in the number of students in the UK studying a language has been widely documented both within the schools sector (Dearing and King 2006; Coleman, Galaszi and Astruc 2007; Holmes 2014) and in higher education (Marshall 2003; Footitt 2003; McPake, Sachdev et al. 2008, Worton 2009; Board 2014; Holmes 2014; Tinsley & Board 2014). Furthermore, the lack of availability of community languages[17] in higher education, both as a degree subject and as part of teacher

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[14] There are no strong indications that lesser taught languages are gaining ground in the school system. However, the study of Chinese is increasing slowly from a small base, with three per cent of primary schools offering pupils the opportunity to learn Chinese, six per cent of state secondary schools and ten per cent of independent schools offering the language as a curriculum subject. However, in common with other lesser taught languages, its sustainability is not assured. (Holmes 2014: 116).

[15] In 2012, the European Commission carried out the first European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC) with fourteen member states taking part. The survey collected information about the foreign language proficiency of a representative sample of 54,000 European pupils at age 17. England was bottom of the table with only 9% of pupils achieving the level of an Independent User, defined as the ability to deal with straight forward, familiar matters (B1 or above). (Holmes, 2014: 16).

[16] The European Commission stipulates that: 'Every European citizen should have meaningful communicative competence in at least two other languages in addition to his or her mother tongue' (*Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: an Action Plan 2004 - 2006* section 1.1) and that 'the range on offer should include the smaller European languages as well as all the larger ones, regional, minority and migrant languages as well as those with 'national' status, and the languages of our major trading partners throughout the world' (1.6)
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52003DC0449.

[17] We are using a broad definition of community languages as 'languages in use in a society, other than the dominant, official or national language' (McPake, Sachdev et al. 2008: 6). The term community language

education programmes, has been identified as a problem (McPake, Sachdev et al. 2008; McPake 2007; Tinsley & Board 2014; OFSTED 2008).

League tables

The introduction of league tables as a strategy to drive up standards in schools has, paradoxically, worsened the quality of language education for many pupils because some schools, mainly from the state maintained sector, have opted to close languages options in favour of 'less difficult' subjects, as measured by higher grade results at GCSE and A level, in order to improve their league table position. This is depriving pupils in those schools of the advantages associated with a languages education. The Interim Findings of a recent British Academy report outlined the situation as follows:

> Between 2004, when languages ceased to be a statutory requirement for fourteen-year olds, and 2010, the percentage of state maintained schools retaining compulsory languages dropped from 30% to 20%. Meanwhile the Independent Sector appeared to be prioritising languages, with figures for compulsory language learning rising from 75% in 2004 to 89% by 2010 (Holmes, 2014: 12).

There are some worrying sociological implications to this trend. Roger Taylor, Chair of the Open Public Services Network (OPSN), commented on a report from the OPSN on GCSE statistics from 2013 which shows that only one in four pupils in Middlesbrough studied a language whilst, in areas such as Chelsea or Hammersmith, almost all pupils studied a language. In his words:

> These data show that children's educational opportunities are defined by where they live. We can see that the curriculum taught to children in poorer parts of England is significantly different to that taught in wealthier areas. This would be of little concern if these differences reflected the needs and choices of pupils and families. Our worry is that instead they reflect decisions made by schools and are based on calculations as to how schools can appear better on league tables by encouraging children to avoid taking on more challenging subjects. The evidence suggests that in areas where most children

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has been challenged on the basis that it allocates inferior status to these languages in relation to Modern Foreign Languages although no alternative term has been generally agreed and it is therefore used in this paper simply to differentiate between Modern Foreign and languages spoken within the wider community.

are expected to do less well in exams, the educational opportunities for all children are being restricted.[18]

This is something that should be of concern to anyone who believes in equality of opportunity and the benefits of diverse cultural and social backgrounds as drivers of innovation and change in society. The situation for community languages is even worse. OCR and AQA took the decision to close a number of community languages at GCSE and A Level due to low demand[19]; this follows the decision in 2012 to close Asset Languages, which accredited a wide range of languages. The decisions in both cases are understandable as business decisions on the basis of viability. However, this situation is at least partially an unintended consequence of the policy decision not to recognise Asset Languages alongside GCSE as part of the EBacc, and therefore as part of the school performance indicators. This has meant that community languages continue to have low language status and have not benefitted from the same structural changes in schools in response to the league table performance indicators that have driven improvements in provision and uptake in French, German and Spanish.

The marketization of higher education, originally intended to give students greater choice, has paradoxically resulted in less choice for pupils from many state schools wishing to study a language. This is because, with a few exceptions, Languages have become the preserve of independent schools and Russell Group institutions; the marketization of higher education has made cross-subsidy to support small subject areas untenable, with the result that many university languages departments around the country have closed, disenfranchising many students in terms of their access to language education.

In contrast with (or perhaps as a consequence of) the decline in languages in schools and at Honours Degree level in universities, there has been a substantial increase in the number of students taking a language on Institution Wide Language Programmes. Whilst it is positive to see the growth of languages as additional subjects in higher education, the provision does not reflect the diverse portfolio of languages spoken in the communities around the UK, nor the level of specialist expertise required by some Government agencies (Chen and Breivik 2013).

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[18] Roger Taylor, Chair of the Open Public Services Network (OPSN): https://www.thersa.org/action-and-research/arc-news/opsn-publishes-new-data-on-access-to-gcse-subjects-across-england/

[19] AQA will stop offering A Levels in Polish, Panjabi, Bengali and Modern Hebrew from 2016 http://www.aqa.org.uk/supporting-education/policy/gcse-and-a-level-changes/structure-of-new-a-levels and OCR will stop GCSE and A Level Dutch, Gujarati, Persian and Turkish http://www.ocr.org.uk/news/view/%20redeveloping-gcses-and-a-levels-for-2017/

Furthermore, the decision to close Asset Languages, however well justified as a business decision, means that there is no longer accreditation of a wider range of languages reflecting (and valuing) the diversity of the country and the needs of the Government. There is a sign that this may change in light of the Government intervention in July 2015, when Schools Minister Nick Gibb announced that the government would take action to secure the future of some community languages. Gibb stated that, 'All pupils should have the opportunity to study foreign languages as part of a core curriculum that prepares them for a life in Modern Britain. This should extend to community languages'. If followed up with action, this is a positive comment which could open up opportunities for the languages communities.[20] Indeed, since the writing of this paper, the government has worked with Pearson and AQA to secure an agreement that qualifications in some community languages will continue to be available.

Motivation in language learning

In addition to the variable opportunities for studying languages in schools, depending on postcode and financial means, there is a further factor in relation to the decline of language take-up: the fact that many students opt not to study a language even when the opportunity exists. This raises fundamental questions about attitudes towards languages. There is a considerable body of research on motivation in language learning, including the work of Ager (2001), Gardner (2005) and, more recently, Coleman, Galaszi and Astruc who concluded that, 'for many [pupils] languages are irrelevant to life and career, and are more difficult, more demanding and less enjoyable than other school subjects' (Coleman et al 2007: 245-280). Further evidence that perceived level of difficulty is one of the reasons why many pupils decide not to continue with a language at university was documented in a UK school-leavers' survey on attitudes towards languages, undertaken in 2007. This report concluded not only that 'higher education language study is envisaged to be difficult' (*Hobsons' Research* 2008: 5), but also that: 'white students appear to have the least affinity to languages, while the black or black British student group demonstrates more positive perceptions across the board' (*Hobsons' Research* 2008: 5). Similar attitudes have been recorded in various *Language Trends* reports, particularly in relation to 'A' Level.

Despite the more positive attitudes among BME groups, languages classes in universities around the UK are predominantly white, suggesting that we are not capitalizing on this positive predisposition. This could be due to the language

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[20] 'Future of community language qualifications secured', Gov.UK (https://www.gov.uk).

choice available at university, with many institutions offering only French, German and Spanish. However, universities do respond to market trends which has resulted in a growth in Mandarin in many institutions and, in response to research conducted by Routes North West on demand for Urdu, Manchester Metropolitan University introduced a Minor Route in Urdu; this is a step in the right direction. However, recent trends in the take-up of a range of community languages suggests that part of the challenge is the fact that students are not opting to study these languages even when provision is available prompting exam boards to close them[21] thus reinforcing the impression that they are less important.

Gardner observes that motivation in language learning is broadly related to two variables: 'Attitudes towards the learning situation on the one hand, which can be greatly influenced by the skill and passion of the language teacher' (2005: 6) and 'the degree of integrativeness: an individual's openness to taking on characteristics of another cultural/linguistic group' (2005, 7). In other words, the curriculum design and the competence of the teacher are important influences on motivation levels, as is the degree of integrativeness of the pupils. The latter typically relates to their curiosity about other cultures and their interest in meeting people from other cultural backgrounds. Instrumental motivation, that is the desire to learn a language for external reward such as career enhancement, is according to Gardner, a secondary variable:

> Another variable that can be implicated in second language achievement is an instrumental orientation, or more generally instrumentality. In many situations, individuals might well want to learn a language for purely practical reasons, and to the extent that this orientation is related to achievement it is reasonable to expect that the relationship would be mediated by motivation' (Gardner 2005: 8).

Over recent years, there has been a strong focus on appealing to the instrumental motivation of young people, emphasising the fact that knowledge of languages improves employment prospects, and can result in higher paid jobs. Less emphasis has been placed on the integrative motivation of young people who may be more interested in the culture of the country where a given language is spoken, and

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[21] Teresa Tinsley has observed that, 'we can see a very uneven picture, with some big increases in Russian, Polish and Portuguese, balanced by declines in Italian, Urdu and other Indian subcontinent languages' http://www.speaktothefuture.org/what-is-happening-to-languages-at-gcse/. AQA and OCR have recently closed a number of community languages due to low uptake, suggesting that there is low demand for these languages in the communities where they are spoken.

more motivated by passion for the subject than by desire for external reward. Discourse around languages and curriculum content over the past two decades has focussed on acquiring transactional language, with little opportunity to develop critical thinking around the cultural context, and the discourse around languages as a discipline has focused on employability: languages as a communication skill within a global context. Evidence from surveys of students suggests that this could be part of the problem as it fails to communicate the intrinsic value of the discipline as a lens into a cultural context.

A pupil survey, conducted by Scottish CILT in 2003 to find out what activities pupils most enjoyed in their Modern Languages education, concluded that 'Finding out about other people and their ways of life was ranked the third most popular learning activity, but in the chart of ten types of activities they do in class, it came ninth.'(Oates, 2008: 3). More recently, Routes into Languages has been tracking responses by 1st year undergraduate languages students across the country on a range of issues, including the reasons why they decided to study a language. According to the most recent survey (which is in line with the findings of previous surveys), by far the most frequent reason for studying languages was enjoyment, which was mentioned 519 times (26.2% of reasons provided). There were a further 174 references (8.8% of reasons provided) to interest. The report concludes that, 'this suggests that many of these university students are strongly intrinsically motivated and aligns with findings from previous studies which have found that students at all levels study languages because they enjoy them' (Gallagher Brett, 2012: 5). Despite the fact that there have been several major national campaigns to highlight the benefits of languages in terms of employability and career prospects, the report notes: 'Reasons related to employability and careers were referred to 269 times (13.6%)'. Although this does indicate that 'an instrumental rationale is important for many students' (Gallagher Brett, 2012:10), this instrumental rationale is less predominant than other reasons for studying languages. This conclusion is in line with the results of evaluations of Routes into Languages outreach activities, which have found that pupils responded best to sessions involving exposure to cultural activities and to native speakers of the languages (Handley, 2011:149-162). In other words, the integrative orientation is important to many young people who find other cultures interesting, and activities related to culture enjoyable. This is something that could be nurtured, placing languages at the core of the national curriculum for the way they can develop not only language skills but also intercultural understanding and an international perspective.

Working within the current policy context

The inclusion of languages in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) has had a positive impact on the uptake in certain languages at GCSE, prompting some schools to re-establish languages in the curriculum. However, the failure to recognise Asset Languages (in addition to GCSE) as part of that performance measure disenfranchised a range of community languages, resulting in further decline in those languages. Furthermore, the distribution of the improvements is uneven. The latest *Language Trends* report published by the British Council shows that entries for GCSE languages (excluding ancient languages) increased from 41% in 2012/13 to 48% in 2013/14 with a continued upward trajectory, albeit a smaller increase, to 49% in 2014/15 (Board and Tinsley, 2015: 23). However, the distribution of language provision is uneven. In Middlesbrough, for example, only 26.6% of KS4 pupils take a language GCSE in comparison with 70.8% of pupils in Barnet (Board and Tinsley, 2015: 27).

Overall, there has been a 60% decline in language entries at A Level since 1996, and recent falls in French and German have been severe whilst entries in other languages have continued to grow steadily albeit from a low base (Board and Tinsley, 2015: 30). The perceived level of difficulty of languages as a discipline, reinforced by exam results which are often lower than in other subjects,[22] are contributory factors in the high attrition rates in languages; this is partly due to the fact that, 'motivation can be badly affected by language anxiety. Poor performance in exams reduces motivation' (Gardner 2005: 8). Teacher comments in the Language Trends survey allude to this issue:

> 'Take-up post-16 is becoming a challenge, as students are reluctant to opt for a language, since it would appear to be very difficult to access the higher grades at AS and A2 level.'
> 'Marking by exam boards continues to be extremely irrational, meaning that pupils work very hard for seemingly little reward compared with other subjects.' (Board and Tinsley 2015: 100)

This suggests that there are problems either with the curriculum design (including level of difficulty) or with the teaching methodology or both. It is important to learn lessons from the experience of a decade of language learners who, in many

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[22] Free text comments by teachers allude to this issue in the *Language Trends* report:
'Students perceive a language A level as difficult and due to some of the erratic marking over the past few years they have seen bright pupils gaining As and A*s in other subjects but coming out with one grade lower in Spanish. They do not want to risk it with more and more AAA offers being made by universities.' (Board and Tinsley 2014: 96).

cases, have been required to engage with rote learning of presentations at GCSE level on topics such as healthy eating or environment for their oral exams with very little, if any, critical thinking or opportunity to explore the culture behind the language. Teachers have been required to teach to a rigid curriculum with very little room for incorporating creativity, innovation and culture into their teaching. Even though a skilled teacher can bring the curriculum to life,[23] this approach has impacted on the learning experience for a whole generation of language learners who have consequently voted with their feet. This is particularly significant in light of the evidence suggesting that many pupils are motivated to study a language by interest in the culture as well as the language.

Primary Languages

The decision to introduce Languages as a compulsory part of the National Curriculum in primary schools from Key Stage 2 is an important landmark in Government policy in relation to languages education in England. The fact that pupils are now taking a language in primary school has the potential to inspire a passion for languages and the associated cultural contexts from an early age. If well implemented, it could inspire pupils to continue to study languages throughout their school career and beyond. However, this will only happen if languages are taught in a creative and interesting way, by confident teachers and with appropriate consideration to transition arrangements between primary and secondary schools. Therein lies a challenge which could threaten the success of this policy but which could also provide an opportunity for community languages to be part of the solution.

