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The National Capital Language Resource Center Presents

# The Arabic K-12 Teachers' Newsletter

## Vol. 1, No. 2, March 2005

### Introduction

Welcome to the second edition of the newsletter for teachers and administrators of Arabic K-12 published by the National Capital Language Resource Center! The purpose of this newsletter is to serve the hardworking teachers and administrators of Arabic K-12 in the U.S., who daily teach the language of Arabic to a new generation of students. Please do let us know what you think of our second issue and what you would like to see more of in the future by e-mailing us at [info@nclrc.org](mailto:info@nclrc.org).

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## Introduction to the National Capital Language Resource Center

The National Capital Language Resource Center (NCLRC) is a consortium of Georgetown University, The George Washington University, and the Center for Applied Linguistics. The center is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Title VI Program. The mission of the NCLRC is to serve as a resource to improve the teaching and learning of foreign languages. It fulfills this function by providing material resources and professional services that derive from its activities and projects. For more information on the NCLRC, please visit our homepage at [www.nclrc.org](http://www.nclrc.org). This project of the NCLRC has six activities specifically aimed at serving the Arabic language teaching community in the U.S.:

1. **Network of Teachers:** The NCLRC is building a network of K-12 Arabic teachers in the U.S. through which teachers will be able to share materials, methods and discuss their experiences. The network brings teachers together by organizing discussion groups and institutes on the teaching of Arabic K-12 in the U.S. The network will be facilitated through an e-mail listserv and website. To be included in this network, please e-mail us at [info@nclrc.org](mailto:info@nclrc.org).
2. **Standards for Arabic:** The NCLRC, the National Standards Collaborative, the American Association of Teachers of Arabic ([AATA, http://web.wm.edu/aata/](http://web.wm.edu/aata/)) and the National Middle East Language Resource Center ([NMELRC, http://nmelrc.byu.edu/](http://nmelrc.byu.edu/)), are co-sponsoring the writing of Standards for Learning Arabic in the U.S. *The Standards for Foreign Language Learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, published in 1996 by the National Standards Collaborative, developed the language learning goals known as the "5 C's" (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons and Communities) and used them to set standards for learning the Chinese, Classical (Latin and Greek), French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish languages. This new Standards for Arabic Project is now using the 5 C's to set standards for Arabic learning. The first draft of the Standards for Arabic was presented to a packed room at the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Conference in November of 2004 (<http://actfl.org>).
3. **Newsletter for Teachers:** The NCLRC publishes a newsletter in Arabic and English dedicated to the field of teaching Arabic K-12 in the U.S., including feature articles, classroom reflections, lesson plans and other useful activities by teachers; stories of K-12 students and how they succeeded at learning Arabic; teacher training; teaching material reviews, and information on how to begin and support an Arabic K-12 program. But, we cannot do it alone! We need your help! To submit articles, or story ideas, please e-mail us at [info@nclrc.org](mailto:info@nclrc.org).
4. **Website for Teachers:** The NCLRC is designing a website in Arabic and English to host the national network of K-12 Arabic Teachers, the Arabic K-12

newsletter, Arabic textbook reviews, job and funding announcements, links to other helpful websites and much more. The site will be launched soon here: <http://www.arabick12.org>

5. **Archive of Arabic Materials:** The NCLRC is now housing an archive of Arabic teaching materials. This archive will benefit teachers who are looking for new materials to teach Arabic, and teachers who are researching how Arabic is taught in other programs. We currently have over seventy textbooks and are collecting more. We will be reviewing many of these textbooks in our newsletter. For more information please e-mail us at [info@nclrc.org](mailto:info@nclrc.org).
6. **Summer Institutes for Teachers:** In July, the NCLRC held two Summer Institutes of particular interest to Arabic teachers: *Computer Training for Teachers of Arabic* by al-Husein N. Madhany and *Teaching Arabic K-12: Materials and Methods* By Dr. Wafa Hassan and Dora Johnson. There were also sixteen other teacher training summer institutes. The NCLRC is planning on having similar institutes in the summer of 2005. For more information please contact our office at [info@nclrc.org](mailto:info@nclrc.org) or visit this website: <http://www.nclrc.org> Scholarships for the Institutes are available.

## Lesson Plans

By Mrs. Lina Kholaki, The New Horizon Schools, Los Angeles, California

### Fruit

Target Language: Arabic

The level: Pre-school to second grade, beginners & intermediate

Objectives:

- Students will be able to understand the names of fruit (Apples, Bananas, Oranges, Grapes, and Peaches).
- Students will demonstrate using the possessive structure (I have, you have for masculine and feminine).
- Students will use the language through playing to enhance communication.

Materials needed:

- Real fruit if possible, students will taste and touch and use their senses to identify fruit.
- Plastic fruit to play with.
- A group of cards with the picture of each type of fruit enough for the number of students in the classroom.

Presentation:

- The presentation of the vocabulary (Apples, Bananas, Oranges, Grapes, and Peaches) through using the pictured cards.
- The use of the real fruit to present the vocabulary.

### Practice:

First, the teacher will start by saying: I have an Apple. The teacher will practice saying the previous statement using the different types of fruit. In this exercise she will use the picture cards and the real fruit. The teacher will ask the students who likes (Apples, Bananas, Oranges, Grapes, and Peaches), then she will give each student the fruit that he likes.

Second, the teacher will say: I have an apple. Then the teacher will ask each student do you have an apple? The student who has the apple will reply yes, I have an apple. The teacher will repeat the same exercise with each student and each one has to answer the question by saying what type of fruit the student has. For example, I have an orange, I have grapes, and I have peaches...etc. At the end of this exercise student will taste their fruit.

