Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language in the UK

Strand 1 Research: How Arabic is being taught in schools

Review commissioned by the British Council

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Contents

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Introduction

Aims

As part of the Arabic Language and Culture Programme, this report was commissioned by the British Council Arabic Language and Culture Programme in March 2016 and finalised in December 2016. The research team, which comprises of a consortium based at Leeds University, Edinburgh University and Goldsmiths, University of London, collates and presents data to reflect how Arabic is taught in schools in the UK. This report expands on a limited body of research in relation to Arabic teaching and learning, and focuses on how Arabic is taught including teaching methodologies, resources and learning strategies currently employed in teaching Arabic as a foreign language (TAFL) in schools. Specifically looking at the teaching of Arabic in UK schools has not previously been investigated, making this research of vital importance to teachers of Arabic, school leaders, teacher educators and policy makers. The research project aims to find answers to the following questions:

1. How is Arabic being taught in UK schools today and how it can be improved?
2. What varieties of Arabic are being/should be taught and to what extent is attention being paid to the diglossic nature of the language?
3. What are the challenges faced by Arabic learners and teachers which may have an impact on the efficiency of Arabic learning and teaching?

Due to the current lack of research in the field, this represents an important development in addressing this gap. With the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) reporting the numbers of GCSE and A-Level entries for Arabic on the rise,[1] it is vital that research is carried out in this field to investigate how Arabic is being taught.

UK School Context

England-Wales-Northern Ireland, and Scotland have different language policies resulting in a range of approaches used to facilitate language learning. In total there are 172 Muslim faith schools, throughout England and in Cardiff (none in Northern Ireland or Scotland) which teach Arabic and Quranic Studies (Tinsley, 2013). Arabic is taught most intensively in independent Muslim primary schools, usually as a timetabled subject. About 4% of secondary schools taught Arabic in 2012 (ibid). In both independent and state sectors, Arabic is more likely to be an enrichment or extra option than a main-timetable subject. A few schools with relatively large Arabic GCSE numbers offer Arabic as a modern languages option. The National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education (NRCSE) database for England lists 157 supplementary schools teaching Arabic to different communities, such as Somali, Moroccan, Sudanese, Kurdish, Eritrean, Syrian. According to a survey carried out in 2013 (Tinsley), 85 supplementary schools teach Arabic in England, one in Scotland.

Diglossia

Learning Arabic differs from other foreign languages for native and non-native Arabic speakers alike. This is because Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is the mother tongue of no one. Hence, for those

[1] From 2015 to 2016, the numbers of GCSE entries rose from 3780 to 4211, and A-Level entries from 652 to 749 (JCQ, 2016)

who have been brought up in Arab families learning Arabic, although still debatable, is like learning a foreign language because, at home, a regional variety is spoken as opposed to the standard. The situation also makes it difficult for non-natives because the variety they learn at school is different to the variety spoken in practice. GCSEs and A-Levels are conducted in MSA, which includes the oral exam at GCSE, meaning, despite being the varieties of day-to-day communication, regional varieties do not have a place in education.[2] This language situation was described by Charles Ferguson in 1959 as being diglossic:

> Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation. (1959: 244-5)

Ferguson clarified that diglossic language situations were to be distinguished from the alternate use of a standard language and regional variety. He also emphasises that diglossia is limited to two varieties of the same language, ruling out distantly related or totally unrelated languages. Ferguson's work has had a great impact on the analysis of language situations identified as being diglossic and has paved the way for more detailed analysis on such speech communities (see Fishman, 1977; Fasold, 1984). Although a lot of research on diglossia has been conducted, most of it did not focus on diglossia in relation to TASL and still a lot of effort is needed from both teachers and researchers in order to raise awareness of this linguistic phenomenon and make it applicable to teaching in different settings including Arabic in at school level.

Approaches to language teaching

The most widely used approaches to language teaching include the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), the Audiolingual Method (ALM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). However, many researchers (VanPatten, 1998; Lightbrown and Spada, 2013, Fotos: 2013; Hinkel, 2013; Ellis, 2013) argue that rather than adopting a single perspective for second language learning, aspects from various approaches should be adopted and the four skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing, should be well balanced within the classroom. Fotos (2013: 668) argues that, rather than advocating the either the GTM or CTL approaches that have characterized the past, a combination of grammar instruction and the use of communicative activities would provide more effective L2 learning.