According to the most recent *Language Trends* survey, 28% of those teachers who are currently teaching a language in primary schools have only an A Level in a language, and 31% of schools have no member of staff with a language qualification higher than a GCSE (Board and Tinsley 2015: 54). This is worrying, because it is difficult to bring a language to life with limited language competence. According to the 2013/14 survey, 41% of teachers at Key Stage 1 were 'not very' or 'not at all' confident, 27% at lower Key Stage 2 were 'not at all' or 'not very' confident and 30% at Upper Key Stage 2 teachers were 'not at all' or 'not very' confident. As one teacher noted in the free text comments:

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[23] The nature of the learning situation will influence a student's level of motivation. An interesting, devoted skilled teacher with a good command of the language, an exciting curriculum, carefully constructed lesson plans, and meaningful evaluation procedures will promote higher levels of motivation, other things being equal, than a teacher lacking in some of these attributes. (Gardner, 2005: 6).

> Most staff feel ill equipped to teach foreign languages. As a teacher, you want to feel confident that you know your subject matter well. Rusty 'O' level and only being a page or two ahead of the children is not ideal! (Board and Tinsley 2014: 41)

The reality, then, is that the first phase of the primary languages policy has been implemented, pupils are learning a language (or a number of languages) at primary school, but the teacher and pupil experience is variable and, in some cases, poor. There are problems of transition from primary to secondary school with only 28% of state schools catering for pupils continuing with the same language (Board and Tinsley 2015:70). In some schools, pupils are placed in sets based on their results in English and Maths at KS2 (Board and Tinsley 2015:70) and, in those cases where pupils do continue with the same language, their previous knowledge is so varied that it has little value. Free text comments from teachers refer to the transition problems which demotivate pupils:

> 'We have found that those who have studied a language at Key Stage 2 only have very basic knowledge, mainly lists of vocabulary, but are unable to make sentences orally. We therefore see little advantage in their previous knowledge.'
> 'To be honest, often their level is very, very low and they are often demoralised after their time at Key Stage 2.' (Board and Tinsley 2014: 59)

Free text comments from teachers in the 2014/15 record further reasons why it is impossible to guarantee continuity with the same language at secondary school:

> 'Too many feeder schools teach different languages at different stages to differing degrees, covering different topics, so we can't cater for direct continuity.'
> 'We do not find even amongst students who have taken a language before that there is enough prior knowledge to warrant setting differently. We cannot cater for all the different arrangements and so we do not really build on anything they did before' (Board and Tinsley 2015: 76).

Schools which were not offering languages at Key Stage 2 noted that, 'staff knowledge, skill level and confidence is a barrier' (Board and Tinsley 2015: 35). Schools which do offer a language also identified staff confidence and availability of appropriately qualified staff as key challenges, with some staff teaching a language after very limited CPD to equip them to do so (Board and Tinsley 2015:43). Clearly, the availability of staff with the appropriate language skills to inspire pupils is an issue. Given the complexities around guaranteeing transition

in the same language between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, there is a case for arguing that primary languages education should be more about providing a foundation for language learning, kindling enthusiasm for other cultures through innovative activities, and inspiring pupils to see language learning as an enjoyable experience.

Languages and Intercultural Understanding

Within this context, if we accept the premise that primary languages education should be more about inspiring pupils with the desire to learn a language than attaining mastery in one language, a modified approach could be preferable. Qualitative data from the *Language Trends* survey indicate that the presence of a specialist teacher, or someone with a high level of skill in the foreign language, either on the staff or working in a peripatetic capacity, boosts confidence (Board and Tinsley 2014:41). The language input therefore could derive from a native speaker student, a language assistant or peripatetic teacher shared with other schools, or a language tutor from the local community, in partnership with a qualified teacher from the school. This would open up an opportunity for offering a wider range of languages, including community languages, within schools without putting teachers with very limited competence in a language under pressure to teach that language. The community language tutors would benefit from any training opportunities within the school, and would work as part of a team with the mainstream schoolteachers. This model would also open up the opportunity for mainstream and complementary schools to work together, building partnerships between these communities.

Pupils could learn a different language each year at Key Stage 2, including modern foreign and community languages, with a focus on language in context, culture, and basic language acquisition through role-play, songs, films and other cultural activities. Several languages currently spoken as a first language by immigrant communities are important global languages of strategic importance to the UK, and this is therefore a rich but untapped resource. This approach could also develop a sense of intercultural understanding, as activities would develop an appreciation of the cultural heritages within local communities.

The value of languages in preparing pupils to be global citizens, and to succeed in a multicultural context, is recognised by teachers in comments recorded in the *Language Trends* report:

'I believe it is vitally important for languages to be taught within Key Stage 2, primary level. They are so keen to learn a new language (…) The cultural aspect is also vital as we need to build our pupils to be global citizens.'
'We believe it broadens our students' knowledge of the multicultural society in which we live and reinforces the need for respect and understanding of other cultures' (Board and Tinsley, 2015: 46).

Such an approach would address the issue of transition between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, as pupils would study two or more languages at Key Stage 2 within a cultural context; the focus would be on instilling a passion for languages and the associated cultures rather than transactional competence. All pupils could then start to specialise in an individual language at Key Stage 3. This would have the advantage of introducing pupils to a range of languages from different language families, broadening their general knowledge, rather than limiting their experience to one or two European languages.

Language Choice

Despite the growing number of people who are speakers of a language other than English at home, community languages have remained on the margins of the education system. Staffing structures within the school sector and in higher education reflect and perpetuate this. The fact that most teacher education courses within the UK still focus on French, German and Spanish despite declining interest from pupils in German and French reflects historical practice in schools and therefore perpetuates the *status quo* rather than responding to the current context. The *Language Trends* data reveal that there is a growing interest in Mandarin Chinese, although it is still primarily taught as an extra-curricular activity. 17% of State Schools and 35% of Independent Schools now provide Mandarin Chinese as an extra-curricular activity, demonstrating a growing demand for this language (Board and Tinsley 2015: 127). A recent report on British language needs for the future, using a range of criteria, identified Spanish, Arabic, French and Mandarin Chinese as the top four languages for the future, followed by German, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, Turkish and Japanese in that order (Tinsley 2014: 17). That same report identified Punjabi, Urdu and Bengali as the top three languages spoken by English schoolchildren (Tinsley 2014:18) and recent INSET days for teachers as well as GCSE events for schools organised by Routes into Languages North West[24] were attended by more teachers and pupils for Urdu than for

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[24] The North West Consortium, led by Manchester Metropolitan University, brings together the Universities of Liverpool, Manchester, Central Lancashire, Lancaster, Edge Hill and Chester, working in

German.[25] Furthermore, a British Council report on *Languages for the Future* noted that:

> Indian languages are important because of India's position as the second most populous country in the world and a growing economic power. Department for Education statistics show Panjabi, Urdu and Bengali as the top three languages spoken by English schoolchildren with English as an additional language (…) However, Indian languages are currently taught at the margins of mainstream education, supported by families and local communities. Entry numbers at A-level and at GCSE are small and Indian languages are not widely available at degree level in British universities (Tinsley and Board 2014: 18).

There is therefore an argument for offering a broader range of languages in schools, not only for the intrinsic value that knowledge of any language has in terms of the increased mental flexibility,[26] but as part of a strategy to prepare pupils to live in a multicultural context, and work in multicultural teams. Chinese and Arabic, languages spoken by two of the largest minority ethnic communities in the UK, are also official languages of the United Nations and growing in global importance. In addition, there has been a proposal that Hindi should become the seventh official language at the United Nations. In other words, these languages are an important resource for the language education of the future, and should be incorporated into the curriculum in schools. This has been recognised recently by a Government Tender for a Mandarin Teaching Expansion Programme which, if successful, could provide a template for developing provision in a wider range of languages (http://www.chineselanguagepublishing.eu/po-mep.html).

Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)

The lack of clearly identified routes to Qualified Teacher Status for languages other than Spanish, French and German has resulted in a shortage of qualified community language teachers which, in turn, militates against the introduction of these languages into the mainstream curriculum (McPake, Sachdev et al. 2008:

partnership with schools in the North West region. For more information see: http://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/northwest.

[25] A Routes North West INSET Day for Film in 2014 was attended by 15 Urdu teachers, 12 German teachers and 6 Italian teachers. At a recent Cornerhouse Languages day, there were 165 pupils for Urdu and 138 for German.

[26] There is a considerable body of research on the benefits of speaking more than one language in terms of mental agility. See, for example: https://agenda.weforum.org/2015/03/the-advantages-of-speaking-two-languages/?utm_content=buffer75ef8&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer.

70). In 2008, Ofsted recommended that the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCFS) should provide web resources for a wide range of languages and the Teacher Development Agency (TDA) should ensure that all community language teachers have the opportunity to achieve qualified teacher status (OFSTED 2008). Despite some progress in this area, there continues to be a number of obstacles for community language teachers, and the main languages prioritised in Teacher Education Institutions across the country, with a few exceptions, continue to be French, German and Spanish despite the changing international context. It remains to be seen whether the Teach First initiative could become part of the solution to this problem by providing alternative routes to Qualified Teacher Status.

Despite these general trends, there are schools which have successfully integrated the teaching of community languages into the curriculum through partnership with local communities. A report in the Guardian covered a case of a primary school in Sheffield teaching Somali, reflecting the high proportion of Somali speakers in the local community. It was noted that:

> By teaching Somali the school unifies all children around a language that's spoken in the community. Pupils who aren't from the Somali community have a chance to try it out because it's in all the local shops. It also helps children who speak Somali at home but have a poor model of the language because they are also being taught English by their parents.
> http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/may/15/languages-primary-schools-2014[27]

This approach provides a useful space for sharing cultural heritage and valuing diversity in a way, which benefits all pupils, opening their eyes to new worlds, counterbalancing negative images of some cultures in the media and enabling them to learn a language within context. Case studies of similarly innovative approaches to language learning using native speakers and local communities are outlined in *Language Trends* (Board and Tinsley 2015: 60-64) and quantitative data from Routes into Languages identified the value of languages to developing intercultural understanding in schools.[28]

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[27] There have been similar projects conducted in other parts of the country with very positive results. For more information on this see Charmian Kenner & Mahera Ruby, 2013: pp395-417.

[28] Mother Tongue Other Tongue is a multilingual poetry project, sponsored by the Poet Laureate Dame Carol Ann Duffy as a Laureate Education Project and, last year, by boxing champion Amir Khan. In 2014-15 over 14,000 pupils took part. Pupils write a poem in their Mother Tongue (home language) or

Conclusion

It is clear that there have been and continue to be significant challenges in relation to language education in schools and higher education; this situation has been exacerbated by Government policies, the languages curriculum in schools as well as the monolingual mind-set which prevails in the UK. However, recent Government initiatives, and the changing global context, have opened up opportunities for community languages to become part of the solution. There is an opportunity for complementary schools to work in partnership with mainstream schools to offer a wider range of languages at Key Stage 1, as enrichment activities, and at Key Stage 2 as part of the curriculum. Community language teachers who are parents or Governors of local schools can help to make the connections between mainstream and complementary schools; all teachers can work with national languages networks, such as the Association of Language Learning (ALL) or Routes into Languages, to share good practice and speak with a collective voice.

Complementary schools are a rich resource of linguistic and cultural knowledge, and they could play a significant role in the revival of language learning in the UK. It is therefore important to incentivise joint initiatives between complementary schools, mainstream schools and universities; such initiatives could help to challenge the monolingual mind-set, inspire an interest in languages and cultures from a young age, and help to build mutual understanding between communities.

The recent GCSE and A level reforms, with the introduction of culture, literature and film into the curriculum, open up opportunities for an enriched learning experience, which may inspire the next generation of language learners. The new 'A' level qualification in modern languages aims 'to enhance significantly candidates' linguistic skills in the language of study, and to develop their capacity for critical and analytical thinking on the basis of their knowledge and understanding of the language, culture and society of the countries of the language of study' (http://alcab.org.uk/reports/). This is a significant step forward and provides an opportunity to engage pupils in greater evaluation of the context of the languages they are studying. However, the fact that the focus is still on French, German and Spanish, with a reduction in the number of languages offered by our two largest exam boards, coupled with the fact that several community languages have been

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Other Tongue (foreign language) with support from student ambassadors from local universities. www2.mmu.ac.uk/mothertongueothertongue/

dropped, is a retrograde step. It is essential that the languages communities work together to present the case for languages, including community languages, as a core part of education within a global context.

A recent report commissioned by the British Academy observes that:

> Languages (…) should position themselves as an essential part of core knowledge and behaviours, and show how learning a language is transformative, changing attitudes and behaviours, shaping and refining them, to enable young people to develop an international outlook, intercultural understanding and strong multilingual communication skills. These are the attributes of the global mind-set, which young people should develop, if they are to be competitive and successful in the global labour market, and happy and fulfilled individuals within society (Holmes 2014: 37).

Community language teachers can play an important role in this transformation of the languages landscape. Whilst there are still considerable challenges to the languages communities at all levels, evidence suggests that a diversification of the languages portfolio offered in schools, partnership working, the sharing of resources, and the innovative use of cultural context as part of language teaching are all part of the solution. The key challenge is to work together and engage with any opportunity to present the languages case with one voice.

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Routes into Languages North West: a case study

5

Sharon Handley
Manchester Metropolitan University
s.handley@mmu.ac.uk

Introduction

There have been a number of initiatives and interventions to foster language learning in schools, including the creation of a nation-wide portfolio of outreach activities by Routes into Languages.[29] The principle of working in partnership lies at the heart of Routes into Languages, and the particular initiatives outlined here are from the Routes into Languages North West Consortium[30] although many of them have been rolled out nationally. Routes North West developed a range of activities to promote languages in schools and I shall take four examples to illustrate how language education can be enriched and motivation to study a language improved through the integration of culture into the curriculum, through a greater focus on creativity in the classroom and through a broadening of the range of languages offered to pupils.

Language Enrichment Events

Language Enrichment Events were designed as part of a portfolio of activities organised by Routes into Languages to promote languages in schools. They were targeted at pupils in Years 8 and 9 in order to increase their motivation to study languages prior to making decisions on their option choices in Year 10; they typically involved a one-day event organised at one of the seven partner universities of Routes North West. Taster sessions were delivered in a range of languages, including Spanish, French, German, Arabic, Mandarin, Italian and Urdu,

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[29] Background on the Routes into Languages initiative can be found at:
http://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/index.html.
[30] Routes North West consists of a Consortium of seven universities including Manchester, Liverpool, Lancaster, UCLAN, Edge Hill, Chester and Manchester Metropolitan University as the lead partner.

as well as workshops linked to the cultures associated with these languages. A cultural quiz, delivered as part of the welcome session, frequently revealed that many pupils knew very little about some of the cultures associated with these languages, and their learning curve began in that session. Cultural knowledge was developed throughout the day in a 'multicultural market,' where pupils could engage in practical activities such as Italian mask-making, Salsa dancing, Arabic dancing, calligraphy, Tai Chi, Origami and a range of other activities.

Our intention was to improve attitudes towards languages and foster interest in a wider range of languages than those traditionally taught in schools. University undergraduates, who were either native speakers or students of these languages, played a motivational and mentoring role during the events. Community languages were included as a core part of the activities, using authentic materials and working with community language teachers to develop resource banks. Focus groups which were organized with pupils who were speakers of community languages and their parents identified the issue of language status as a demotivating factor for some pupils, with some parents referring to children not wanting to speak certain languages in their mainstream school (Handley, 2011: 152). This may be due to their intuitive awareness of the lower status accorded to their community language at school (Kenner et al, 2008: 127) or, as some parents suggested, it may be due to the negative images of some cultures in the media. Either way, language education could play a role in raising the status of those languages and in valuing the cultures and communities where they are spoken. This was a key driver behind the design of some of the activities, and free text comments from pupils alluded to the positive impact of the activities on their attitudes towards their home language, the pleasure of discovering the cultures of their peers at school, and their newly awakened desire to study a language.