Third, the students will identify the fruit one more time using the pictured cards and repeating the name of each fruit.

Fourth, the teacher will divide students into 4 or 5 groups, each group includes 3 or 4 students, depending on the number of students in class. The teacher will explain the game to the students. Each group will sit in a circle and will be given the pictured cards turned face down. Each student will pick from 4 to 5 cards. The first student will say I have bananas and will ask the other students, do you have bananas? If the other student has bananas they will say I have bananas, if they do not they will say I am sorry I do not have bananas. In this case the student who asked the question will take the other student's card but if the student has the same item on the card, then the student will keep it. At end the student who has more cards will win the game.

### Application:

The teacher will ask the students to grab a piece of paper and ask the rest of the class, what types of fruit you have at home? Each student will write down the number of students who have oranges, grapes, bananas, apples, and peaches. The teacher will put the fruit on the table and will ask 3 students to come to the table. 2 students will be on the sides of the table and one will be in the middle. The student in the middle will ask the other students who has the different fruit on the table. The student who grabs the fruit first is the winner. It is better to give three chances to each team so all students can participate in different roles in the game.

### Evaluation:

- Students' communication skills could be evaluated through their linguistic production while playing.
- The teacher will listen to the students' language while playing.

## **Reflections on Middlebury - Summer 2004**

**by Rula Hijazeen, NCLRC & Alpha-Z Language Solutions, Washington D.C.**

I and nine other teachers of Arabic (K-16) participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Arabic Teacher Training Seminar held at Middlebury College in Vermont. The Arabic School summer program at Middlebury College is regarded as one of the best non-governmental foreign language immersion programs in the United States. Here is an excerpt from their web page:

“The Arabic school offers you a unique experience that is virtually unmatched anywhere in the world. Middlebury is much more than textbooks and classrooms. The entire environment shapes your Arabic learning experience. The value of the experience cannot be calculated in terms of semesters and credit hours. You will eat, sleep, study, make friends, interact with professors, watch television and films, and attend lectures given by the faculty and distinguished guest speakers, all exclusively in Arabic. Arabic newspapers, magazines, television and websites will keep you up to date on current events around the world. Additionally, you can enjoy all of your favorite sports at Middlebury College’s state of the art sports facilities, all while learning to challenge your opponents in Arabic.” Visit <http://web.middlebury.edu/ls/arabic/program/> for more information.

Arriving on campus half-way through the nine week program, we were warmly welcomed by the school administration, faculty, and students alike. I could hardly wait for our first session to begin.

Designed to train the trainer in a live setting, this seminar blended theory with practice. Even though the seminar was only two-weeks, the quality of the training and the friendships formed will have a life-long impact.

The first week included readings, discussions, and classroom observations, while the second week allowed participants the opportunity to teach. As each participant would prepare for his or her lesson, a meeting with Dr. Mahmoud Al-Batal and Dr. Kristen Brustad (seminar trainers and authors of “Al-Kitaab fii Ta'allum Al-'Arabiyya” 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition textbook & DVD, September 30, 2004) would take place to discuss the material and method of delivery to be used. They would then sit-in on each session presented and offer a detailed critique in the form of individual meetings following each session. In the evenings, we would meet as a group and debrief on the events of the day.

For the purpose of this column, I sifted through pages of notes, reflecting on the topics discussed and learned. There is much to share, but I decided to choose the concepts that have been most beneficial to me, and those I think might be helpful to all instructors. Please note that even though the seminar focused on teaching Arabic to adult non-speakers, most of the points can be adapted to the K-12 community.

First, an instructor must resist the temptation to lecture. This, I believe, is the biggest struggle for teachers. Instead, we must encourage students to be more proactive in their learning process both in and out of class.

Second, use as much Arabic as possible in the classroom. Until my return from this seminar, I was guilty of speaking about Arabic in English. Since then I have been applying these points. This has resulted in improved performance on my part, as well as the productivity levels of students.

Third, utilize a teamwork approach. This fall, on the first day of each class, I emphasized the idea that, as a class, we are one team. To that effect, I have increased group activities and have encouraged students to help each other instead of relying solely on me.

The following is a summary of the key ideas gleaned from the training seminar, in addition to features I observed in classrooms. I trust they will prove as helpful to you as they did to me.

### **Philosophy of the Program:**

Every program has a philosophy of its own, and the success of a program lies in a shared vision on the philosophy of teaching. Therefore, it is important for instructors to meet and discuss the overall goals of the program. Prepare students for the learning experience by clearly explaining the philosophy of both the class and the program. Since classrooms draw students from various backgrounds, and as every teacher and program differ in philosophies, you must communicate your own philosophy to the students. Expectations need to be clarified from the beginning. In the syllabus, present your goals and objectives for that semester, and occasionally refer to them to keep the momentum going. When asking students to perform activities, give detailed instructions as to what exactly you want them to do for that particular drill. Help students develop effective learning methods and strategies. One way is by educating them on different learning styles, which will enhance their performance. Another way would be to present the learning material in a variety of methods to ensure that all students will benefit regardless of their unique learning style. Encourage students and be consistent in offering comments on their progress. Positive reinforcement is vital to the learning process. Be generous with your words. Students need to hear the words, “good job,” “excellent work,” and such, accompanied with an enthusiastic smile and spirit.