The GTM was the main language teaching pedagogy in Europe and North America from the 1840s to the 1940s and is still the preferred method of use in some foreign language classrooms (Fotos, 2013: 662; Lightbrown and Spada, 2013: 154). The GTM regards linguistic form as being the primary object of teaching and learning. The approach was tailored to help students read literature rather than to develop conversation skills in the language.

[2] This was the situation as described in Tinsley's last report stating that all schools teach MSA; some also teach Quranic Arabic. One school is known to teach an Arabic dialect (Tinsley, 2013).

It has been noted that the ALM has fallen out of favour since the 1960s (Hinkel, 2013), but it can be used effectively alongside other methods. World War II emphasised the need for proficient language users and, due to the failure of the GTM to prepare L2 learners for communication, the US Army provided a fund for language courses focusing on aural-oral skills under the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP). This lead to the development of the ALM (Shahheidari, 1997: 1). Advocates of this approach claimed that it would enable students to actually converse in the language (Brooks, 1964; Lado, 1964). However, although there was emphasis on the oral language, students rarely spoke spontaneously.

As the GTM and the ALM were not preparing students to converse in the L2, some language teaching methodologists (e.g. Krashen, 1981; Thomasello, 2003) advocated dropping elicit teaching of language structures to focus on communication. Krashen (1981), for example, proposes a language teaching programme with two major components, acquisition and learning, where usage is emphasised over learning. However, this leads to accuracy being neglected in favour of portraying the meaning.

Focus on Form (FonF) originates in the early 1980s and began with Long's work (1983, 1991). It was introduced so language teachers could continue to concentrate on communication and, at the same time, include a focus on linguistics. The idea is that the focus of the lesson would not be specifically on linguistic forms, as is the case with the GTM, but would focus on other subject areas, such as biology, mathematics, history, geography, culture of the native L2 speakers, etc. Within the lessons, students' attention would be overtly drawn to linguistic elements as they arise with the overriding focus remaining on meaning or communication (Long, 1991: 45-46).

Methodology

The research for this report was collected between June 2016 and November 2016. In order to produce a review of methodologies currently being used in the United Kingdom at state schools, non-state full-time schools and other institutions teaching Arabic, a mixed methods approach has been adopted, due to its effectiveness in program development and course evaluation. 260 Arabic language teachers were approached to ask if they would host a visit for the researchers to collect data, including class observations, interviews and questionnaires. Thirteen schools responded favourably to this email, giving us a response rate of 5%. We approached an additional 167 Arabic teachers who were also requested to complete the questionnaire, so in summary, a total of 427 teachers were asked to complete the questionnaire. The teachers who participated in this research, whether through answering the questionnaire or being interviewed are from 27 schools across the UK. 22 of these are either state or independent schools and five were supplementary schools.

The range of quantitative and qualitative research tools employed in the data collection are as follows:

1. Questionnaires for Arabic teachers
2. Interviews with Arabic teachers and Heads of Languages (HoLs)
3. Classroom observations

Both questionnaires and interviews were used to gather data efficiently and enable the researchers to obtain a detailed insight into the situation.

An online questionnaire was produced for Arabic primary, secondary and sixth-form teachers. This survey sought to investigate the background, qualifications and experience of the language teacher, the school's capacity for teaching Arabic, the needs of learners and approaches to language teaching in the classroom, including methods, strategies, language variation, and resources (see appendix A). The survey was emailed to Arabic teachers who responded favourably to the initial email and other contacts known to the research team. Paper copies of the questionnaire were also distributed to teachers and later entered into the online database by the research team. The questionnaire was sent to a total of 180 Arabic teachers and was completed by 43. It was noted that although 62 teachers opened the online questionnaire attempting to fill it in, only 23 completed it.[3] The research team tried to seek reasons from teachers for why they did not complete the questionnaire, but it was difficult to point out the reasons except for one comment conveyed by a teacher on behalf of her colleagues, without specifying numbers, saying it was due to English language difficulties. A suggestion for future research would be to produce the questionnaire in both English and Arabic.

In-person interviews with Arabic teachers and Heads of Languages were held during the school visits, or, by phone or Skype when a visit could not be arranged. These interviews sought to investigate how Arabic is being taught, drawing on comparisons with the teaching of other foreign languages and looking at the proficiency scale employed in teaching, how and whether language variation should be dealt with and the challenges faced by Arabic learners and teachers (see appendix B). A total of nine Arabic teachers and four Heads of Languages were interviewed.