Evaluation data 2013-14

Evaluation of all activities was conducted through pre- and post-event questionnaires. Pupils were asked to indicate their levels of agreement with a set of statements before attending our events; post-event, they were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the same set of statements. The data-set for Language Enrichment Events in the year 2013-14 related to 400 pupils over four events. Whilst this is quite a small data-set, the results do correlate with patterns identified in previous years and with the data collated by Routes into Languages at a national level.

Responses to all statements were more positive after the events than in the pre-

event questionnaires. For example, 98% of pupils in the post-event questionnaires agreed that they enjoyed learning languages in comparison with 88% in the pre-event questionnaires (+10%). 98% of pupils agreed that they liked finding out about other cultures in comparison with 91% in the pre-event questionnaires (+7%); 74% agreed that languages would help them get a job in comparison with 44% in the pre-event questionnaire (+30%). The consistent improvement across these attitudinal measures suggests that Routes activities are having an immediate motivational impact; national data from Routes into Languages provided similar results.[31] The fact that most students were positive about languages before attending does suggest that schools may have been selecting the pupils. It is interesting to observe that the most positive responses are in relation to discovering other cultures, suggesting that culture should be an integral part of the languages curriculum if pupils are to be inspired to continue with language study. Pupil responses revealed a real interest in discovering other cultures and a desire to relate that to their own communities, thus suggesting that the impact of these events went beyond the languages curriculum and into the realm of community cohesion.

Pupil Comments

'I'd like to learn Arabic so I can communicate with people in my local area' (Year 9 pupil).

'I discovered that Arabic has an interesting culture and I especially enjoyed the dancing' (Year 9 pupil).

'I'd like to learn Urdu because this country is multicultural and I'd like to know more about this culture' (Year 8 pupil).

'Before I came here, I didn't know Urdu was a language and it is very unusual; now I know it has an interesting culture' (Year 8 pupil).

'Chinese is becoming a very important language like French, German and Spanish and it would be interesting to learn' (Year 9 pupil).

A toolkit has been developed for running such events either at a university or in clusters of schools. This model has worked well with Cockermouth School, in

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[31] Gallaher Brett, Angela 2012 *Routes into Languages first-year undergraduate survey in England and Wales: students' prior engagement with languages outreach and enrichment activities.* https://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/sites/default/files/1st_year_ug_survey_2011_report_england_and_ wales_final.pdf.

Cumbria, which has been running Language Enrichment Events for other schools in the region for the last eight years with support from Routes North West. This principle could be applied to the Primary Languages curriculum, with one school taking the lead in hosting workshops in partnership with other local primary and complementary schools, to develop shared resources and CPD sessions. This could include the sharing of good practice in teaching language within a cultural context through songs, dance, literature, and film. Resources could be shared online. Government funding could be allocated to projects which share resources in this way, building partnerships between complementary and mainstream schools, and preparing teachers for the step change in approach to language teaching which will be required in order to maximise the potential of the new National Curriculum. It is therefore important that the language community continues to engage with Government consultations on proposals to promote any language. One important case in point is the recent bid for tenders for proposals to drive forward Mandarin[32], building on suggestions outlined in the British Council report on Mandarin[33].

Film in Language Teaching

Our events for schools also involved working closely with the Cornerhouse Cinema (now HOME) in Manchester to screen films relating to Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Italian and Urdu, using a model that was developed for Spanish, French and German. Language workshops included podcasts, vodcasts and the making of short films relating to these sessions. The cinema-based study sessions involved a subtitled film, screened in the target language; they were developed for GCSE and for AS/A2 level learners. With the support of a bespoke study guide, the sessions were led by film and language specialists who engaged pupils in language-related activities prior to, during, and after the screening of the film; all activities were linked to the National Curriculum. Young people had the opportunity to develop a better understanding of other cultures, ways of life and history, by watching films they would not normally have seen. Most pupils indicated that they had never previously watched a foreign film with subtitles and welcomed the opportunity to do so.

Learners were encouraged to think critically about the film and the issues raised in it, providing an excellent opportunity to discuss the representation of certain cultures within mainstream media and film, and comparing some of the themes

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[32] https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/.../722da614-fbac-4085-9a1b.

[33] Teresa Tinsley & Kathryn Board (2014). *The teaching of Chinese in the UK*. Alcantara Communications. www.britishcouncil.org/sites/.../alcantara_full_report_jun15.pdf.

with the representations of culture and identity in the foreign language films. Pupils were encouraged to discuss in the foreign language some of the issues explored in the film, thus enhancing their language skills and broadening their vocabulary within context. Pupils then developed podcasts, short films or created their own interviews about the film, enabling them to use the foreign language within a creative context. All teaching materials to support these sessions are available online.[34] These workshops have inspired a global following through a dedicated website to support film in language teaching (www.FILTA.org.uk/).

Evaluation

We adopted the same evaluation model as for the Language Enrichment Events, using pre and post event questionnaires. The results from the 2013-14 events showed a 7% increase in pupils saying that they enjoyed learning languages, rising from 91% to 98% and an increase from 88% to 92% of pupils saying that they enjoyed learning about other cultures. Evidence from previous events of this kind identified that teachers valued these workshops for a variety of reasons; this included the fact that a lot can be learnt in a limited space of time (Urdu session); that it is an effective way of learning new vocabulary and listening to the correct pronunciation (Chinese session); that it is enjoyable and culture-orientated (Chinese session); and that it can effectively bring to life elements such as family structure, food, festivals, etc. Continual Professional Development sessions for teachers are now running on a regular basis to train language teachers in effective ways of integrating film into their classes (Chan and Herrero: 2010).

Further INSET days have been developed for teachers of Modern Foreign and Community Languages to work together. Sessions include workshops on the sharing of language teaching materials through the development of online resources for a wide range of languages. These sessions have facilitated the sharing of ideas and materials between the two sectors and materials are available online (https://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/resources/library). The sharing of resources in online format in this way should be part of any strategy to diversify the range of languages taught in schools, and could be particularly effective in relation to community languages.[35]

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[34] www.cornerhouse.org/education/education-programmes/projector-communitylanguages and www.cornerhouse.org/education/education-programmes/projector-mfl. This Cinema has now relocated and rebranded as HOME.

[35] The same principles underpin the Routes into Languages SPEAKGLOBAL teaching pack; it is available for any Secondary teacher to download and use to support their teaching (https://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/resources/library/speakglobal-resource).

Teacher feedback

Free text comments from teachers of Modern Foreign and Community Languages who participated in the INSET days noted the advantages of working together:

'The INSET/CPD sessions organised by Routes into Languages NW have provided us (teachers) with an opportunity to share ideas and resources to strengthen our teaching practice. Community Language teachers have an in-depth authentic language knowledge, which was very valuable for us to understand and learn about'. (Teacher of Modern Foreign Languages from a High School)

'The Routes INSET days are really the very few opportunities such diverse (Community Language and Modern Foreign Language) teachers have to meet to design and share resources. I have learnt new innovative and interactive methods of teaching and it has provided me with new teaching insights'. (Urdu Language Teacher)

Mother Tongue Other Tongue

Routes North West developed a multilingual poetry competition to encourage pupils to enjoy the study of language learning, with a focus on creativity and self-expression rather than transactional language. The initial drivers for the Mother Tongue Other Tongue project were two-fold: to address the issue of language status identified in focus groups by bringing community languages to the centre through a Mother Tongue category, and to inspire pupils to be creative with their foreign language through the Other Tongue category. This started as a small pilot in the North West in 2012, and evolved into a National Laureate Education project under the creative direction of the Poet Laureate, Dame Carol Ann Duffy. It illustrates the value of pulling together curriculum areas, in this case creative writing and languages.

In 2014 there were more than 14,000 entries in over 70 languages by pupils from England, Scotland and Wales. Pupils wrote a poem or shared a poem in their home language (Mother Tongue), or wrote a poem in a language they were learning at school (Other Tongue); support was given to pupils through workshops facilitated by University students supervised by Creative Writing tutors from partner universities. This experience gave those entering the mother tongue category the opportunity to share their language, identity, heritage and culture with other children in their school, creating a sense of belonging, of shared

values, multiple identities and integration. This went beyond language learning and into the realm of intercultural understanding, kindling passion and curiosity about different cultures and enabling pupils to share experiences in a safe space at school. Key themes emerging from the Mother Tongue category included migration, nostalgia for the homeland, identity, dual heritage and the value of education. The Olympic silver medallist and World Champion boxer, Amir Khan, sponsored the project, attending the launch and joining Dame Carol Ann Duffy to hand out prizes at the National Final, which was hosted at Manchester Metropolitan University. An anthology of the winning poems and information about this project along with resources for teachers are available on the Routes North West website: http://www2.mmu.ac.uk/mothertongueothertongue/

Comments from teachers have emphasised the value of cross-curricular work like this to the development of a sense of shared community and intercultural understanding. For example, one teacher in an Academy in Manchester noted that the project, 'broke down the barriers that exist in our school between the 70 plus different languages and taught our pupils that what they thought were barriers to learning were actually opportunities and this was a wonderful thing to see'. Teachers also appreciated the principle of encouraging pupils to be creative with language, and to share their cultural heritage with peers at school. Several teachers commented on how the enriched curriculum reflected pupil diversity within their classrooms and inspired a sharing of cultural heritage and dual identities in a safe space. One teacher noted:

> 'Pupils enjoyed the freedom of being able to write a poem about any subject of their choice and, for those whose mother tongue is not English, it is an activity which makes them value their mother tongue whilst giving us teachers the opportunity to show that we value their ability to speak a language other than the ones taught in school'.

Pupil feedback

One pupil from a 6th Form College in Manchester commented that:

> 'I have discovered that speaking your mother tongue is nothing to be ashamed about. This competition has made me feel more confident and has inspired me'.

A Year 9 pupil said:

> 'The Mother Tongue Other Tongue competition has given me the

confidence to learn more languages and I have applied to be a Spanish ambassador at school. I hope to continue studying languages in the future'.

Qaisra Shahraz, British-Pakistani novelist and scriptwriter, supported the project and described the way it, 'inspires children, builds their confidence and celebrates their achievements as well as their ability to use language and write poetry'. Amir Khan described the project as, 'a fantastic initiative which helps to bring better understanding between the many diverse people that make up this great country. It's a chance for us to celebrate multiculturalism and for us to get to know one another even better.'

If the energy and excitement around this project could be embedded into the curriculum, it would address the motivational issues that are plaguing languages in schools; it appeals to the integrative motivation level of pupils by sharing identity and heritage in a creative way.[36] The new languages curriculum, which includes culture and literature, opens up an opportunity to allow pupils to be more creative in their language study, and to make the connections between language and the society associated with it. This is a positive step forward, but it requires innovation and creativity in the classroom, as well as confident teachers, in order to maximise the potential.

Languages Double Club and Language League

The final project I shall discuss in relation to engendering excitement around the language curriculum at Key Stage 2 is the Languages Double Club. Based on the Arsenal Double Club initiative, there are various versions of this project which combines football and language learning in a creative way. There are modules in French, German, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese. The classes are delivered in sessions of two 45-minute 'halves', like a football game. In one half pupils develop their language skills in the classroom, working with specially designed Arsenal-themed workbooks, interactive PowerPoint activities and videos featuring the international stars of the football squad speaking in their own native languages. In the other half, pupils move to the football pitch, where they play football using the vocabulary and phrases they have learnt in the classroom. Double Club Languages is available to all UK schools at Key Stages 2 and 3, and it provides an innovative way of motivating pupils to learn a language. Various supporting materials are provided to help teachers, coaches and pupils maximise the

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[36] Gardner stipulates that integrativeness, 'typically relates to (their) curiosity about other cultures and (their) interest in meeting people from other cultural backgrounds'. (Gardner 2005: 8). It is a key factor in motivation to study languages.

potential of the programme; this includes a teachers' guide and an activity-pack with instructions, diagrams and the vocabulary needed to run the activities.

Benchmarked against the standard Key Stage 2 / Key Stage 3 curriculum topics, combined with authentic football vocabulary, the resources aim to inspire pupils' interest and confidence in the target language, as well as providing them with a cultural insight into the countries in which the target language is spoken. Since the programme began in 2006, over 11,000 pupils from more than 400 schools across the UK have participated in Double Club Languages at primary and secondary level. The latest evaluations of Double Club found that 100% of teachers thought their pupils' attitude to learning and confidence had improved; 50% believed that pupils' attendance had improved after completing the Double Club programme, and 67% of parents thought their child's attitude to learning and confidence had improved significantly from completing Double Club.

Routes North West conducted focus groups on the Double Club initiative, with a view to developing a new version of this project with North West football clubs and including additional languages such as Arabic and Mandarin. These focus groups with teachers revealed that there would be additional value in developing resources which promoted diversity in football, both in terms of race and gender, and which did not align with any particular football club given the loyalties and rivalries associated with certain football clubs. We developed resources in French, German and Spanish and are in the process of developing further resources in Arabic and Mandarin. Further information is available on the Routes North West website: http://www.languageleague.co.uk/.

The Future

Outreach activities organised by Routes into Languages have demonstrated that cultural activities and contact with native speakers can improve attitudes towards language learning. Language Enrichment Events involving culture and film, competitions like Double Club which align with agendas such as wellbeing and diversity, and projects like Mother Tongue Other Tongue which promote creativity and intercultural understanding, have established that language learning can be creative and enjoyable and support key educational agendas beyond the language curriculum. We have established that the language classroom can provide a safe space for sharing cultural heritage, developing confidence in self-expression and valuing diversity. The introduction of Primary Language Education, if approached in a creative and inclusive way, can provide an opportunity to embed diversity into the curriculum by bringing local communities together and

using authentic resources to open up new worlds to the children in all communities. Language and cultural learning can be placed at the heart of the educational experience, by celebrating festivals, sharing traditional stories, using authentic resources and engaging with projects like those created by Routes into Languages to develop the foundations for life-long appreciation of languages. Our data has consistently shown that many students are motivated by passion for the subject and interest in other cultures. Community language teachers can play an important role in this new languages landscape in which the diversification of languages in schools, partnership working, the sharing of resources and the innovative use of cultural context as part of language teaching, are all part of the solution.

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A Lexical Spreadsheet for Learners of Arabic

6

John Morley & Salwa Mohammed
The University of Manchester

Introduction

It is accepted that vocabulary plays a key role in language development, and that successful second language learning depends on the development of a strong vocabulary. This fact has been recognised in more traditional approaches to language learning and teaching, from the compilation of the first bilingual glossaries in the ancient world to the rote learning of word lists which, along with grammar manipulation and translation exercises, characterised much of language learning and teaching prior to the influential communicative movement. This more recent approach has prioritised practical skills development and the acquisition and effective use of functional exponents and commonly used structures. Though never perhaps totally abandoned, the usefulness of learning words from decontextualised lists was questioned, the preferred approach being to teach and learn vocabulary in meaningful contexts. Translation and the use of bilingual dictionaries and word lists were discouraged as exposure to and use of the target language was emphasised. Around the same time, however, research into the characteristics and behaviours of successful language learners revealed that good learners pay constant attention to expanding their language (Naiman et al.1978 and that they do most of their learning of new words independently (Graves, 1987), often preferring more traditional methods eschewed by the communicative movement. One effect of this research has been an increased interest in the use of vocabulary notebooks (Allen, 1983: 50; Gairns and Redman, 1986: 95-100; McCarthy, 1990: 127-9), which, it is claimed, facilitate cognitive processing of new lexical items (Schmitt, 2000). Walters and Bozkurt (2009) administered pre-tests and post-tests and mean gains made by the treatment group using vocabulary notebooks were statistically significantly higher than the gains by the control group without vocabulary notebooks. In Fowle's (2002) study,

all participants liked using vocabulary notebooks, and felt that this approach to learning was helpful in remembering new and useful words, and most participants felt that the vocabulary notebooks made them better students.