### **Your Role as an Instructor**

Have faith in the ability of students to succeed in learning the Arabic language. Students will perform and work only as hard as they know you expect of them. Therefore, raise your expectations and push them to the next level. Again, be positive in your communication. Smile. Display enthusiasm. Set an example to students by being prepared for class. Have a comprehensive vision of the goals you wish to accomplish in a particular class, while tying it into the vision of the program as a whole. Taking your job seriously will have similar effects on them as well. Adopt the role of personal trainer/facilitator, offering encouragement and support without spoon-feeding students. Be deliberate in pushing your students to reach their fullest potential. This will allow students to sense that they are a primary element in the learning process.

### **Utilizing Time in and out of Class**

To maximize each session, set aside a substantial amount of time in class for interactive and productive exercises. Often, the only interaction your students have with the language is during Arabic class. Listening exercises on the CD should be done at home. Focus on language production and the development of guessing and discovery strategies. Avoid lecturing and explaining. Encourage students to guess the meaning of new vocabulary words from the context, especially when new reading texts are presented. Allow students to explore the language instead of relying on you for every word. Homework is fundamental for strengthening the different language skills. Whatever the case, always assign homework, but vary it to include reading, writing, and listening exercises. In class, concentrate on activating the new vocabulary since it is an integral part of forming the various linguistic skills. Play games and form sentences using new words.

The curriculum and outside materials need to support the teaching philosophy. It is important to use authentic material from the beginning, keeping in mind that students' proficiency level is first and foremost reflective of their language skills and not on the number of lessons they have covered. Note that the linguistic, social, and cultural context and content are more important than the structures themselves.

### **On the Issue of Working in Groups:**

For all exercises, except for detailed listening, students will learn more by working in groups. This includes conversation, grammar exercises, and reading and writing. Give clear instructions of the exercise before breaking into groups. This way, all students, especially shy ones will have a chance to express and practice what they are learning. It is also less threatening to share among three or four other students as opposed to speaking in front of the entire class. As they work in their groups, walk around, listen, correct mistakes, and encourage the team spirit.

### **On the Teaching of Letters and Sounds:**

While working on the letters and sounds of the Arabic alphabet, other skills can be honed. This could include listening, dictation (both in class, and at home from a CD), and annunciation. At this phase, students should be given the opportunity to learn the basic greetings, self introduction and simple phrases.

Prior to class arrival, students would have studied the assigned letters and worked on the listening and writing exercises presented in the book and CD. Class time is too valuable to waste in writing and explaining the letters from the beginning. Rather, class time can be utilized in speaking, reading, listening, and writing activities. Capitalize the use of technology by introducing software that teaches letters accompanied by diagrams showing phonetics and places of articulation for the sounds unique to Arabic.

### **On the Teaching of Vocabulary:**

Expect the students to have studied the new vocabulary before arriving to class. As a group, activate the new vocabulary by forming sentences and playing games. As teachers, we must be creative, flexible, and open to new ideas. Encourage student

participation in this process, as language students have an amazing ability to form associations and invent funny or practical ways to remember words. Ask students to share their clues and hints with the rest of the class. As the teacher, you are not a dictionary for the vocabulary already covered. Instead, ask others in the class to provide the words. As students' proficiency increases, activities should require them to produce longer sentences on different topics.

### **On the Discussion of a Reading Paragraph:**

Reading comprehension does not mean reading aloud. Rather, let students explore and discover meaning on their own or in groups. When discussing a reading paragraph, moderate the discussion and let students produce the information from the text. Allow students the opportunity to think of different answers by asking open questions rather than using questions which require a yes/no response. Open questions could be something like: "what is your opinion on...?" or "from the text, what did we learn about...?" or "the text discusses a variety of issues, what are some of these?"

### **Vocabulary Building Games** (the teacher's role is at a minimum):

**The Flashcard Circle** is used for warm-up. *Pre-game preparation: the teacher would have the vocabulary words for that lesson (or week) on flashcards – one word per card.* The student sitting on one end of the room starts the pile by looking at each card and passing it along – ONLY if he or she recognizes or knows the word. If a word is unknown to someone, then he or she must ask the person seated on either side to explain it, which must be done only in Arabic (without giving its equivalent in English).

After all the flashcards circle the room once, they are distributed to all students, who in turn form sentences using the word they received on the card.

**Pictionary:** *Pre-game preparation: the teacher would have the vocabulary words for that lesson (or week) on flashcards.* After splitting the class into two groups, one person from one group chooses a card and has to draw it on the board for his group to guess the word. However, if someone from the other group guesses the word first, then they would get that point. Then the other team would have their turn next.

**Memory Game:** *Pre-game preparation: the teacher would have the vocabulary words for that lesson (or week) on two sets of flashcards.* All the cards would be placed face down on a table. With each turn, one person from each team uncovers two cards, and so forth. The object of the game is to find as many word pairs as possible. The person finding a word pair forms a sentence using that word. One point is given for that team.

**Hang-man:** This can be played with two students on each team (with the whole class playing simultaneously), either on the board or on a piece of paper at their desks. One player would choose a word from the list of vocabulary and draw dashes for the number of letters in that word. The other player will say letters trying to guess the word. The hang-man drawing would grow with each wrong guess.

Based on my own experience, language teachers should take a foreign language class whenever possible. The benefits of doing so are countless. By studying another language we can relate better to the struggles our students face, we will discover our own learning styles, and we can gain ideas from other language teachers, resulting in improving our own skills.

