

TEACHING ARABIC SPEAKERS

Challenges and Approaches

Regan O'Malley
November 2019

In your experience, what kind of issues do Arabic-speaking learners have in an English class?



OVERVIEW

- Literacy
- Grammar
- Classroom Management

Can you think of any examples of literacy issues that Arabic-speaking learners face?



















LITERACY

- Different alphabet
- Right to left
- No Upper/Lower case letters in Arabic
- Punctuation – commas often used instead of full stops
- ‘Mirrored’ letters can create confusion eg. ‘b’ & ‘d’, ‘p’ & ‘q’
- Tendency to favour top-down reading strategies
- Vowels written as diacritics in Arabic

ARABIC DIACRITICS

Table 1: Arabic vowel diacritics

Name :	Fatha	Damma	Kasra	Name :	Tanween Fatha	Tanween Damm	Tanween Kasr
Symbol :				Symbol :			
Explanation:	Written above the Consonant	Written above the Consonant	Written below the Consonant	Explanation:	Written above the Consonant	Written above the Consonant	Written below the Consonant
Example :				Example :			
Pronunciation:	ba	bu	bi	Pronunciation:	ban	bun	bin
Name :		Shadda		Sukun			
Symbol :							
Explanation:		Written above the Consonant		Written above the Consonant			
Example :							
Pronunciation:		bb		b			

SUGGESTED APPROACHES - LITERACY

- Encourage daily writing (diaries, blogs, etc) – little and often, with regular feedback.
- Reading assignments
- Appeal to interests of students to encourage motivation
- Depending on level, focus on alphabet recognition may be appropriate
- Spelling lists/tests
- Encourage development of bottom-up reading strategies

BOTTOM-UP READING STRATEGIES

- **Analogy**: recognising patterns in the relationship between spelling and pronunciation.
- Assists learner in decoding individual letters in their reading.

BOTTOM-UP READING STRATEGIES

- **Analogy:** eg. / ʌ / is represented using the following patterns:
 - u (up), o-e (done), o (won), ou (trouble).
- Have learners brainstorm words with this sound and categorise them by spelling:

u	o	o-e	ou
Sunday husband uncle but us lunch hungry fun much	month mother brother son other	come one some love	young cousin

Can you think of any examples of grammatical issues that Arabic-speaking learners face?



GRAMMAR

- Verb 'to be' is not used in present tense in Arabic
e.g. "He a student." "He playing guitar."
- Issues with modal verbs
e.g. "He must to go to school." OR "He will can go to school."
- Use of subjects + pronouns:
e.g. "My father he is a doctor"
- No indefinite article in Arabic e.g. "This is car."
- Incorrect word order e.g. adjective/noun "He is man tall."

SUGGESTED APPROACHES - GRAMMAR

- Put grammar in context (especially modals) & include them in speaking tasks
- Include oral activities to keep interest
- During speaking activities, correct grammar errors more frequently
- Have learners produce the material for speaking tasks
e.g. creating dialogues / vanishing dialogues

VANISHING DIALOGUE

A: Hello. How are you feeling?

B: Hi. I'm not good.

A: Why? What's going on?

B: I'm having a lot of headaches.
My stomach is sore and I'm
feeling cold

A: Oh, I see. You need fluids.
Are you drinking lots of water?

B: Yes, I am, but it's not helping.

A: I will check your blood pressure.

B: No problem.



VANISHING DIALOGUE 2

A: Hello. How feeling?

B: Hi. not good.

A: Why? going on?

B: I'm a lot of headaches.

My stomach is and
feeling cold

A: Oh, I . You fluids.

Are you lots water?

B: Yes, I , but not helping.

A: I check blood pressure.

B: No .



VANISHING DIALOGUE 3

A: Hello. ?

B: . good.

A: ? going ?

B: I'm a headaches.

My is and

feeling

A: , I . You .

Are you lots water?

B: Yes, I , not helping.

A: I check pressure.

B: .



VANISHING DIALOGUE 4

A: . ?

B: .

A: ?

B: .

A: , . ?

B: , , .

A: .

B: .



Can you think of any examples of classroom management issues that Arabic-speaking learners present?



CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

- Punctuality
- Reluctance to write
- Expectations to be spoon-fed information by teacher
- Cultural issues related to gender in a mixed class

SUGGESTED APPROACHES – CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

- Set clear classroom rules with learner input
- Try to explain the rationale behind activities they may not like (eg writing)
- Encourage competition through games
- Validate culture by allowing them to speak about their countries
- **LEARNER TRAINING!**

LEARNER TRAINING

- Elicit reading strategies from learners before a task
- Set reflection tasks (written or spoken) after a task
- Have learners discuss study strategies that help them
- During feedback, ask learners:

“WHY?” or “HOW DO YOU KNOW?”

REFERENCES

- Alqrainy, S., et al. (2010). Toward developing a universal and standard system for transliteration and transcription Arabic language. Retrieved from:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261637050_Toward_Developing_a_Universal_and_Standard_System_for_Transliteration_and_Transcription_Arabic_Language
- Anderson, D. (June 2005). Bottom-Up Strategies: Reading Literacy. Retrieved from
https://colombianmythsandlegends.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/8/3/12838633/reading_literacy.pdf
- Bensaid, M. (2015). Arab ESL Learners and Modals. *Arab World English Journal*, 6 (4), 90-97. Retrieved from
<https://www.awej.org/images/AllIssues/Volume6/Volume6number4December/8.pdf>
- Dirou, E. (2016, July 22). Tips for teaching English to Arabic speakers. Retrieved from:
<https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/tips-teaching-english-arabic-speakers>
- Dobbins, E. (n.d.). Teaching English to Arabic speakers. Retrieved from: <https://www.edarabia.com/teaching-english-to-arabic-speakers-between-classes/>
- Packer, S. (2011, Nov 1). Teaching Arabic speakers: linguistic and cultural considerations. Retrieved from:
<https://www.slideshare.net/spacke/teaching-arabic-speakers-linguistic-and-cultural-considerations-shira-packer>



ANY
QUESTIONS?



THANK YOU

kaplaninternational.com