Vocabulary notebooks can take a variety of forms, from bound notebooks with fixed pages, to loose-leaf binders with movable pages, to small index cards small enough to fit into a pocket. Schmitt and Schmitt (1995) recommend using a loose-leaf binder or cards which are kept in a box so that pages/cards can be moved around to facilitate learning: lesser known words can be moved towards the front. In addition, movable pages/cards allows the words to be arranged in different ways. The lexical spreadsheet is an electronic form of the vocabulary notebook, but with dynamic possibilities for organising and retrieving the words, with enhanced portability and reproducibility, and with much greater ease of adding additional information and making changes. This paper aims to demonstrate the potential of the lexical spreadsheet with reference to learners of Arabic although the tool may be of use to learners of any language. It begins by setting out some of the theoretical reasons why learners should find the spreadsheet useful, and moves on to show examples of how the words can be organised. In the final part, we hear from a small group of learners as to the potential value of this tool.

Theoretical principles

One of the reasons for introducing learners to the idea of the vocabulary notebook is the understanding that information that is organised in some way is easier to learn. Many experiments have shown that information that has been organised is more memorable than disorganized information (Baddeley, 1990). This principle applies to learning words in a second language, and we know that successful language learners understand the need to 'structure their vocabulary learning' (Schmidt, 2000). In fact, this observation echoes research dating back to the 1970s which suggested that successful language learners are 'constantly trying to find schemes for classifying information' (Ruben, 1975: 47). One way of organising lexical information is in the form of word pairs (native word/L2 target word). Once thought not to be very effective (Judd, 1978: 73), there is in fact good evidence that word pairs, a form of decontextualised learning, can be used to learn a great number of words in a short time (Nation, 1982: 16-18, 22-24). Lists containing word pairs are a good way of giving exposure to new words although this only seems to be true once the underlying semantic concepts are known in L1. Still, there is plenty of evidence that, for the simple word form-word meaning aspect of vocabulary learning, decontextualised lists 'is an efficient and highly effective practice' (Nation, 2001).

Another reason for encouraging learners to compile and use their own vocabulary notebook is the fact that learners need to find ways to recycle words (especially new words), to mirror the natural recycling that takes place during L1 acquisition implicitly. The notebook is essentially a tool for allowing learners to do this explicitly. Furthermore, once a word has been learnt initially, that knowledge needs to be enriched with other kinds of information about the word. Collocates, antonyms, synonyms, alternative meanings, roots and etymological features, phonological features. Enriching is also a form of recycling. Schmitt and Schmitt (1995) suggest that 'learning activities themselves need to be designed to require multiple manipulations of a word, such as in vocabulary notebooks in which students have to go back and add information about words'. They go on to suggest the kind of information that can be included in vocabulary notebook word entry, as follows:

- an L1 translation
- keyword illustration
- a note on style and register
- number of times heard in two days
- part of speech
- pronunciation
- a semantic map
- an example sentence(s)
- derivative information
- collocations
- an L2 definition

It is because so much useful and often necessary information about a word can be recorded that the kind of vocabulary notebook (loose-leaf binder) suggested by Schmidt and Schmidt accommodates one word entry per page.

The third reason for introducing a vocabulary notebook to language learners is that they need to develop the attitudes and strategies to take their learning beyond the classroom. They need to be encouraged 'take control of their learning' (Holec, 1981:3). This is because successful second language learning depends on learners having the skills, the self-reliance and the self-confidence to continue learning outside and beyond the formal taught class situation (Dickenson and Carver, 1980). Indeed, developing these skills seems to be one of the essential characteristics of successful second language learners (Oxford, 1990). Because

vocabulary plays such an important role in language learning and use, there is an obvious need to help learners acquire the strategies necessary to learn words on their own (Nation 1990; Schmidt, 2000). Compiling and maintaining a vocabulary notebook is one way that learners can begin to do this.

Why an electronic lexical spreadsheet?

The lexical spreadsheet uses *Microsoft Excel* rather than a traditional note book to store, list and organise words. It serves all the functions of a paper-based vocabulary notebook but has a number of advantages, one of the most important is that, being electronic, it largely overcomes the limitations of time and space. New material can be added to any section of the spreadsheet without limitation. For example, if the user wishes to organise the words alphabetically according to their first letters, new words can be added to the alphabetical group without limitation and the alphabetical order can be maintained once the list is sorted. This is a major improvement over the paper-based vocabulary notebook with fixed pages where it is not possible to maintain alphabetical order as new items are added. Furthermore, with paper-based notebooks, it is not possible to predict how much space should be left for words of each alphabetical group, often resulting in insufficient space being left for words beginning with A, and S and too much space being allocated for words beginning with letters such as K and Q. A note-book with unbound pages held in a ring binder, as recommended by Schmidt and Schmidt (1995), does overcome these limitations to a large extent, as the pages can be moved around and new entries can be entered whilst maintaining alphabetical ordering. But even here the binder can only hold as many words as the number of pages that can be held in the binder.

Furthermore, the lexical spreadsheet can easily be copied with different versions being stored in different places (e.g. computer hard drive, cloud storage, memory stick, smart phone). The content of the spreadsheet can also be edited and updated very easily. Because it has the potential to be used on a smart phone, it has the advantage of being easily transportable; the phone can fit into the learner's top pocket – unlike the ring binder. It is also important to point out that the lexical spreadsheet should not deteriorate over time, unlike paper which tears and can become creased and dirty with use.

The advantages of using the spreadsheet begin to become more obvious when the potential for sorting the lexical information in various ways is considered. *Excel* allows the learner to sort the entries in a variety of ways with just a click of

the mouse. As an example, the screenshots[37] below show the items in the spreadsheet sorted according to the initial letter of the Arabic words, in this case ح:

English	عربي	Pron	Class	مَجَال	جذر
accident	حادِث	hādith	noun	general	حدث
according to	حسب	hasab	preposition	general	حسب
approximately	حَوالي	howlī	adverb	general	حول
authentic	حقيقي	haqīqī	adjective	general	حق
bathroom	حمام	hammām	noun place	home	حمم
bill	حساب	hisāb	noun	food	حسب
civilisation	حضارة	hadara	noun	art and culture	حضر
conservation	حفظ	hifz	noun abstract	general	حفظ
conversation	حديث	hadīt	noun	general	حدث
event	حدث	hadath	noun	general	حدث

Figure 1. Lexical spreadsheet snapshot showing
alphabetical sorting of the Arabic entries

The automatic sorting is easily achieved by highlighting all the active rows and columns and then using the *Excel* sort command for the column which will determine the sort. In this case, the column selected to determine the way the data is sorted is the column containing the Arabic words. *Excel* recognises the Arabic characters and even 'knows' that the first letter is on the extreme right of each word. Much quicker sorting can be archived if a macro is created to sort the data according to a particular column and is then linked to action button at the top of the column. Clicking on the action button then sorts the whole spreadsheet in an instant.

The second screen shot displays a group of words all belonging to the word class 'adverbs'. In this case, the filtering function in *Excel* has been used to filter our all the other word classes and to select only the adverb class.

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[37] The figures displayed are not actual screenshots of the *Excel* spreadsheet, as these would not be easy to read. Instead, the figures display the spreadsheet information in a way that is easily readable. For exemplificatory purposes, these figures only show 10 entries; on the actual spreadsheet there is no limit to the number of entries under each category.

English	عربي	Pron	Class	مَجَال	جذر
ago	مُنذ	mundhu	adverb	general	منذ
also	ايضاً	aidan	adverb	general	أيض
approximately	حَوالي	howlī	adverb	general	حول
before	قَبلَ	qabl	adverb	general	قبل
eventually	أخيرًا	akhīran	adverb	general	اخر
everywhere	كلّ مكان	kull makān	adverb	general	مكن
finally	أخيراً	akhiran	adverb	general	اخر
firstly	أوَّلا	awwalan	adverb	general	أول
gradually	تدريجياً	tadrījīyan	adverb	general	درج
here	هنا	huna	adverb	general	

Figure 2. Lexical spreadsheet snapshot showing
filtering of the adverb class

And in Figure 3, the words have been sorted according to their domain or topic, in this case the domain for art and culture. Again the filter function is used for this so that only the words belonging to the 'art and culture' group are displayed:

English	عربي	Pron	Class	مَجَال	جذر
actor	ممثل	mumaththīl	noun job	art and culture	مثل
literature	ادب	adab	noun	art and culture	ادب
metaphor	مجاز	majaaz	noun	art and culture	جوز
performance	تمثيل	tamthīl	noun	art and culture	مثل
poem	شعر	shi'r	noun	art and culture	شعر
poet	شاعِر	shu'ara	noun	art and culture	شعر
poetic	شعري	shi'ri	adjective	art and culture	شعر
poetry	الشعر	ashe'r	noun	art and culture	شعر
similitude	مثل	mathala	noun	art and culture	مثل
statue	تمثال	timthāl	noun	art and culture	مثل

Figure 3. Lexical spreadsheet snapshot showing
filtering of the art and culture domain

The spreadsheet allows the lexical items to be sorted easily in other interesting and useful ways. For example, one way of sorting Arabic words is according to their root system. As in other semitic languages, Arabic has a 'root-and-pattern' morphology. A root consists of a set of bare consonants (usually <u>three</u>), around which different vowels are placed to form words. For example, from a single root k-t-b, numerous words can be formed by applying different patterns:

- *katabtu* 'I wrote'
- *kattabtu* 'I had (something) written'
- *kātabtu* 'I corresponded (with someone)'

- *ʾaktabtu* 'I dictated'
- *iktatabtu* 'I subscribed'
- *takātabnā* 'we corresponded with each other'
- *ʾaktubu* 'I write'
- *maktūb* 'written'
- *kitāb* 'book'
- *kutub* 'books'
- *kātib* 'writer'
- *maktab* 'desk, office'
- *maktabah* 'library, bookshop'

If the root is entered into the spreadsheet, the entries can then be sorted according to their roots. The screenshot below shows a list of items which all share the root جمع:

English	عربي	Pron	Class	مَجَال	جذر
association	جمعية	jam'īya	noun	general	جمع
collection	مَجْمُوعَة	majmū'a	noun	general	جمع
everybody	الجميع	al jami	noun	general	جمع
everything	جَمِيع	jamī'a	noun	general	جمع
Friday	يوم الجُمعة	yawm al-juma'a	noun day	time	جمع
meeting	إجتَماع	ijtimā'a	noun	general	جمع
mosque	جامع	jāmi'a	noun place	religion	جمع
plural	جَمع	jam'	adjective	linguistics	جمع
social	اجتماعي	ijtima'i	adjective	general	جمع
society	مجتمع	mujtama	noun	general	جمع
to collect	جَمَعَ	jama'a	verb	general	جمع
university	جامعة	jāma'a	noun place	academic	جمع

Figure 4. Lexical spreadsheet snapshot showing
words sorted by the root pattern جمع

What is interesting about these word root lists is that learners are able to see the deeper level of meaning and semantic relationships underlying the words. In the list above, we can see that the word for 'university', 'society' 'meeting' and 'mosque' all share the same root: جمع which means 'coming together' or 'grouping together'. Knowing these associations is not only fascinating from a cultural point of view but they are likely to be helpful in learning new words for their retrieval and use. This is because memory tends to be associative in nature.

Use and evaluation by students

A proper systematic evaluation exercise of the lexical spreadsheet still needs to be undertaken. Nevertheless, preliminary steps to gauge whether learners might find this tool useful have been carried out. Through the use of an electronic questionnaire and two focus group evaluation sessions, we have already elicited some interesting comments from a group of learners of Arabic in their first year at the University of Manchester.

The students were introduced to the spreadsheet at the beginning of the second semester of their first year. They were shown how it works and how it might help them. Towards the end of the semester an electronic questionnaire was sent out to all the students, with 22 questionnaires being returned, representing a response rate of around 50%. However, of this group approximately 31% indicated that they had only used the lexical spreadsheet just once and not subsequently. This general observation would thus suggest that, initially at least, a large proportion of learners did not think the spreadsheet would be useful for them. However, it is important to bear in mind that students were not obliged to use the spreadsheet in any way. Furthermore, as we shall see later, a number of students in the survey indicated that they needed more guidance on how to use the spreadsheet and how to activate its features.

The questionnaire was one way of identifying students who might be prepared to take part in a focus group discussion. At the same time, we were able to ask respondents to indicate what they liked about the spreadsheet. In response to this question, 45% of the respondents said that they found the fact that they could sort or categorise the words in different ways a particularly useful feature. Subsequently, in the focus group discussion, two students commented:

> the fact that you can group words in several different ways is extremely useful, as I find it so much easier to learn all adjectives/verbs/adverbs etc.

> I think the categorising the words into topics, something so simple I just didn't think of that. I usually just do it by lesson, but if you do it by topic it just somehow sticks better

The feature that 40% of the respondents felt to be useful was the ability to sort and group the entries according to their root system. There were many comments attesting to this feature in the focus groups; some of which are given below:

I have enjoyed building on the lexical spreadsheet and have found it interesting to learn new words from the same roots

Showing me how words can be connected that I would have otherwise not realised

By combining all the words that come from the same root, it helps me understand how the root system works and what patterns I can make

Having the option of adding the root of the word along with its meaning as this makes it easier to remember the word

Some of these comments here suggest that students feel that being able to see the common root system helps them to learn the new words.

A small number of respondents (10%) indicated that they found particularly useful the ability to search for a word in this spreadsheet using the *Excel* 'Find and Select' facility. As the number of entries in the spreadsheet grows, this feature becomes increasing important. The other features that were found to be particularly useful by smaller numbers of students (less than 10% of the total number of respondents), are as follows: recording commonly-used phrases, showing the pronunciation of the words, sorting or categorising words by word class, a way of recording many words in one place, the ease of adding new words. With respect to the last of these, one student commented that they particularly liked the fact that the spreadsheet could be personalised.

I really liked the fact that you could personalise it easily, adding your own words to it.

This may be evidence of a student taking 'control of their learning' (Holec, 1981:3) and the development of learner autonomy. If so, it is pleasing to see that the lexical spreadsheet can support this process.

In terms of what could be improved, a number of students commented that they would have benefited from an instruction sheet, or that they needed more help with *Excel*, and it is clear that whilst some students experienced no difficulties in using the new tool, some certainly did. With hindsight, therefore, it would have been advisable to hold a separate induction session for students who were less familiar with *Excel*. In practice, it would also have been useful to show students

how to set up and properly understand the 'Sort' and 'Filter' functions, as well as the basic concept of a spreadsheet macro, before suggesting that they use the tool. Another area of improvement that was mentioned was 'technical issues' (18%). For example, the *Excel* spreadsheet macros do not work on Mac computers or laptops, or at least the ones the students were using at the time. In addition, it was mentioned that uploading to the internet (understood here as meaning *Google Drive* or *Dropbox*) and then downloading the spreadsheet on a mobile phone was not straightforward. This is certainly the case. On mobile phone systems, the *Excel* spreadsheet is not fully functional and, in any case, for most systems, specialised 'apps' need to be downloaded so that the spreadsheet can be viewed[38]. Although this information was given to students orally, with the assumption that young people today are familiar with the new technology, it seems that this cannot be taken for granted. The whole process of uploading to a cloud storage system and then downloading to a mobile phone, with an appropriate 'app', needs to be demonstrated and clear instruction sheets given out to the students.