In conclusion, even though opportunities for teacher training programs have yet to be expanded nationwide, they do exist. Be proactive in searching for similar training programs. Beginning in January 2005, the NMELRC - National Middle East Language Resource Center at Brigham Young University will be hosting a series of monthly training web casts on their website at <http://www.nmelrc.org>. This will bring some of the information of the Middlebury seminar to the hundreds of instructors that are unable to attend a 2-week seminar. And if you know of any other teacher training programs, please email us at: [info@nclrc.org](mailto:info@nclrc.org)

And finally, on behalf of the participants in the 2004 Arabic teachers training seminar, and teachers nationwide, I would like to offer special thanks to the NMELRC for underwriting and sponsoring this seminar, and for their continued service to teachers. Many thanks go to Middlebury for hosting this training, and specifically to Dr. Mahmoud Abdalla, Arabic School Director, for his warm welcome and support. And finally, without Dr. Kristen Brustad and Dr. Mahmoud Al-Batal this program would not have existed. Your efforts and hard work are appreciated.

**A Teacher's Diary: Ending the Summer,  
Beginning the School Year**  
by Nijmeh Zayed, The Islamic Saudi Academy, Virginia.

This past summer (2004) was such a wonderful experience as I, and a number of Arabic language teachers from across the United States met in the Washington, DC metro area to attend workshops presented by Dr. Wafaa Hassan, Mrs. Rajaa Aquil, and al-Husein N. Madhani. Hosted by the NCLRC (National Capitol Language Resource Center), these sessions enriched our knowledge, and provided the other participants and I exposure to the latest educational methods based on the most successful educational research in the U.S. while, at the same time, considered learning strategies to improve students' learning, in addition to benefiting from websites that assist in the teaching of Arabic.

Teachers, administrators, and participants shared examples of their attitudes, behaviors, and their educational experiences to enhance the educational performance. And as we all know, the teacher is one of the basic elements of the educational experience, because he or she has a large impact on the students. The teacher is not only the leader, guide, and curriculum designer, but he or she chooses the appropriate teaching methods in order to deliver the lesson, and assesses students' achievement. I am pleased, in this diary excerpt, to share how I began my school year.

The wide smile with which I greeted my students was reciprocated. I glorify the smile based on Al Hadith Al Sharif which says that smiling in your brother's face is a charity. I

smile also because I believe that smiling lessens many of the stresses of studying. It helps students understand the subject, and is the first key to success that I have for them. After that, I showed them the second key, which is respecting the class rules. Then, I focused on the importance of investing time and making the best use of it. And above all, strengthening self confidence and believing in the ability to succeed and excel. During our first meeting, I emphasized the importance of communication and its value in serving many teaching goals. Enriching the thought process of my students is one of the ultimate goals, which also helps in creating interaction with the subject at hand.

Especially following the long summer holiday, I begin the class with simple questions to indirectly quiz them. I encourage every student to ask questions, but first I set an example. I am extra careful in posing my questions, as I want to set the stage for the students to form meaningful and well constructed questions. I also shy away from questions that elicit a yes or no response. I advise my students to think before they answer, and when a student answers, I ask her for further clarification, or for an example.

With each passing day, I slowly clear the space for my students to lead the discussions, instead of me being at the center, especially during the conversation (expression) class where students should have room to make comments and discuss freely. With this good model set in place, students become occupied in the learning atmosphere, but when a few star students take control of the discussion, taking the discussion off track, it now becomes necessary for me, as an instructor, to wisely lead them back.

I wish all students a good school year filled with great educational benefits, as well as psychological enjoyment.

Until next time, farewell!

Nijmeh Zayed is an Arabic language Teacher at the Islamic Saudi Academy in Northern Virginia

## **A Teacher's Diary: More Than Letters and Sounds** By Maha Aylouche-Bohsali

(Editor's note: Virginia's Fairfax County Public School system not only teaches Arabic K-12, but they have also expanded their program to teach adults Arabic in the evenings using the high school classrooms. Maha Aylouche-Bohsali is an Arabic teacher taking part in this innovative program. The following is a diary entry of the beginning of her school year.)

This day has been marked on my calendar for a while and even though I am fully prepared for the task ahead, I review the lesson plan one more time. This is the beginning of another 12 week session of Introductory Arabic I. In this course, I will teach students to read and write the Arabic alphabet and basic everyday expressions. While the skills they practice in class are elementary, the unstated benefit of the course is in the cultural understanding the students acquire while learning the language.

Demand for Arabic classes has grown nationwide since September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, and our overall enrollment has paralleled this trend. A closer look at the numbers shows that demand for evening classes is at least twice as high as it is for daytime ones. Informal surveys of my daytime students indicate that the majority of them take the course for enrichment, while some take it for career advancement, plus a few who are heritage learners. On the other hand, evening students are for the most part, working professionals who seek to acquire Arabic for career advancement.

Some of the difficulties faced by the adult learners are no different than those faced by students on college campuses, while other challenges are specific to this population. Arabic is not an Indo-European but rather a Semitic language, therefore, there are not many cognates with English. The non-Roman script seems overwhelming at first. I discourage transliteration as they become dependent on it. Usually, as students learn to isolate the letter sounds and use the phonetic regularity of spelling they breach that obstacle.

Students come with high expectations that some degree of fluency will be achieved by the end of the course. I try to set realistic and achievable expectations which are clearly stated in the syllabus.

Limited classroom contact hours (2 hour per week) and the absence of foreign language labs make it more difficult for this group to acquire the language. Even though excellent software (in lieu of language labs) is available in the market to support the student of Arabic, yet its price, in the hundreds of dollars, is prohibitive to the individual user. Furthermore, since the majority of students take Arabic for enrichment, few spend the necessary practice hours to supplement what they had learned in class. Since, in this setting, no tests are administered, the only incentive to study is personal motivation. Consequently, few of my daytime students continue onto levels of proficiency.