Classroom observations were carried out at primary, secondary and sixth-form schools by researchers as non-participant observers. This sought to investigate the approaches to language teaching used in practice, as opposed to relying on the opinions of teachers. The observations were employed to offset the limitations of the other research tools as teachers are not always aware of

[3] The other 20 respondents completed paper copies of the questionnaire.

what they do in practice. A total of eleven lessons were observed at nine different schools. During these sessions, the researchers focused on the range of resources used, teaching techniques, the ways teachers plan, deliver and assess learning, examples of integrating diglossia, and identified examples of good practice in the teaching and learning of Arabic, to be discussed in the research.

Ethical implications

Ethics approval was attained by the University of Leeds Ethics Committee prior to commencing the research. Ethical approval stipulated that individual respondents and participating institutions be anonymised, where necessary pseudonyms will be used. Due to working in an environment that involves under eighteen years of age, each school was consulted as to whether parental consent was required in order for researchers to undertake classroom observation and a parental information sheet and consent form was handed to the school for their use if they wish (see appendix C). Each respondent was asked to fill in an informed consent form prior to participating in the research and provided with an information sheet describing the research project and including researchers' contact details (see appendix D). Data will be kept securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Research Findings

The findings presented and discussed in this section are divided into the three main research questions (RQ).

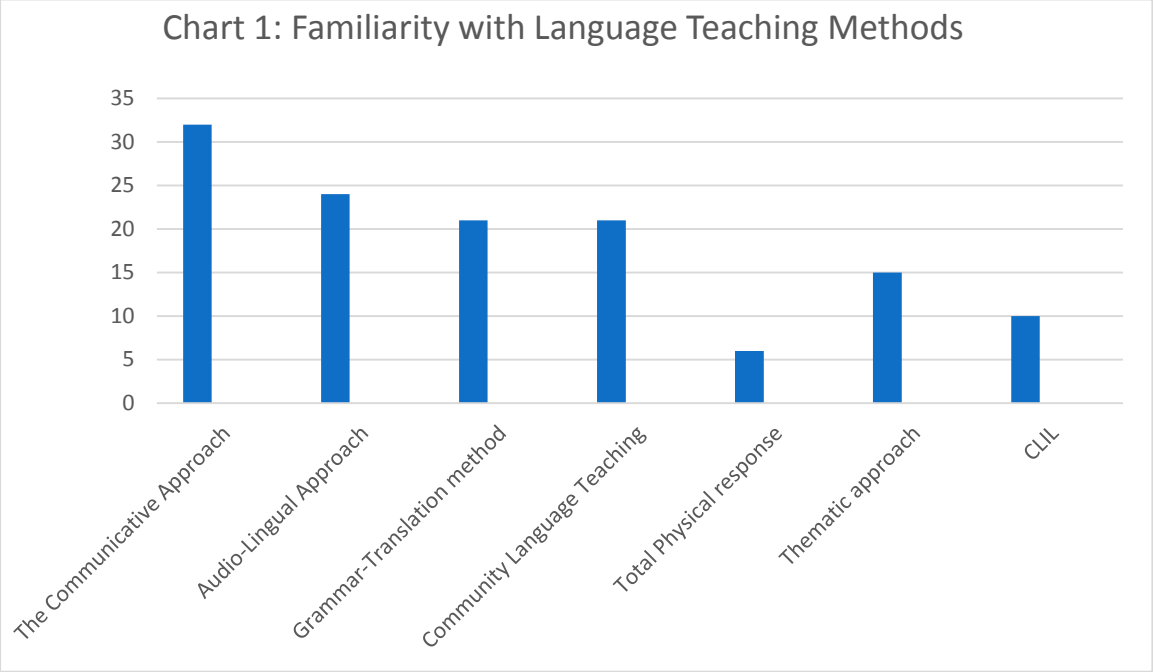
1. How is Arabic being taught in UK schools today and how it can be improved?
2. What varieties of Arabic are being/should be taught and to what extent is attention being paid to the diglossic nature of the language?
3. What are the challenges faced by Arabic learners and teachers which may have an impact on the efficiency of Arabic learning and teaching?

The first question considers how Arabic is taught and raises questions about teaching methods that the Arabic teachers are familiar with and apply, reliance on proficiency scales, materials used in teaching and the balance in teaching the four language skills. The next section of this report will present the research findings in relation to RQ1.