This latter point, however, is important and one thing is clear: the use of mobile devices for vocabulary retention and consolidation is beginning to attract considerable interest (Hu, 2013; Rezai, Mai and Pesaranghader, 2013). The other thing to bear in mind is that mobile phone technology is advancing at a rapid pace and there no reason why, in the near future, the 'Sort' and 'Filter' functions, even the *Excel* macros, will not be able to be used on mobiles. It is envisioned that technology will soon allow users to add words to the spreadsheet wherever they are and to upload these to a server via *wifi* or via a mobile phone network. The mobile smart phone can thus become an instant record of new vocabulary items encountered in different places and contexts. The current spreadsheet can already serve this function, but the uploading of items needs to be delayed until the learner can access a computer or laptop where they have a fully functioning version of *Excel*.

The last important finding to emerge from the evaluation discussions is that a small group of students indicated that they enjoyed using that spreadsheet (14%), though this comment was often made in conjunction with one of the other features that was found to be useful or interesting:

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[38] Various 'apps' are available, but each has different strengths and weaknesses. Not all reproduce the Arabic script from right to left, or reproduce the letters clearly enough. Of those that have been tried, *Polaris Office* seems to work best though with this 'app' the sort and filter functions are unavailable.

> I have enjoyed building on the lexical spreadsheet and have found it interesting to learn new words from the same roots

This 'enjoyment' dimension is not insignificant as we know that people will tend to engage more in any activity they enjoy doing.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that, for learners of Arabic, the lexical spreadsheet may be a valuable development of the paper-based version of vocabulary notebooks which are an important and useful tool for language learners. In the focus group discussions reported here, evidence has emerged that some students have found the resource to be very useful and that they will continue to use it in future for all the advantages it offers, though this appears to be the case only for a minority of all the students it was originally introduced to. It may be that this kind of lexical consolidation tool will not appeal to all types of learners; nevertheless, the positive responses which have been reported and discussed here suggest that further work is worth pursuing.

It would certainly be worth introducing the idea of the lexical spreadsheet to different groups of students in future, though with much greater guidance and possibly by incorporating some prescribed and, perhaps, with some assessed tasks. Teachers could also review their learners' spreadsheets on a regular basis - just as reviewing vocabulary notebooks can reveal to teachers aspects of their learners' progress (McCarthy, 1990). Students' work can be reviewed in paper form as long as selected sections are printed out. In addition, teachers could promote class/study activities which encourage students to use the words they have added to their spreadsheets. 'The key point is that learners should go regularly through their notebooks and do something with the words' (Schmidt and Schmidt, 1995). Importantly, in a subsequent study of the kind described here, which has aimed to evaluate the usefulness of the lexical spreadsheet from the users' perspectives, it will be important to try to ensure a higher response rate to the electronic questionnaire so that a wider range of responses can be obtained. Particularly significant will be the reason why so many did not appear to find the tool appealing or useful. Future studies might also compare the vocabulary test scores of students who use that lexical spreadsheet with the scores of those who use a different method of consolidating their vocabulary learning. Finally, further work should be undertaken to see how the spreadsheet might be of use in the learning of other languages.

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An Account of Authentic and Teacher-made Materials in Learning Right to Left Scripted Languages

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Hassan Soleimani & Mahboubeh Rahmanian

Payame Noor University, Iran
rahmanian74@yahoo.com (corresponding author)
arshia.soleimani@gmail.com

Abstract

Among the Middle Eastern languages, Arabic and Hebrew are written right-to-left which have a difficulty level of 2 and 3 based on the difficulty rating scale leading to postponing full communicative competency for EFL students. In fact learning these languages can pose difficulties for learners who have a first language with a different script direction from Arabic and Hebrew.

This study was designed to investigate which if authentic or teacher-made materials might be helpful for Arabic as a foreign language (AFL) learners, who spoke Armenian (a left-to-right scripted Indo-European language) and were learning Arabic. Sixty Armenian low-intermediate Arabic as a foreign language (AFL) male and female students from two classes in Isfahan, Iran, were classified into two groups. To put it simply, one experimental group studied Arabic using authentic teaching materials and another group studied Arabic using and teacher-made materials. Homogeneity of the two groups was first examined applying Arabic Language Proficiency Test. A pretest and two post-tests were administered in order to investigate the results of the treatment being nine sessions of teaching Arabic to the participants.

An independent sample t-test was used since the study used two normally distributed scores from the two experimental groups. The results indicated that the group undertaking the teacher-made material utilizing both authentic and teacher-made materials advised by the teacher progressed better in their Arabic language skills

compared to the group undertaking mere authentic materials. This positive result can help us understand how those with Indo-European languages as their L1 can progress with learning right-to-left scripted languages.

Keywords: right-to-left language, left-to-right language, script, teacher-made material, authentic material

Introduction

The provision of effective Foreign language learning courses has long been a struggle not only for administrators and teachers, but also for learners. Learning languages from a different language family to that of the learners' L1 makes this more complex. To put it simply, learners of Indo-European languages who need to learn Semitic languages like Arabic, Hebrew, Amharic, and Aramaic experience more difficulty since there cognate lexical items are rare as are word structures, grammatical processes and conceptual frameworks which are similar between the two languages (Ryding, n.d). One of the outstanding features of these languages is the direction of their script which is mostly left-to-right (LTR) for Indo-European and right-to-left (RTL) for Semitic languages. Although this direction can not be regarded as the major reason behind this difficulty, it can contribute to some basic difficulties.

Although there are many factors which can support language learners in learning languages of different directions from their own, language material is of particular importance. This study is designed to compare the effect of authentic and teacher-made materials to examine which one of them can bring about faster and more efficient Arabic proficiency for Armenian students possessing an Indo-European language.

Literature Review

Although learning a foreign language is a demanding task which takes time, it has many advantages particularly in today's world. As globalization continues to occur, the need to learn a foreign language manifests itself more than the previous times. That is why many schools, curriculum designers, and researchers have placed learning a foreign language among their significant programs. Learning a foreign or second language is not separated from leaning its writing system or particularly its script and direction. Understandably, writing direction is a concept relating to scripts and not languages; therefore, a language written in a particular script will be inevitably written in that script particular direction (Texin, 2003). The primitive alphabet was written in various directions, that is horizontally (LTR or

RTL) and vertically (up or down). In other words, it was written boustrophedonically which was initiated in the horizontal direction and at the end of the line was changed (Threatte, 1980; as cited in Writing system, 2014). The Greek alphabet and its replacements like the Armenian script had the LTR direction which was a change from the top to bottom writing direction (Writing system, 2014). Among the Middle-Eastern languages Hebrew, Arabic, and Urdu from the Indo-Pak subcontinent, are written in Arabic script (Texin, 2003) having an RTL direction.

While Arabic holds the sixth rank among the worldwide languages of the league table (Whitaker, 2009), many learners and in particular those from LTR languages find it places many demands on them. In other words, this Semitic language with approximately 186 million native speakers (Whitaker, 2009) has some particular characteristics like nouns with broken plurals, nouns, adjectives, verbs and pronouns with dual categories, long vowels turning to words in reading and writing, invisibility of short vowels, exclusive phonemes like pharyngeals, uvulars, and velarized consonants, and complicated morphological structures (Ryding, 2003) for spoken language and having to deal with a different script direction and different letter-shapes depending on the position of a letter within a word for written language. Therefore, teaching Arabic to those of LTR languages like Armenian can not be simple and needs a systematic planning.

The approach we would be resorting to in making this pathway easier is looking more profoundly at teaching materials since they constitute a significant aspect of foreign language teaching programs. The choice between authentic and teacher-made materials is a much debated issue to which a considerable amount of literature has been devoted. Each of these two broad areas has advantages and disadvantages which many researchers have attempted to unravel them.

Authentic Materials

Widdowson (1990) defines authentic materials as the materials prepared for native speakers of the language in order to be used in their original form (i.e. no changing) in the classrooms. To explain authentic materials more clearly he holds that: "It has been traditionally supposed that the language presented to learners should be simplified in some way for easy access and acquisition. Nowadays there are recommendations that the language presented should be authentic". (Widdowson, 1990, p. 67). Due to the advent of communicative language teaching methods, authenticity became more important than previous times. Breen (1985)

has pointed out four different kinds of authenticity in the context of the classroom:

1. Authenticity of the texts which we may use as input data for our students;
2. Authenticity of the learners' own interpretations of such texts;
3. Authenticity of tasks conducive to language learning;
4. Authenticity of the actual social situation of the classroom language. (Breen, 1985, p. 61)

However, Widdowson (1990) suggests a distinction between *"authentic"* and *"genuine"* concepts. Understandably, he uses the genuine notion to refer to an instance of the utterances of a native person and the authentic notion to refer to the replications of a native person:

> The language presented to them may be a genuine record of native speaker behaviour, genuine, that is to say, as textual data, but to the extent that it does not engage native speaker response it cannot be realized as authentic discourse. (Widdowson, 1990, p.45)

One of the critical points which can be inferred from Widdowson's statements is that he does not regard authenticity as an inseparable part of the text but he knows it as the outcome of the interaction across the learner and the text.

Along the same lines, Berardo (2006) has enumerated some reasons to explain why authentic materials are superior over teacher-made materials. He states that authentic materials are "highly motivating, giving a sense of achievement when understood and encourage further reading". Heitler (2005) also brings authentic materials into our consideration since they are much newer and let the learners experience reality. Although these reasons can be the major driving force behind using authentic materials, they need to be treated more cautiously as they can easily frustrate the learners (Heitler, 2005) and in some cases can have irreparable consequences. In other words, some factors such as cultural misunderstanding and the combination of several structures can make understanding an authentic text very difficult for the learners (Martinez, 2002). Similarly, Richards (2001) believes that authentic materials can bring demanding language, unnecessary words, and complicated structures for the learners which in effect can constitute many problems for the learners as well as the teachers. Furthermore, Berardo (2006) mentions another problem with using these kinds of materials, that is they

can not be used permanently for a long time by teachers since they easily lose their novelty and in effect need to be substituted by much newer ones.

Teacher-made Materials

Many teachers prefer to prepare their own materials for language learning contexts because of its many advantages. Bearado (2006, p. 61) believes that the language used in this kind of material is "artificial and unvaried, concentrating on something that has to be taught and often containing a series of *"false-text indicators"*. Some convincing reasons such as contextualization, fulfilling individual needs, personalization, timeliness (Block, 1991) have been brought up in the literature in order to indicate why teacher-made materials need to be substituted course books. In the following sections, these elements will be discussed in detail.

In today's world, cultural and educational contexts are among the factors which need to be considered in teaching foreign languages. In fact, any context has its own limitations, financial problems, logistics, cultural prejudices, and requirements which can not be fulfilled by mere commercial and widely-used materials. As a result, teachers try to pay more attention to their students' specific contexts such as the students' native language and culture and their background in order to create more appropriate teaching materials. Thomas and Collier (1997) mention that although the studies in the improving the second language maneuver on bilingualism, commercial book designers usually use monolingual texts and designs. Along the same lines, teachers need to consider the level of the learners when making their own materials in order to become confident if they can cope of with their difficulty level. The notion of personalization by Block (1991) can be observed through two viewpoints: on the one hand, he suggests that considering the students' interests and learning styles can enhance their incentive and involvement; on the other hand, Podromou (2002) holds that teachers can have a greater control by personalizing the materials. In addition to the previously-mentioned factors, timeliness is another element which makes many teachers and learners attract to teacher-made materials since these materials are current and adaptable and in effect can be more responsive to the students' learning needs. Nevertheless, like authentic materials, some disadvantages can be set forth regarding this category of materials as well, like: a) organization (Howard & Major, 2004): coherence and having a clearly recognisable language focus are among the important factors which most of the teacher-made materials could lack and in effect could lead learners away from achieving competency in a foreign language; b) quality (Block, 1991, p.212): teacher-made materials might "seem ragged and unprofessional next to those produced by

professionals. "; c) being time consuming to produce (Howard & Major, 2004): Time can enumerated as the most important factor which prohibit many teachers from making their own materials.

The experimental data on this issue are rather controversial yielding contradictory findings about whether authentic or teacher-made materials can be better for learning a foreign language. Therefore, further investigations are required to establish this hierarchy.

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was formulated as literature could not give an outstanding answer to these ambiguities.

> Null Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant difference between using authentic and teacher-made materials in learning Arabic communicative phrases by Armenian foreign language students.

Method
Participants

Sixty male and female Armenian foreign language learners (N = 60) from a guidance school in Isfahan, Iran, were selected. The participants between 12-15 years old were from two classes each containing 30 learners. They were classified into two groups, that is authentic material group and teacher-made material group. This research was conducted during their normal class time over seven sessions, that is one session for pretest, five sessions for treatment, and one session for posttest. Arabic Language Proficiency Test (*ALPT*) was administered to check if the two experimental groups (two intact classes) were at similar levels of language proficiency.

Instruments

The following instruments were employed in order to conduct the study.

Arabic Language Proficiency Test (ALPT)

Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality index indicated that the test scores of the groups were normally distributed (p =.083, p < .05). Therefore, the parametric *t-test* statistical tool was applied in which the Levene Test of equality of variances demonstrated homogeneous variances across the experimental groups. It can be concluded that we encountered homogeneous groups regarding the Arabic level of proficiency (p = .304, p < .05).

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Teacher-made Materials

Materials prepared for language learning purposes are usually referred to as teacher-made materials. Howard and Major (2004) believe that teacher-made materials can be for a single skill or complex of different skills and language components. The current study has resorted to some of their teaching material composition criteria: a) Howard and Major (2004) state that the teacher-made materials need to be within the context of the learners' first language; b) The teacher-made materials need to bring to the learners "meaningful, purposeful uses for the target language" (p. 105); c) teacher-made materials need to present the learners with opportunities in which they can interact with each other in order to be prepared for real-life activities; d) teacher-made materials should allow learners to develop their own leaning strategies and skills repertoire; e) teacher-made materials should reinforce both form and function of the target language; f) teacher-made materials have to provide learners with chances where they can have an integrated use of language skills.

Nowadays, a principal part of teaching a target language is emphasizing its communicative aspect. Keeping in mind this and the above-mentioned criteria, this study has tried to evaluate the retention of some communicative phrases which would be regularly used in daily communicative exchanges. Furthermore, giving prominence to the learners' background information including their first language in material preparation, the Armenian language was utilized in order to give the meaning of the phrases to the learners.

After some preliminary preparation concerning typical utterances used in regular conversations, the teacher-made film in which two men are talking was played. One of the men was speaking the communicative phrases in Arabic and the other was translating his statements in Armenian. During this five-minute film, the utterances were transcribed in subtitle format. Afterwards, the learners as well as the researcher analyzed the film linguistically in terms of the grammar and vocabulary used in the phrases and communicatively in terms of the message transferred in the phrases. Following the integrated use of language skills in materials preparation, the learners were asked to create groups of two in order to practice the communicative phrases as well as to write a story about whatever they had watched in the film. During all the stages of the following activities, the researchers were observing the learners to help them if they had any problem concerning the usage or use of the target language.