A language cannot be isolated from its culture. Arabic speaking countries do share aspects of a culture but there are also differences in traditions. As a teacher, I am committed to integrating culture in my classes. This has led me to learn about other Arabic nations and not to generalize when I speak about cultural elements. My Arabic culture is a product of my own upbringing, experiences, and personal biases. For instance, a question pertaining to the role of women and freedom in the Arab World will have an area specific answer focused on specific societal characteristics. Questions about the “hijab” or the veil were numerous while the French were debating about disallowing symbols of religious belonging in their secular schools. An eagerness for learning is an obvious characteristic of this group of students. I try to keep them engaged, asking questions, giving them the opportunity to dispel stereotypes in a comfortable environment.

Acting as a cultural bridge has become more challenging since 9/11. Students are well read, inquisitive and seek answers supported by evidence. Their interests in the region are varied, so are their questions: terrorism, politics, history, religion, customs and traditions to name a few. While I do not claim to be an authority on any of the above, my students’ questions have encouraged me to update and deepen my own knowledge

by reading new books available on these subjects in order to be able to answer in an educated manner, respond to criticism constructively, and recommend useful reading materials and articles.

Teaching Arabic is much more than just every day expressions, letters and sounds. I am very proud to be teaching Arabic I - the first stop in my students' journey to Arabic. While few will continue to become fluent in the language, they will all be more knowledgeable about the culture, which in itself is a great achievement.

Maha Aylouche-Bohsali is an Arabic and French Instructor for the Fairfax County Public Schools-Adult and Community Education. You can find them online at: <http://www.fcps.k12.va.us/adult.htm>

## **Parental Support for the Teaching of Arabic for Heritage Learners**

**by Mrs. Wafaa Makki, The Dearborn Public Schools, Dearborn, Michigan**

Research has shown the importance of parents being involved in their children's education. Parental involvement improves the level of education, and gains better results. Children need the support of parents in order to learn Arabic, whether as a foreign or a native language. When parents realize the importance of their children learning Arabic in securing a more successful future for their children, they must show their interest and motivate their offspring, as suggested in the following:

- 1) Parents can encourage children to learn both Arabic and English.
- 2) Parents can create a fun and exciting atmosphere for learning through music, arts and crafts, and listening to stories which correspond with the child's age and interests.
- 3) Parents can get involved in their child's school and volunteer to serve on a committee in order to ensure a satisfactory level of education is being offered, and to test the most popular curricula for their childrens' understanding.
- 4) Speaking to the children in Arabic and reading stories in Arabic suitable to their age and interests are vital steps in this process. Story-reading aids the development of the child's brain, increases vocabulary, and improves the listening skills.
- 5) Parents must attempt to create a fun social atmosphere through involving their children in culture clubs which bring children together around games and activities expressing the Arab civilization. This helps the children to speak about culture through playing and taking part in various entertaining and beneficial activities.
- 6) It is important to create entertaining games in Arabic equivalent to the games that the child plays in English, which adds to the child's mental and intellectual ability in both languages.

- 7) Helping the Arabic teachers to encourage the children to express their talents by organizing and providing competitions in Arabic.
- 8) Due to the terrorist incident of 11 September, which resulted in ruining the image and reputation of Arabs, and lowering the self-esteem of Arab children, it is very important that parents are consistent with encouraging their children to learn Arabic. The increase in people wanting to learn Arabic elevates the feelings of depression that the children have, and helps shed light to the Arab civilization's richness in all literary and scientific areas.

As mentioned earlier, the scientific research has proven the importance of learning the mother-tongue in order to gain another language. So learning the Arabic language well will assist in gaining fluency in English as a second language in a faster and deeper way.

### **How the Arabic Language Differs from Other Languages: An Interview with Dr. Mamdouh Nur Addin of the Open American University and the George Mason University, by Ahmad Almaz of the Saudi Islamic Academy**

In an interview with Dr. Mamdouh Nur Addin, the educational advisor and Dean of the Arabic Department at the Open American University and a professor of Arabic at the George Mason University, the following dialogue transpired in reference to the importance of gaining fluency in Arabic and the factors distinguishing Arabic from other languages.

#### **Dr. Mamdouh, can you describe the state of the Arabic language for non-speakers who wish to learn it?**

In consideration of the current global political situation, it is evident that, in America, there is a strong drive for people to learn Arabic. For example, take a look at the Defense Language Institute and the other institutes that have experienced a massive flow of language students. Yet even prior to this, one was able to find a large number of new Muslims who wanted to learn Arabic in order to better understand Islam; not to mention heritage learners born in America who had lost their mother tongue. Then you find other language learners who fall into categories of their own.

#### **What effect does the environment have on learning Arabic?**

The linguistic environment plays a large role, for when a person learns a language in its original environment, he or she will certainly learn at a higher speed. However, the negative points concerning Arabic when learning this way, is the issue of the local dialects, whereas when Arabic is learned outside the parameters of an Arabic environment, then the student gains the classical Arabic.

#### **Dr. Mamdouh, what is the first step for a person desiring to learn Arabic?**

This is dependent on a variety of factors, the first being the goal for learning Arabic. When businessmen, for example, learn Arabic, they need only to speak it without worrying about reading and writing. In this case, the method of teaching will certainly be consistent with this goal, whereas when diplomats in Washington learn Arabic their goal is to understand the written language of the newspapers and magazines, and to

read reports, in addition to understanding the oral media. So in their case, as the goal differs, so will the approach.

**What approaches are available for non-speakers who wish to learn Arabic?**

One is the audio-lingual approach, and another is the direct approach. The latter approach was determined to be very suitable when learning Arabic, and I have benefited from it and have used it in my book series. This approach calls for learning the whole before the part, meaning that we do not learn the alphabet before the words, or sentences, but we begin with words, phrases, or sentences prior to learning the alphabet. In this approach, the student learns to see the word as a picture and does not take it as a group of letters. So the word he or she is trying to learn would be repeated in various contexts, and in different lines and sentences, but after it is learned, it would not be repeated more than once in a page. Through repetition, and in seeing the word in many places, the student will remember it and know when to use it. Therefore I say that this method has an effective result in the reading speed and in reading comprehension, which is what is needed.

**Dr. Mamdouh, what is your advice to a man who recites the Qur'an well but is unable to understand the Arabic language because he does not come from Arab decent?**

The original intent for Muslims to learn Arabic was for the purpose of reading the Qur'an. However, as Islam spread to non-speakers of the language, they would read without comprehension. This was not what the Prophet Mohammed sought.

Although understanding the language requires much effort and dedication, it will eventually heed positive results. And I salute the recent tendency among learners to focus on comprehending the written text, while the series I designed entitled, "The Arabic Language: A Bridge to the Islamic Culture" will, thank God, support this fine development. In this series, English is used at first to reconcile the linguistic gap, but as the students' knowledge increases, the use of English gradually decreases, without the student noticing it, until it disappears by the end of the series.

**Dr. Mamdouh, while teaching Arabic, did you find an interest among non-Muslims to learn Arabic?**

Yes, I remember in some of the institutes that I taught, there were a number of non-Muslims who were interested in learning the Arabic language. In general, learning languages requires time; however, learning a language out of its environment is hard, and learning a language in separated periods is even harder. The more the student is exposed to the language the easier his or her understanding is going to be.

**Dr. Mamdouh, is language learning the same as learning other disciplines?**

No. Language is not a science (where data collection is the primary focus), but constitutes a set of skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing; it must then be acquired, and cannot be taught.

### **Dr. Mamdouh how is the Arabic language distinguished from the other languages?**

In my essay entitled, "How the World Would Gain if Everyone Spoke Arabic," I address the distinguishing characteristics of this concise language. To prove my point that a text of 100 Arabic words when translated into any other language would contain more words, I will use the English as an example. Thus, the four-word phrase:

"بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ" translates into 11 words: "In the name of Allah the most gracious, the most merciful."

Add to this the letters in Arabic that become words in English, such as (و) which means "and". So, the purpose in highlighting such differences, in my article, was to demonstrate that, should the whole world speak Arabic only, then the time and paper used for writing would be cut in half. Its conciseness and richness enables the speaker to express meaning in the least amount of words.

And because of its grammatical structure, Arabic is characterized with a rhythmic flow, enjoyable to the ear. And even when reading the Qur'an, an example can be found in Sourat Al Rahman where the verse endings rhyme.

Finally, with its root-based structure, twenty different words can be derived from the same word. Take for example, the three root verb "ʿalima" meaning "knew" which creates: scientist, knowledgeable, science/knowledge, taught, learned, instructions, sciences, and bringing to light. Thus, if a person knows the origin of the word, he or she would be able to understand many other words without much effort.

### **Dr. Mamdouh, give us some distinguishing factors in reference to Arabic words and their meanings.**

In English, I would offer the word "hospital" as an example, which has no relation to healing or taking medicine. Whereas the word in Arabic "mustashfa" consists of the "m" of the place, the "s" for request/seek, and the verb "shafa" meaning healing, thus the meaning is "a place to request healing."

### **What is language?**

Language consists of symbols and sounds that people use to communicate. This grouping of sounds is considered very easy for a person raised in a certain environment, such as being fluent in Spanish because one was born and raised in a Hispanic community, whereas if that same person were raised in a Russian community, he or she would be fluent in Russian and would consider it a very easy language.

Learning a language as an adult means this would have been preceded by the mother tongue, which is used day and night. However, the newly-learned language cannot be taught to encompass every situation of life, thus creating learning obstacles. The difference then lies in the method of acquisition: whether a person learned the language by exposure and upbringing, or solely by studying it.

A man who moves his family to Britain or America finds that the children learn English easily. This is because they are surrounded by the language at school, on the television,

and in public places. And with time, it overcomes the mother tongue. Therefore, people believe English to be easier than Arabic. This is not true. Spoken English is extremely difficult. Take for example the letter C. This letter can be pronounced as an S or as a SH or a K, and at times you find the Ci, pronounced completely different, which is another difficulty. This problem is not limited only to letters, but similar problems are applied to words as well.

English speakers do not find this to be a problem because they gain this language in the most natural settings. However, they do face problems when they learn to read. This is due to the lack of agreement between the written letters and the auditory sound of letters - a realistic factor in the English language. For example, the word “see” means to look at, but if spelled “sea” it would change to mean a body of water. So where words might sound exactly the same, the meaning is completely different. This pertains to many other words in English, and is present in Arabic in a very limited way, but non-existent in Indonesian - a completely phonetic language.

**Is there a difference in the degree of language learning between adults and children?**

Yes, there is. For children, language is an issue of adoption, therefore they learn at a much faster pace. Children, unlike adults (who always compare), do not over analyze and ask too many “whys” – “Why this word?” and “Why is it used here?” all of which slows the learning process.

**Dr. Mamdouh, don’t you think the English language has been easy and dispersed worldwide, more than Arabic?**

Of-course! There are hundreds of centers worldwide that teach English, which does not compare to the minimal numbers of institutions teaching Arabic.