Figure 1: Teacher-made material
Adapted from http://www.youtube.com

Authentic Materials

Peacock (1997) refers to authentic materials as the ones which "…have been produced to fulfill some social purpose in the language community." In order to use authentic materials in the classroom teachers can use a wide variety of resources such as newspapers, films, magazines, internet, and set forth. However, teachers need to consider some elements in order to select a good authentic material: "suitability of content" (i.e. its adaptability to the learners' purposes and requirements), "exploitability" (i.e. its objective), "readability" (i.e. its level of difficulty), and "presentation" (i.e. its appearance and long-standing results; Berardo, 2006, p. 63).

The materials prepared for authentic purposes had the same activities as the teacher-made materials except that the five-minute film was an extract from an Arabic film produced for native Arabic speakers. The film had some dialogues including the same communicative exchanges as the above materials and some extra wordings and phrases which helped the students consider it as an authentic material. Furthermore, the film contained Arabic as well as Armenian subtitles.

Figure 2: Authentic material
Downloaded from http://www.youtube.com with the addition of subtitles

Pretest and Posttest

Sixty most common Arabic phrases which have been regularly used in normal conversational exchanges were utilized in the pretest (*r* = .73) in order to find out the unfamiliar ones to the learners. Among them 40 least known phrases were selected as the target communicative phrases. One week after the treatment which was for five sessions, a posttest (*r* = .85) was given containing the 40 unfamiliar phrases to reveal the effectiveness of different materials in terms of learning the target communicative phrases. The results of descriptive statistics in Table 1 demonstrate that the authentic materials group acquired the mean number of 14.60 unfamiliar phrases and the teacher-made materials group acquired the mean number of 29.93 unfamiliar phrases. The tests which had the same administration circumstances including rubrics and time required the participants to write the L1 translation of the target items. The scoring procedure was between zero to one devoted to incorrect to correct answers, respectively. On account of having a finely-tuned scoring, Laufer (2008b; as cited in Walsh, 2009) devoted half a score to answers with approximately similar translations of the communicative phrases. In addition, the research team asked more experienced teachers to rate answers which were not clearly correct or incorrect.

Data Collection Procedure

Arabic Language Proficiency Test allowed us to select two sample groups similar in terms of their level of proficiency. Two days after administering the pretest, the researchers explained to the two experimental groups about the purpose and procedure of the experiment in the students' own language. Besides, the role of each group was clarified in order to let the learners show their real ability in our study. In fact, the researchers indicated that the learners would have explicit instruction of some communicative phrases through films accompanied by some additional exercises for six weeks as the period between pretest and posttest.

In the initial stage of each session the learners experienced some warm-up activities about the communicative phrases under consideration which were designed to be taught in the same session. In other words, the researchers tried to activate the learners' background knowledge about what they would express in their ordinary interactions. Afterwards, the two experimental groups watched two pieces of film each one for five minutes with the difference that the teacher-made material group watched a piece of authentic film for the first five minutes in addition to a piece of teacher-made film for the second five minutes and the authentic material group watched the same piece of authentic film as the teacher-made material group for the first five minutes and a different piece of authentic

film for the second five minutes. To put it simply, while teaching the same four to five communicative expressions to both groups at each session, the first group experienced two authentic pieces of films and the second group experienced both authentic and teacher-made pieces of films. Then the learners along with the researchers examined the film formally and communicatively to better elaborate them to their previously learned schema in their long-term memory. Next, learners in the classes worked in pairs in order to interact with each other using the communicative phrases and to assess each other's writing of a story about the film. The researchers were monitoring these processes in order to help the learners have a suitable communicate with each other in the target language.

This study was conducted in the usual class time so that teachers could teach four to five Arabic communicative phrases to the learners for about 25 minutes in each session. One week after the treatment which lasted for five sessions, a posttest containing the same instructed phrases in the treatment was administered in order to find the difference between the effect of authentic and teacher-made materials in teaching an RTL language to the Armenian students. The posttest requiring the participants to write the Armenian meaning of the phrases was administered in 30 minutes.

Data Analysis

The graphical and statistical analyzing tools helped us to reveal if the distribution of the scores were normal. K-S normality index was applied to clarify whether the posttest scores of the experimental groups were normal demonstrated that at the p < .05 level normality assumption was met: p = .092. As a result, the parametric *t-test* was applied in order to unravel if any of the experimental groups was significantly different from another one.

Results

This study examined the difference which the authentic and teacher-made materials can have on AFL students in learning 40 new communicative phrases. Scoring the number of correctly translated phrases for each participant consisted the figures of our study. Due to the normal distribution of the data, the parametric *t-test* statistical tool was run. Table 1 demonstrates the descriptive statistics for the scores of authentic and teacher-made material groups. The figures in column *M* refer to the number of the phrases translated correctly. The statistical results in this table indicate that considering learning the communicative Arabic phrases the participants in the teacher-made material group (*M* = 29.93, *SD* = 5.86) could get a higher mean score in comparison with the authentic

material group (*M* = 14.60, *SD* = 5.89). As can be seen, the standard deviation of each experimental group shows that the spreading of the scores around the mean is similar. In other words, we can claim that they were somehow homogeneous groups. Understandably, the teacher-made material group could reveal better results in learning the phrases.

group	N	M	SD
Authentic material	30	14.60	5.89
teacher-made material	30	29.93	5.86

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the authentic and teacher-made material groups

The independent sample *t-test* (Table 2) run to make a comparison between the teacher-made material group and the authentic material group showed that the variances of scores were similar across the two groups. Furthermore, the statistics in the results unraveled a significant difference in the mean scores of the two experimental groups; $t(58) = 10.100$, $p = .000$ (two tailed); $p < .05$. In addition, a large effect size ($d = .63$) was perceived taking Cohen's (1988) criteria into account. Referring to Cohen (1988) criteria, we can find a small effect size for those between 0.0 and 0.2, a medium effect size for those between 0.3 and 0.5, and a large effect size for those between 0.6 and 0.9.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	0.002	0.961	10.100	58	0.000

Table 2: Independent samples t-test

It can be declared that the null hypothesis was rejected since a statistically significant difference was found between the mean scores of the two experimental groups. On the whole, it can be concluded that using the teacher-made materials and authentic materials by the two groups could create a difference in teaching English as an RTL scripted language to Armenian learners.

Discussion and Conclusions

The current research compared two different types of materials in order to find out which one of them can be helpful for teaching an RTL scripted language to Armenian learners. The research hypothesis was formulated to examine whether authentic and teacher-made materials could make any difference in learning the

Arabic communicative phrases by Armenian students. We put learning the target communicative phrases as the ultimate goal of our experiment. In other words, teacher-made and authentic materials were designed to reinforce learning such phrases. In addition, upon using learners' background information in material preparation, the learners' first language was used to make the communicative phrases understood to the learners. As a matter of fact, this study investigated the behavior of the teacher-made material group watching the teacher-made film and the authentic film and the authentic material group watching two authentic films in order to find which one might have better results in learning these communicative phrases in an RTL scripted language.

This investigation suggested that the group studying the teacher-made material showed significantly better results compared to the group studying the authentic material. Understandably, the teacher-made material group experiencing both authentic and teacher-made materials could have more beneficial results for Armenian learners in learning Arabic communicative phrases. It might be suggested that while learning a Semitic language (i.e., RTL scripted language) or in particular its communicative phrases, could be difficult for learners L1 is an Indo-European language (i.e. LTR scripted language), teacher-made materials may support the learning of communicative phrases.

The findings of the current study do not support some aspects of previous research findings (e.g., Berardo, 2006; Heitler, 2005) concerning the superiority of authentic materials. This difference can be explained by referring to Heitler (2005) who believes that authentic materials can disappoint learners and in effect can decrease their level of achievement. In addition, our results differ from some studies in literature suggesting that teacher-made materials can not bring about encouraging results due to their quality (Block, 1991).

On the other hand, the obtained results are consistent with those of some other studies in the literature (e.g., Block, 1991) that draw our attention to the importance of teacher-made materials. A possible explanation for this result might be the synthetic and consistent language of the teacher-made materials (Bearado, 2006). Some factors such as contextualization, fulfilling individual needs, personalization, and timeliness can be regarded as the other possible explanations for the usefulness of teacher-made materials (Block, 1991).

On the whole, learning a foreign language and in particular a language from a different family from the learners' own native language is somewhat difficult.

However, considering using such materials in syllabuses is worthwhile. This research suggests that teacher-made materials composed of both teacher-made materials and authentic materials can be more useful in learning such languages in comparison with mere authentic materials.

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Urdu vocabulary, script and grammar: A learner's suggestions

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David Young
Leeds Beckett University
d.young@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Abstract

The type of learner who is learning Urdu is changing: learners of Urdu may now be older professionals who lack language backgrounds and are learning Urdu as a first second language for either personal reasons (such as marriage into the South Asian diaspora) or professional reasons (such as working with Urdu-speaking colleagues or customers). This paper argues that current resources for Urdu are often inappropriate for this type of learner. It details the author's suggestions as a learner of Urdu, namely: that (1) vocabulary resources for Urdu should include everyday vocabulary and indicate the gender, category and pronunciation of any entry, (2) there is a more efficient way of teaching Urdu script that does not centre on four letter forms ("final", "medial", "initial" and "isolated") and (3) there is a more efficient way of describing certain grammatical features of Urdu, such as categories of word, the oblique case and gender. This paper attempts thereby to break away from more traditional ways of teaching grammar and script. As an avenue of future research, it suggests that the same principles suggested for increasing the efficiency of specific grammatical descriptions in Urdu could also be applied in more widely taught languages.

Keywords: *Urdu vocabulary*, *Urdu script*, *Urdu grammar*, *pedagogical grammar*, *learner suggestions*

Introduction

This paper presents a learner's experience of learning Urdu. It suggests that the type of learner who is learning Urdu is changing and describes the implications of this change on resources available for learners. It suggests that current resources are often problematic for this type of learner and the author's own suggestions are presented in terms of the changes that could be made to (1) dictionaries and

vocabulary resources, (2) the way Urdu script is currently taught and (3) the analysis of certain features of Urdu grammar.

Urdu language learners: Two stereotypes

Two types of Urdu language learners might be posited. The first type might be considered young (late-teenage to early twenties) learners, who may have recently completed A Levels in more widely taught languages, such as French and German (Brown, 2009). These learners may now be studying Urdu as part of a South Asian Studies degree or an Islamic Studies programme, either at Bachelors or Masters level. Being younger, and being full-time students, they may not have many professional or personal commitments. This second type of Urdu learner might be identified as older professionals, who are learning Urdu in a part-time community college setting, where hours per week are limited (see Brown, 2009 for a discussion of the demographics of lesser taught language students in general). These learners may already be established both professionally and personally and their motives for learning Urdu may be similarly professional or personal; they may have married into or work with members of the South Asian community (see Phinney et al., 2001 for a wider discussion of the personal motivations of lesser taught language learners). The last time such learners attempted to learn a language may have been when they were school pupils (which may have been around 20 or 30 years prior) and they may not be as comfortable accessing and using the online materials that are necessary due to the comparative lack of resources for lesser taught languages (see Godwin-Jones 2013; Winke et al., 2010). These learners may have no formal qualifications at all; for all intents, Urdu may be their first second language (see Wynne, no date, for a further general discussion of adult learners).

These two stereotypes are of course extremes and such students do exist for all languages; however, for Urdu, it is perhaps the second type of learner that either predominates or will predominate in the future. This could be due to the growing South Asian diaspora and the subsequent interest in Urdu among people who are related to, marrying into or working with those communities (see Anderson, 2011 for a discussion of learners who begin a lesser taught language with an existing background or relationship to that language).

If the second type of learner is the more dominant, this has an important implication for the materials that are available for these learners. As a learner of Urdu, I argue in this paper that current materials for Urdu, unlike materials for more widely taught languages, are in some ways inappropriate for this second

type of learner. Specifically, I have identified three areas in which current materials available for Urdu learners might be improved: (1) dictionaries and other vocabulary resources, (2) the current way of teaching Urdu script and (3) standard presentations of certain features of Urdu grammar.

Urdu dictionaries: Three areas of learner frustration

It is my experience that there are three main issues with many of the Urdu dictionaries that are available currently for learners. In the following discussion, it is important to consider both traditional printed dictionaries and similar online vocabulary resources, given that, for many learners, the first stop when looking up a word in their target language is an online search engine or mobile app (see Blackenship & Hinnebusch, 2013, for a survey of current digital resources for many lesser taught languages, including Urdu).

Gender and parts of speech

The first obvious problem with many currently available dictionaries and online resources is that they often lack the extra grammatical information that is considered standard in dictionaries for more widely taught languages, namely: gender and parts of speech. As a typical example, one might search for the word "watch" in the online vocabulary resource urduword.com (2011).Two results are given (see Figure 1).

English	Urdu Script	Roman Urdu
Watch	گھڑی	gharhi
Watch	دیکھنا	daykhna

Figure 1: Results of the search for "watch" using urduword.com (2011)

There are, of course, multiple meanings of the word "watch" in English. There is the verb "watch" (as in: "I *watched* that new series on iPlayer") and the noun "watch" ("I don't wear a *watch* these days"). It is essential for any learner to be able to distinguish the two; however, the results shown in urduword.com (2011) do not distinguish between these two interpretations. Of course, a learner who is familiar with the grammar of Urdu might be able to decode that دیکھنا denotes the verb "watch", given that دیکھنا ends in the infinitive ending نا, and thus may then, by a process of elimination, presume that گھڑی denotes the noun "watch".

Furthermore, if the learner was able to do this, he or she might then work out that گھڑی is a feminine noun, given that it ends in ی.

But no such assumption can or should be made for any learner—and particularly for learners of Urdu, who, as mentioned previously, may not have the grammatical background to know what a noun, verb or infinitive ending is in the first place.

Who is the audience?

There also seems to be some confusion in some dictionaries and online resources about the intended audience. For instance, in the previous example, urduword.com (2011), the problem described is only an issue for English-speaking learners of Urdu. Not including gender or parts of speech is not an issue for Urdu-speaking learners of English because these learners would already know that دیکھنا is an infinitive and گھڑی is a noun (whether they are conscious of these formal terms or not). It is my impression that many vocabulary resources that are billed for beginners are not, in fact, designed for beginner *English*-speaking learners of Urdu at all—instead, they seem to be designed for *Urdu*-speaking learners of English.

For instance, the first impression a learner might have of the print dictionary Crawley (2002) is that this resource is a dictionary for English speakers who are beginning to learn Urdu. On closer inspection, the dictionary is clearly designed for native-speaking Urdu learners of English. Although the learner can look up an English word and a definition is given in Urdu of that word, only rarely is there a one-to-one translation that an English-speaking learner might easily understand. Although the dictionary is clearly labelled as an "English-to-Urdu" dictionary, it could be argued that it is only really useful for Urdu speakers translating a word they encounter in English—not for English speakers who want an Urdu translation of an English word.