**Dr. Mamdouh, to what degree will Arabic spread in the future?**

Unlike English, Arabic is not tied to countries or peoples, and its strength as a language is not dependent on the strength of the nations that speak it. And since a Muslim cannot gain more understanding of Islam except through the Arabic language, this differentiates Arabic from other languages. So because of its association with Islam, it will spread.

**What is your advice to a family desiring for its children to keep the Arabic language?**

This is very important, since English surrounds every aspect of life in the West. Therefore, parents who want their children to learn Arabic need to communicate with members of the family in Arabic. The presence of Arabic audio-visuals, tapes, and reading materials around the house is good; as well as enrolling the children in Arabic schools; choosing Arabic friends; and traveling to Arab countries for extended period of times. With this, children can bring together both languages and have many advantages.

**Dr. Mamdouh, what do you see at George Mason University in terms of its contribution in teaching Arabic?**

The university deserves many thanks for its efforts, and it certainly is contributing in spreading the Arabic language. I ask them to continue in this, and to benefit from all available resources.

**Would you share a little about yourself and your contribution in teaching Arabic?**

I work as an educational consultant and head the Arabic Department at the Open American University, as well as an instructor at George Mason University for some of its Arabic classes. I have been working in the field of teaching Arabic to speakers of other languages since 1977. I started at the Imam Mohammad Bin Sa'oud University where I encountered two groups of students; first, American students leaving America to an Arab country to learn Arabic, and another group from Japan. My teaching of American students (since I speak English) was much easier than the Japanese students, who do not speak English. I benefited much from this experience, and then I moved to Indonesia and worked as an Arabic instructor. While there for 10 or 11 years, I also trained instructors of Arabic, then moved to the United States of America and worked at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies in Virginia, and while teaching and working there, I received a Master of Arts degree from George Mason University. My thesis was entitled "Gaining Arabic as a Foreign Language." Sources for my thesis were documents gathered from three countries: Indonesia, Saudi Arabia (The Arabic Language Institute), and the United States of America. Following that, I started working at the Open American University, and from time to time, I teach Arabic classes to some students. And as a result of my experiences, I wrote a series of books dealing with self-teaching of Arabic as a foreign language, which I spent approximately ten years developing.

**Dr. Mamdouh, do you welcome giving the reader your email?**

Yes, my email is: [mamdouh2000@hotmail.com](mailto:mamdouh2000@hotmail.com)

We thank Dr. Mamdouh Nur Addin for speaking with us and we hope to meet with him again in the future.

The interview was conducted by Mr. Ahmed Almaz, a teacher at the Saudi Islamic Academy. For further questions or comments, please write him at: [almazz2001@yahoo.com](mailto:almazz2001@yahoo.com)

**Resources for Teachers of Arabic K-12**  
by Maha Abdalla

During the NCLRC survey of Arabic programs, teachers and administrators told us of their need for teaching materials and resources. We scoured the Internet for such things that may be useful to you. We did not find much, but below is what we could find. If you know of any other useful resources, please let us know and we will include them in our next newsletter. If you do not know how to access the Internet, please ask your school administrator to assist you. If you need computer training, consider coming to the NCLRC's Summer Institute "Computer Training for Arabic Teachers" in Washington DC in July 2005. Below are lists of websites and organizations that may be of some

assistance to you. **Please Note: The National Capital Language Resource Center is not responsible for content on external websites.** This list is only a beginning and clearly some of the sites are less than satisfactory. If you have additional sites that you have found useful, please send them to us. All of these Internet addresses were accessible as of December 7, 2004.

### **NCLRC: Essentials of Language Teaching**

<http://www.nclrc.org/essentials/>

This website is written by the NCLRC. It includes information regarding language teaching and the best and most recent theories and methodologies in language teaching. This website is very useful for language teachers not only for Arabic language but also for other languages as it helps teachers to identify their method of teaching and evaluate themselves to improve their teaching.

### **Aldoukan**

[http://www.aldoukan.com/dk/index.cfm?&DS\\_ID=3&DID=7](http://www.aldoukan.com/dk/index.cfm?&DS_ID=3&DID=7)

Aldoukan is an online shopping website. It contains many different items that are used among Arabs and are related to the Arabic culture. The visitor of this website will be surprised with the variety of things that he can purchase through this website. The website includes home decoration items such as, hand painted glass and masks. Also, water pipes (hookahs), mosaic, movies, books, and food are available. It is a source for purchasing Mediterranean food and pastries. The website is based in Lebanon. All you need is a credit card and your order will be shipped to you.

### **The Egyptian Ministry of Al Awqaf**

<http://www.islamic-council.org/index.html>

The Egyptian ministry of Al Awqaf administers this site of information on Islam. The website is in Arabic and English and the holy Qur'an is available for download in seven languages including: English, German, Greek, Spanish, French, Arabic, and Indonesian. It also, provides information about the Islamic Pillars. The website provides information about Islam for non-Muslims, including information on the Prophetic tradition, legislation, Islamic creed, Prophetic stories, Islamic history, architecture, library, and encyclopedia. The encyclopedia includes very interesting topics about Islam. For example, Allah's names, companions of the prophet, Islam and science and much more. Anyone who is interested in listening to the Qur'an online may do so on this website. It includes downloads of the holy Qur'an and al Hadith al Sharif. It is an informative website for those interested in Islam.

### **Arabic Community**

<http://www.mesiti.it/arabic/>

This website is a non profit online community for the study of the Arabic language and culture. The website consists of the contributions of its visitors. The website encourages the visitors to participate by sending articles, lesson plans, research papers, or topics that are related to the Arabic language and culture. Some pages of this website are under construction.