The difference is subtle but I believe indicative of the "real" intended audience: Urdu speakers. Evidence for this is the fact that phonetic indication is only given for English words, along with parts of speech for the English words—no such information is given for Urdu translations (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Sample entries from Crawley (2002)

The use of "unpointed" Urdu script also indicates the "real" audience. Any resource for beginners (if the audience is intended to be English-speaking learners) that contains "unpointed" Urdu script or that does not otherwise indicate the pronunciation of a given word is not going to be as useful as one that does (which is also the case with resources for other Arabic script languages). This is like producing an Urdu-to-English dictionary in which all the English words lack vowels:

بلی	*ct*	n.	a small feline animal
بچے کا پلنگ	*ct*	n.	a baby's bed
کاٹنا	*ct*	v.	to shear or separate with a blade
پیارا	*ct*	a.	pretty or lovely

Without an indication of how to pronounce words in Urdu script (through either the in-built use of symbols such as کسره, فتحہ and ضمہ or an English-script approximation of pronunciation), such a resource is primarily only useful for learners who *already* know how to pronounce those words—namely: Urdu-speaking learners of English or, more usually, Urdu-speaking learners who are learning how to write in Urdu:
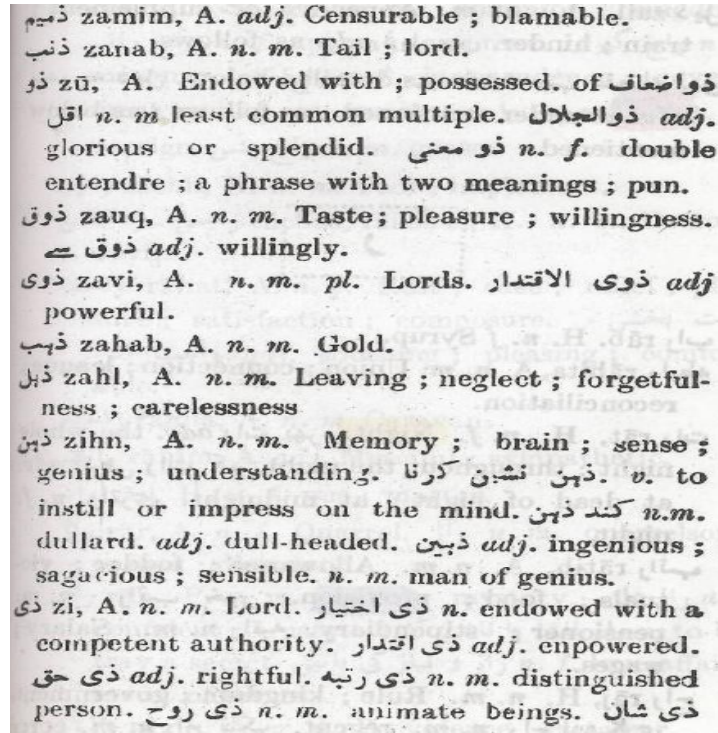
بلی	cat	n.	a small feline animal
بچے کا پلنگ	cot	n.	a baby's bed
کاٹنا	cut	v.	to shear or separate with a blade
پیارا	cute	a.	pretty or lovely

It may also be the case that these authors are presuming that learners will be learning in a formal classroom context—that all learners have access to a teacher who can help scaffold their learning and explain complex structures. Again, no such assumption should be made for any learner, especially for older professionals, who may not have the time to access a classroom context. Likewise, it has been my experience that classes that are billed for "beginners" in Urdu often are, for all practical purposes, Urdu literacy classes for native speakers, who, as mentioned above, already know how to pronounce words in Urdu and only need to match their mental pronunciations with the shapes of the words on the page.

رجل *or* مرد ,آدمی *: "man"?*

The third issue with many dictionaries for Urdu is that many of the vocabulary items included are not ones that are used in the everyday spoken Urdu that beginners presumably want to acquire (particularly those learners with spoken communicative goals, such as communicating with Urdu-speaking relatives or colleagues). There may be several reasons for this. One reason may be an appeal to an earlier period in which words of Persian or Arabic origin were more commonly (and consciously) used in Urdu. This persists in modern times, as the inclusion of Arabic and Persian-origin words further distinguishes Urdu from its sister language—and political and linguistic rival—Hindi (see Khan, 2006 and Rahman, 2011).

An example of this might be found in Sabri (2001). In many ways, this is an excellent resource for learners. In addition to indicating the pronunciation of Urdu words, this print dictionary also indicates gender and parts of speech; likewise, English translations are short and readable. However, it is not a two-way dictionary and the reason for this is perhaps evident in the fact that the etymology of each word is given (words are identified as Arabic, English, Persian, Turkish or Sanskrit origin) (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Sample entries from Sabri (2001)

Essentially, many words that are included in this resource are not used in modern, everyday Urdu—at least for the translation given. For instance, in addition to آدمی, this resource also contains both the Arabic رجل, the Persian مرد, and even the Sanskrit پرش—all of which are translated as "man"; in fact, if this resource were a two-way dictionary, for any given English word, multiple translations would have to be given to account for words of different etymologies. Clearly, as a resource for beginners, and one that should reflect the modern use of Urdu, this is somewhat impractical.

If it can be done for Hindi…

The excuse for these three problems cannot be that Urdu is a lesser taught language or that Urdu is not a "European" language, which are often posited as somehow "more familiar". After English, the top five most spoken languages in England and Wales are Panjabi, Urdu, Bengali and Gujarati, with Polish coming in second only due to recent migration (see Language in England and Wales, 2011, 2013). Urdu is an Indo-European language (Pereltsvaig, 2012; Lewis et al., 2015) and so shares structural and lexical similarities with not only English but also other "European" languages (see Pereltsvaig, 2012 and Schmidt, 2004); the fact that Urdu is written in a different script should not justify viewing it as somehow "exotic" and accepting materials that would perhaps be considered problematic for more widely taught languages like French, German and Spanish.

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Equally, there are precedents for effective vocabulary resources for lesser taught languages. Snell (2004) is a resource for Hindi that includes all the positive points identified above and none of the negative points. This resource is a print dictionary of everyday words in Hindi for a beginning learner. Not only is it a two-way dictionary that identifies both gender and parts of speech but it also offers short and simple translations, includes the original Hindi script and an indication of pronunciation, details useful related expressions for common words and highlights words that may be particularly problematic for the English-speaking learner (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Sample entries from Snell (2004)

If such resources can be produced for Hindi, then they can certainly be produced for Urdu. (Since this paper was written, a new, two-way Urdu dictionary that indicates gender and pronunciation and focuses on everyday vocabulary has been published. See Masud, 2015, for details of this excellent resource.)

The current method of teaching Urdu script: Two problematic traditions

The way that Urdu script is usually taught also presents two problems for the learner. The first applies to many resources for Urdu while the second applies to resources for both Urdu and, in fact, all Arabic script languages.

نستعليق *or* نسخ : *Printed or cursive?*

While resources for Arabic (and often for Persian) use the نسخ style of Arabic script, resources for Urdu often use the نستعليق version of the script (as an example, see Delacy, 2010 and see Eteraz, 2013 for an interesting discussion of the necessity of using نسخ online):

نستعليق

نسخ

When analysing these two styles, it is immediately apparent that, for a learner, نستعليق will probably be harder to read and acquire. One reason for this is because, whereas نسخ is written on a single horizontal line, words in نستعليق often (but not always) descend diagonally:

نستعليق

نسخ

Likewise, نستعليق letter forms are less obvious; نسخ letters are more uniform in terms of both size, form and the placement of dots above or below the letters:

نسخ

English-speaking beginner learners (or, indeed, Urdu-speaking learners beginning to learn the script) would most likely find resources written in نسخ easier to read; likewise, they would likely find writing words in نسخ easier. Once a learner has learned the نسخ style, he or she could then move on to the more difficult نستعليق. In my view, it is much harder to start with نستعليق, as many resources billed for beginners do (see, for example, Delacy 2010 and Asani & Hyder, 2008)—doing so is like learning how to write cursively in English before learning printed letters:

Kaun sa ziaadah aasaan hei?   *Kaun sa ziaadah aasaan hei?*

"Bodies" and "tails": An alternative to learning four letter forms

There is, however, a more fundamental problem with how most resources teach Urdu script. The current way of teaching Urdu script asserts that each letter has four forms: a "final" form, "medial" form, "initial" form and "isolated" form (see Hashmi, 1984, 1986, Delacy, 2008, James, 2011, Taj & Caldwell, no date and The Arabic Letters – Different positions: Initial, medial and final, no date as examples); essentially, it is the learner's job to memorise four forms for each Urdu script letter (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Final, medial, initial and isolated letter forms
(adapted from James, 2011)

There is, however, an arguably more logical and efficient way of learning the same amount of information (see Young, 2013 or Young, 2014a for a fuller discussion of this method). Essentially, this involves ignoring the final and medial forms. This is possible because the vast majority of Urdu script letters consist of only two parts: the first part is the "body" and the second part is the "tail". The body can be considered the core shape of each letter; when writing Urdu script, the body of the letter is like the letter on a keyboard. Bodies appear next to each other in exactly the same manner that letters in Roman script follow one from the other, the only difference being that Urdu script letters are written so close together that they actually touch:

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ک و ثد شد ثد یپ شد

کوشیثش
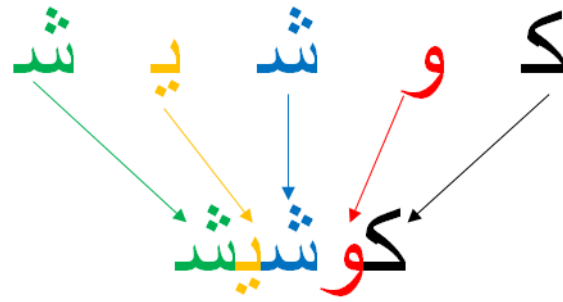
Viewed this way, the learner does not even have to think about final, medial, initial or isolated forms at all; if the body of each Urdu script letter is considered the primary element that is learned, all the learner has to do is add one letter to the next—in exactly the same way that Roman script letters appear after each other when typing.

The one difference of course is that, in Urdu script, at the end of words, most final bodies take tails:

کوشیش

However, tails are not that "exotic". In fact, English has a similar feature: *capital letters*. At the beginning of some English words, any given letter may be written in a special form: a capital letter. Just as, for each letter in Urdu script, the learner needs to learn two forms (the body and tail), the learner of English also needs to learn two forms (upper and lowercase) for each letter in English script (which is arguably a bigger challenge than learning a simple tail extension). When learning Urdu script, instead of four different forms for every letter, all the learner needs to learn for any letter is a body and any attached tail:

گ ف ب ا

Of course, some bodies do not have tails; therefore, at the end of a word, no tail is attached:

تیز

Likewise, there are some Urdu script letters that are exceptions; for example, ە, ی and ع. It would perhaps be more efficient learning these letters the usual way, namely: learning the final, medial, initial and isolated forms separately (see Figure 6). However, overall, simply learning bodies and tails seems to me a much more efficient way of learning Urdu script.

final	medial	initial	isolated
ـه	ـهـ	هـ	ە
ـی	ـيـ	یـ	ی
ـع	ـعـ	عـ	ع

Figure 6: Final, medial, initial and isolated forms of ە, ی and ع
(adapted from James, 2011)

Redundant grammatical analyses: Multiple word categories, the oblique case and gender

The third and final problem that is evident in many resources for Urdu is the over-analysis of grammar. In any language resource, even those resources written for more widely taught languages, a certain degree of grammatical terminology is of course required; however the same grammatical terminology that may be required for beginners in French, German or Spanish may not necessarily be required for beginners in Urdu. This section suggests how the traditional analyses of three features of Urdu grammar could be made more efficient.

Rebranding word categories

One way of improving efficiency in the grammatical analysis of Urdu is through reducing the amount of syntactic categories identified. As an example, most Urdu grammar resources (and, indeed, traditional grammars everywhere) would present the following words and suffixes as belonging to entirely different categories, namely: articles, demonstrative adjectives, postpositions, compound postpositions, conjunctions, interjections, suffixes and verb endings (see Schmidt, 2004 as an example):

articles		demonstrative adjectives	
ایک آدمی	ایک کتاب	یہ آدمی	وہ کتاب
ek aadmi	*ek kitaab*	*ye aadmi*	*vo kitaab*
a man	a book	this man	that book

postpositions		compound postpositions	
پاکستان سے	گھر میں	آدمی کے لئے	گھر کے اوپر
Paakistaan se	*ghar men*	*aadmi ke lie*	*ghar ke oopar*
from Pakistan	in the house	for the man	above the house

conjunctions		interjections	
اور	لیکن	ہاں	سلام
aur	*lekin*	*haan*	*salaam*
and	but	yes	hello

suffixes		verb endings	
میز	میزیں	بولنا	وہ بولے گا
mez	*mezen*	*bolna*	*vo bole ga*
table	tables	to speak	he will speak

However, there is arguably a more efficient way of analysing all these grammatical words and suffixes: by considering their *location* (again, see Young, 2013 and Young, 2014a for a fuller description of the following location-based analysis for Persian and Urdu respectively). All these different words and suffixes have one thing in common: they can be defined by their location in terms of another word. For example, instead of learning that میں is a "postposition" in Urdu, the learner simply learns that (1) it can appear after a noun in order to (2) denote "in":

<div align="center">

گھر میں

ghar men

in the house

</div>

Likewise, instead of learning that یہ can be used as a "demonstrative adjective", the learner simply needs to learn that (1) it can appear before a noun in order to (2) denote "this":

<div align="center">

یہ آدمی

ye aadmi

this man

</div>

(This word can of course appear as a singular or plural "demonstrative pronoun" and a singular or plural "third-person pronoun", which can be learned alongside other nouns). The learner simply needs to learn the position of these "helping" words in relation to the word or phrase they "help" give meaning to (whether they go before or after these words or phrases or whether they are attached to other words)—together with one meaning of the word in English. By doing so, the learner cuts out a *vast* amount of grammatical terminology. As a result, "articles", "demonstrative adjectives", "postpositions", "compound postpositions", "conjunctions", "interjections", "suffixes" and "verb endings" can thus be considered members of the *same* category: "helpers" or "helping words".

Rebranding the oblique case

The second example of the over-analysis of grammar can be found in descriptions of the Urdu "oblique case". Traditional grammatical analyses of Urdu nouns identify two *genders*, masculine and feminine, two *numbers*, singular and plural, and two *cases*, nominative and oblique (see Asani & Hyder, 2008, Schmidt, 2004 and Ur Rahman, 1998 as examples). Theoretically, there are therefore *eight* possible forms for nouns in Urdu: masculine nominative singular, masculine nominative plural, masculine oblique singular, masculine oblique plural, feminine nominative singular, feminine nominative plural, feminine oblique singular and feminine oblique plural. These cases are illustrated below for the nouns "لڑکا – "*laṛka*" – "boy", "گھر" – "*ghar*" – "house", "لڑکی" – "*laṛki*" – "girl" and "میز" – "*mez*" – "table" (see Table 1).

		nominative		oblique	
singular	masculine	لڑکا	*laṛka*	لڑکے	*laṛke*
		گھر	*ghar*	گھر	*ghar*
	feminine	لڑکی	*laṛki*	لڑکی	*laṛki*
		میز	*mez*	میز	*mez*
plural	masculine	لڑکے	*laṛke*	لڑکوں	*laṛkon*
		گھر	*ghar*	گھروں	*gharon*
	feminine	لڑکیاں	*laṛkiaan*	لڑکیوں	*laṛkion*
		میزیں	*mezen*	میزوں	*mezon*

Table 1: Traditional noun declensions in Urdu

Likewise, many resources (such as Asani & Hyder, 2008 and Schmidt, 2004) suggest the same for adjectives. Since adjectives often change in Urdu to "agree with" the noun they are describing, adjectives are also presented as having *eight* possible manifestations. These manifestations are illustrated below using the adjective "اچھا" – "*accha*" – "good" (see Table 2).

		nominative		oblique	
singular	masculine	اچھا لڑکا	*accha laṛka*	اچھے لڑکے	*acche laṛke*
		اچھا گھر	*accha ghar*	اچھے گھر	*acche ghar*
	feminine	اچھی لڑکی	*acchi laṛki*	اچھی لڑکی	*acchi laṛki*
		اچھی میز	*acchi mez*	اچھی میز	*acchi mez*
plural	masculine	اچھے لڑکے	*acche laṛke*	اچھے لڑکوں	*acche laṛkon*
		اچھے گھر	*acche ghar*	اچھے گھروں	*acche gharon*
	feminine	اچھی لڑکیاں	*acchi laṛkiaan*	اچھی لڑکیوں	*acchi laṛkion*
		اچھی میزیں	*acchi mezen*	اچھی میزوں	*acchi mezon*

Table 2: Traditional adjective agreement in Urdu

All this information can be radically "compressed" into a more efficient grammatical analysis. As is evident in Table 2, both nouns and adjectives are essentially the same in the nominative and oblique cases; there is subsequently no need to describe two cases at all. In other words, ignoring for the moment the subsequent exceptions, we can simply remove the oblique case from the analysis of nouns in Urdu (see Table 3).

				(remaining exceptions in RED)	
singular	masculine	اچھا لڑکا	*accha laṛka*	اچھے لڑکے	*acche laṛke*
		اچھا گھر	*accha ghar*	اچھے گھر	*acche ghar*
	feminine	اچھی لڑکی	*acchi laṛki*		
		اچھی میز	*acchi mez*		
plural	masculine	اچھے لڑکے	*acche laṛke*	اچھے لڑکوں	*acche laṛkon*
		اچھے گھر	*acche ghar*	اچھے گھروں	*acche gharon*
	feminine	اچھی لڑکیاں	*acchi laṛkiaan*	اچھی لڑکیوں	*acchi laṛkion*
		اچھی میزیں	*acchi mezen*	اچھی میزوں	*acchi mezon*

Table 3: Removing the oblique case (with remaining exceptions)

If the oblique case is essentially deleted (and thus the need for a separate nominative case similarly redundant), it may seem that there are a lot of exceptions to account for—and, perhaps, too many exceptions to justify removing the oblique case in the first place. These exceptions include all nouns in the oblique plural, masculine singular nouns that end in ا and adjectives that describe masculine oblique singular nouns (see Table 3). However, the analysis is justified because these exceptions can be explained very easily.

First, since oblique forms occur in Urdu when the noun is followed by a postposition (and, in the few structures that break this rule, an *implied* postposition can be posited), the oblique can simply be "rebranded" as "what happens before a postposition" (see Table 4).

				before a postposition	
singular	masculine	اچھا لڑکا	*accha laṛka*	اچھے لڑکے	*acche laṛke*
		اچھا گھر	*accha ghar*	اچھے گھر	*acche ghar*
	feminine	اچھی لڑکی	*acchi laṛki*		
		اچھی میز	*acchi mez*		
plural	masculine	اچھے لڑکے	*acche laṛke*	اچھے لڑکوں	*acche laṛkon*
		اچھے گھر	*acche ghar*	اچھے گھروں	*acche gharon*
	feminine	اچھی لڑکیاں	*acchi laṛkiaan*	اچھی لڑکیوں	*acchi laṛkion*
		اچھی میزیں	*acchi mezen*	اچھی میزوں	*acchi mezon*

Table 4: Rebranding the oblique case

Second, we can say that all plural nouns are made to end in وں before a postposition; this accounts for all oblique plural exceptions (see Table 5).

				before a postposition	
singular	masculine	اچھا لڑکا	*accha laṛka*	اچھے لڑکے	*acche laṛke*
		اچھا گھر	*accha ghar*	اچھے گھر	*acche ghar*
	feminine	اچھی لڑکی	*acchi laṛki*		
		اچھی میز	*acchi mez*		
plural	masculine	اچھے لڑکے	*acche laṛke*	لڑکوں	*laṛk**on***
		اچھے گھر	*acche ghar*	گھروں	*ghar**on***
	feminine	اچھی لڑکیاں	*acchi laṛkiaan*	لڑکیوں	*laṛki**on***
		اچھی میزیں	*acchi mezen*	میزوں	*mez**on***

Table 5: Accounting for oblique plural exceptions

Finally, to account for our remaining exceptions (masculine singular nouns that end in ا and adjectives that describe masculine oblique singular nouns), an equally simple rule can be used: a masculine noun *acts plural* before a postposition (see Table 6).

				before a postposition	
singular	masculine	اچھا لڑکا	*accha laṛka*	اچھے لڑکے	*acche laṛke*
		اچھا گھر	*accha ghar*	اچھے گھر	*acche ghar*
	feminine	اچھی لڑکی	*acchi laṛki*		
		اچھی میز	*acchi mez*		
plural	masculine	اچھے لڑکے	*acche laṛke*	لڑکوں	*laṛk**on***
		اچھے گھر	*acche ghar*	گھروں	*ghar**on***
	feminine	اچھی لڑکیاں	*acchi laṛkiaan*	لڑکیوں	*laṛki**on***
		اچھی میزیں	*acchi mezen*	میزوں	*mez**on***

Table 6: Accounting for masculine oblique singular exceptions

Therefore, instead of positing two noun cases in Urdu, we can simply use two rules. First, before a postposition, masculine nouns act plural and, second, before

a postposition, plural nouns are made to end in وں (see Young, 2014a for an example of a resource that uses these two rules as an alternative standard analysis). These two rules, which can be described in a single sentence, can theoretically replace the vast amount of analysis usually used to describe nominative and oblique cases in Urdu (see, as examples, the discussion of the oblique case in Asani & Hyder, 2008 or the extensive use of a multiple case-based analysis for nouns in Ur Rahman, 1998).

Rebranding gender

As mentioned in the previous section, in Urdu (and many other languages, including Arabic and the Romance languages: French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian and Spanish), traditional grammatical analyses present two genders for nouns: masculine and feminine (Asani & Hyder, 2008; Schmidt, 2004; Ur Rahman, 1998). However, there are alternative—and arguably more efficient—ways of analysing "gender".

The traditional (and somewhat muddled) analysis of gender is that, when a language is described as having two genders, what this means is that there are nouns that are "naturally" male (i.e., those that denote human males) and nouns that are "naturally" female (i.e., those that denote human females) (see Table 7).

masculine			feminine		
آدمی	*aadmi*	man	عورت	*áurat*	woman
لڑکا	*laṛka*	boy	لڑکی	*laṛki*	girl
بھائی	*bhai*	brother	بہن	*behn*	sister

Table 7: Naturally masculine and feminine nouns

In terms of grammar, these two groups of nouns act differently; for example, an adjective that describes a noun may change depending on whether that noun is masculine or feminine:

میرا بھائی مجھ سے بڑا ہے
mera bhai mujh se baṛa hei
my brother is older than me

میری بہن مجھ سے بڑی ہے
meri behn mujh se baṛi hei
my sister is older than me

In the languages mentioned above, all nouns that denote non-human objects *also* act as if they were denoting either human males or human females (see Table 8).

masculine			feminine		
گھر	*ghar*	house	میز	*mez*	table
دروازہ	*darvaazah*	door	کرسی	*kursi*	chair
پانی	*paani*	water	دیوار	*deevaar*	wall

Table 8: Non-human masculine and feminine nouns

وہ دروازہ کالا ہے
vo darvaazah kaala hei
that door is black

یہ کرسی کالی ہے
ye kursi kaali hei
this chair is black

Another traditional way of analysing gender is to remove the "masculine" and "feminine" labels completely and simply say that, in those languages mentioned above, there are two groups of nouns: Group A and Group B. Under this analysis, it just so happens that nouns that denote human males belong to one group and nouns that denote human females belong to another group (see Table 9).

Group A			Group B		
آدمی	*aadmi*	man	عورت	*áurat*	woman
لڑکا	*laṛka*	boy	لڑکی	*laṛki*	girl
بھائی	*bhai*	brother	بہن	*behn*	sister
گھر	*ghar*	house	میز	*mez*	table
دروازہ	*darvaazah*	door	کرسی	*kursi*	chair
پانی	*paani*	water	دیوار	*deevaar*	wall

Table 9: Group A and Group B nouns

However, there is a third way to analyse gender (see Young, 2014a for a fuller discussion of the following alternative analysis). In all the languages mentioned above, the rules for masculine nouns are, essentially, the *default* rules. For instance, the dictionary form of all adjectives is listed in the masculine singular:

لمبا
lamba
long

ایک لمبی میز
ek lambi mez
a long table

Likewise, groups of mixed-gender nouns are treated as grammatically masculine:

وہ آدمی اچھے ہیں
vo aadmi acche hein
those men are good

وہ عورتیں اچھی ہیں
vo áuraten acchi hein
those women are good

وہ آدمی اور عورتیں اچھے ہیں
vo aadmi aur áuraten acche hein
those men and women are good

Given that the rules for masculine nouns are the default, there is actually no need to divide nouns into groups at all. In a sense, they can all be considered "masculine"—or a hypothetical neutral category (see Table 10).

nouns		
لڑکا	*laṛka*	boy
بھائی	*bhai*	brother
کرسی	*kursi*	chair
دروازہ	*darvaazah*	door
لڑکی	*laṛki*	girl
گھر	*ghar*	house
آدمی	*aadmi*	man
بہن	*behn*	sister
میز	*mez*	table
دیوار	*deevaar*	wall
پانی	*paani*	water
عورت	*áurat*	woman

Table 10: Removing gender

However, the problem then remains of explaining the changes that take place with "feminine" nouns. As a solution, we can *start* by positing special rules that occur when talking about human females; for instance, adjectives ending in ا change this letter to ی when describing a feminine noun:

وہ لڑکا اچھا ہے
vo laṛka accha hei
that boy is good

یہ لڑکی اچھی ہے
ye laṛki acchi hei
this girl is good

It is *then* a conceptually easier step to consider examples in English of calling a ship or a country "she" and applying that same principle to Urdu—but on a much larger scale—to account for *all* feminine nouns. For example, in Urdu, instead of saying that کرسی is a "feminine noun", we might simply say that the noun کرسی acts *as though it denoted a woman* (see Table 11).

nouns		
لڑکا	*laṛka*	boy
بھائی	*bhai*	brother
کرسی	*kursi*	chair
دروازہ	*darvaazah*	door
لڑکی	*laṛki*	girl
گھر	*ghar*	house
آدمی	*aadmi*	man
بہن	*behn*	sister

nouns		
میز	*mez*	table
دیوار	*deevaar*	wall
پانی	*paani*	water
عورت	*áurat*	woman

Table 11: Nouns that act as though they denoted women

To summarise, in this alternative analysis, nouns are not divided into two syntactic categories (masculine and feminine). All nouns are treated the same and the learner presumes that any noun he or she encounters uses the default ("masculine") rules. To account for changes that take place with so-called "feminine" nouns, we can postulate two rules. First, nouns denoting women undergo special changes (such as the change in adjectives mentioned above). Second, some nouns that denote non-human objects, such as books and chairs and walls, are referred to *as if they were women*. What this means is that, instead of learning a "masculine" or "feminine" label for *all* nouns, we are simply learning a special feature of *some* non-human nouns.

This method has two advantages: (1) it is arguably a more efficient way of presenting something as notoriously confusing as gender in Urdu and (2) it is perhaps conceptually easier for English-speaking learners (especially since calling non-human nouns "she" in English is not without precedent and thinking of books and chairs and walls as "women" instead of "feminine nouns" can be introduced in a pedagogically fun way).

In addition, by combining this alternative view of gender with the alternative rules for the "oblique case" discussed in the previous section, we can further "decompress" noun declensions in Urdu (see Table 12) (and see Young, 2014a as an example of how this approach could be incorporated into teaching materials).

				before a postposition	
	singular	اچھا گھر	*accha ghar*	اچھے گھر	*acche ghar*
	plural	اچھے گھر	*acche ghar*	گھروں	*ghar***on**
denoting	singular	اچھی لڑکی	*acchi laṛki*		
women	plural	اچھی لڑکیاں	*acchi laṛki***aan**	لڑکیوں	*laṛki***on**
*Some nouns denoting non-human objects act as though they denoted women.					

Table 12: Rebranding both gender and the oblique case

Implications for other languages

The three examples illustrated so far are measures that might be taken to make resources more appropriate for learners of Urdu. To recap, these measures

include (1) dictionaries and other vocabulary resources that indicate gender, parts of speech and pronunciation and that contain modern vocabulary that is actually used in everyday language, (2) a more efficient way of teaching Urdu script that concentrates on bodies and tails and (3) more efficient grammatical descriptions that dispense with redundant terminology and analyses.

To return to the discussion of the types of learners who are learning Urdu, I would argue that these measures are particularly important if these learners are not learning the language full time, have professional or personal commitments, have no language or linguistic background and are learning Urdu as their first second language. If the majority of Urdu learners do fit this category, it is even more important to make any vocabulary resource, any way of acquiring the script and any grammatical description as efficient and learner friendly as possible. As Shaw wrote over 20 years ago:

> If Urdu and Hindi are to be recognised as languages of equal status to other modern languages… then they need to be taught by methods that are appropriate for the students, and teach them what they want to say.
>
> (1991, p.vii)

This is not to say that grammatical descriptions in "other modern languages" are perfect—far from it. Specifically, the measures that could be taken in Urdu in terms of categories of word, noun case and gender could in fact be applied to *all* languages—not just Urdu. Likewise, although the need to take such measures is perhaps more urgent, given the type of learner identified earlier and the relative scarcity of materials, it could be argued that more efficient grammatical descriptions would benefit *any* learner.

Therefore, this paper suggests, as an avenue of future research, that such measures be applied to grammatical descriptions in more widely taught languages. In fact, given that the traditional grammatical analysis of Urdu (and other relatively lesser taught languages like Arabic, Persian and Turkish) is perhaps not as entrenched or established as more widely taught languages (such as the Romance languages, English or German), there is a clear opportunity to establish new—and more efficient—alternative systems of grammatical analysis for all languages (see Young, in press, 2014b and 2014c for examples of applying the same alternative grammatical system to languages from three different language families—Arabic, Turkish and Spanish respectively).

Conclusion

In this paper, I presented my own experience as a learner of Urdu. I suggested that the type of learner that is learning Urdu is changing: increasingly, learners may be older professionals without language backgrounds, who are learning Urdu as a first second language in a part-time community college setting for personal or professional reasons. I then described the implications of this change on resources available for Urdu learners: that such resources need to reflect that these learners may have little time and lack explicit knowledge of grammatical terms. I then suggested that current resources are often inappropriate for this type of learner and highlighted three areas of improvement: (1) vocabulary resources that include everyday vocabulary and indicate gender, parts of speech and pronunciation, (2) a more efficient method of teaching Urdu script that uses bodies and tails and (3) more efficient grammatical analyses of categories of word, the oblique case and gender. Finally, I suggested an avenue of future research in which these same principles are applied to more widely taught languages.

Acknowledgements

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Learning and Teaching for
Right to Left Scripted Languages:
Realities and possibilities

Proceedings of the B.A.A.L./C.U.P. sponsored seminar
14 June 2014
Leeds Metropolitan University

Edited by
Naeema Hann