### **Arabic Poems**

<http://arabicpoems.com/>

This website includes Arabic poems from different ages and schools. The website is in Arabic and English. The English section is very limited. It includes translated poems for Abel Hamid Mahmoud, Nizar Qabany, and Ali Mehilba. It also includes English poems for, Gibran Khalil Gibran, Rita Odah, Turki Amer, and Sam Z. Jaser. The last part in the English section includes lyrics by famous singers in the Arab world. On the other hand, the Arabic section is rich with different poets and their poems. Also, it includes a separate section by female poets in the Arab world. This website is an excellent source for Arabic poetry.

### **Alwaraq**

<http://www.alwaraq.com/>

This website is loaded with information about Arab religion, art, culture, folklore and literature. In addition, it includes audio materials where the visitor can listen instead of reading. The visitor will be surprised with the huge amount of information that this website has. It includes the most famous books in the history of the Arabic including alf layila wa layila (A Thousand and One Nights) a famous story book, lisan al Arab (Arab Tongue) a famous Arabic language dictionary, and tafseer al ahlam (Dreams Interpretation) a famous dream interpretation book. To access these books register and get a password and it is free. The website is an appealing, fascinating, and useful website.

### **Lakii**

<http://www.lakii.com/cookportal/index.php?doWhat=showcat&catid=1>

This link is part of lakii website. To visit this website log on to [www.laki.com](http://www.laki.com), then click on matbakh lakii to visit the cooking link. The website is in Arabic and it focuses on Muslim women's issues. For example, the importance of the veil and women's role according to the Islamic legislation. The cooking link includes recipes for Mediterranean food, and recipes from other countries. The link is divided into different sections. Each section focuses on a certain type of food. Some of these sections include pastries, appetizers, salads, deserts, sandwiches, and cakes.

### **Matbkh**

<http://www.matbkh.com/matbkh/>

This website is loaded with information about cooking. It is in Arabic and has a number of food recipes classified according to the food pyramid. It provides information regarding health and nutrition. The website includes tips and instructions of the best ways of cooking and herbal treatments.

## **Upcoming Conferences and Workshops**

**Plan ahead to attend these important conferences!**

**The Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages**

**New York, New York, March 31-April 3, 2005**

<http://omega.dickinson.edu/nectfl>

The Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages is a regional conference held annually to discuss and support the teaching and learning of foreign languages. The next conference will be held on March 31-April 3, 2005 at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in New York City. Relevant presentations include *Teaching Arab Culture in the Arabic as a Foreign Language Classroom*, *Learning Standards for Arabic*, *Challenges and Learning Strategies for Students of Arabic and Japanese*, *Arabic Curriculum on a Continuum between Classical and Dialect*.

For more information see: <http://omega.dickinson.edu/nectfl/conf.html>

Northeast Conference at Dickinson College

P. O. Box 1773

Carlisle PA 17013-2896

Phone: 717.245.1977

Fax: 717.245.1976

E-mail: [nectfl@dickinson.edu](mailto:nectfl@dickinson.edu)

**The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention and Exposition**

**Baltimore, MD November 18-20, 2005**

<http://www.actfl.org>

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) is a national organization that has 7,000 members who are foreign language teachers or administrators. The annual ACTFL annual convention is considered to be of crucial importance by teachers of many foreign languages. In recent years, there have been several presentations on teaching Arabic. Even the presentations that do not focus on Arabic can still very useful to teachers of Arabic, as what foreign language teachers are doing in other languages can often be adaptable to teaching Arabic.

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

700 S. Washington St., Suite 210

Alexandria, VA 22314

Phone: (703) 894-2900

Fax: (703) 894-2905

E-mail: [headquarters@actfl.org](mailto:headquarters@actfl.org)

<http://www.actfl.org>

**The Middle East Studies Association**

**Washington, DC November 19-22, 2005**

<http://fp.arizona.edu/mesassoc/>

The Middle East Studies Association is a national organization of scholars studying the Middle East, North Africa and Islamic world. They hold an annual conference and publish several periodicals. The MESA annual conference is on November 19-22 in Washington DC. For more information see:

<http://fp.arizona.edu/mesassoc/cfp/CFPhome.htm>

## **In Our Next Issue...!**

In the next issue of the Arabic Teachers' Newsletter we'll have more articles, lesson plans, interviews, announcements and resources for your classroom. We want this newsletter to be as helpful to you as possible. Please e-mail us with your comments on this newsletter and what you would like to see more of in the future. Also, if you would like to contribute ideas, articles, resources or announcements, please e-mail us at: [info@nclrc.org](mailto:info@nclrc.org).

## **Editors' Note:**

We hope that you find the information in this issue useful and relevant to your work. Please photocopy and share the newsletter with your colleagues and students. If you would like to include information or reprint articles from our newsletter in another publication, we encourage you to do so, with standard source information. We ask that you communicate to us what you share, republish, and disseminate so that we can keep track of our information dissemination for government accountability purposes. Such information can be sent to the attention of Shawn Greenstreet at [info@nclrc.org](mailto:info@nclrc.org).

If you were forwarded this newsletter, and would like to subscribe directly, e-mail us at: [info@nclrc.org](mailto:info@nclrc.org) Please note that unless otherwise stated, all contributors can be contacted at the NCLRC by postal mail or e-mail. To receive the newsletter, submit ideas, articles or inquiries, inform us of duplicate mailings, or be removed from the list, please contact:

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