How Arabic is being taught in UK schools

Familiarity with language teaching methods

In order to investigate this question, we asked the teachers to tick all the language teaching methods that they are familiar with and think they apply in their teaching out of a list that included seven teaching methods plus a space for other methods that they might be using. Chart 1 below shows the listed seven methods and the number of teachers who chose each method to be familiar with. The methods that were ticked by most teachers were the Communicative Approach chosen by 32 (74%) out of 43 teachers, the audio-lingual approach was selected by 24 (56%) teachers. Five teachers also ticked "Other" with one of them indicating their reliance on the scheme of work given to them, two teachers mentioned the "Structural Approach" which is based on teaching grammar and two teachers said that they were not familiar with any of the listed methods and they relied on their own intuition in teaching. Two teachers did not comment at all on which methods they are familiar with.



This shows that majority of teachers are familiar with the Communicative Approach which can be considered the most common approach to language teaching. However, there is also a lack of knowledge about language teaching methods, five teachers (12% of the participants) either did not recognise the methods or were confused between teaching content and methods. This may indicate the need for further training for teachers regarding foreign language teaching and learning methods and the underpinning learning theory.

Which methods and activities are actually applied in the Arabic classrooms

Classroom observation revealed that teachers used a range of teaching activities. One teacher produced learning materials for the class, in other lessons text based work centred around the use of text books or grammar notebooks. Active learning was noted in half of the lessons observed, with students participating in role play, engaging in game based tasks or using songs to learn numbers or days of the week.

Evidence suggests that in lessons where student engagement is high teachers deployed a range of approaches. Thematic, communicative and audiolingual approaches were prevalent in lessons exhibiting high student engagement.

The learning environment varied between schools. Some schools has a designated Arabic classroom with language posters displayed and seating arrangements conducive to learning that involves speaking and listening in pairs or small groups.

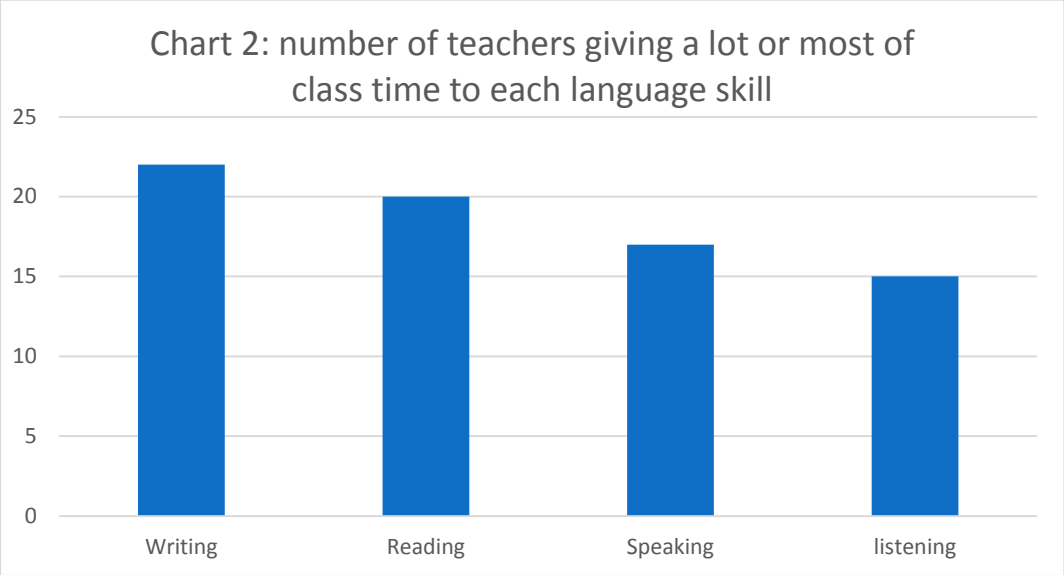
The data gathered for this report indicates that the majority of teachers (74%) are most familiar with the communicative approach. However, within the lesson observations, the communicative approach was only used within five of the eleven sessions observed, which may point to a difference between the approaches teachers report they adopt and what is done in practice. The Audiolingual Approach[4] was the most popular in practice, used in ten of the eleven lessons observed. In these sessions, activities included listening to Arabic materials or the teacher pronouncing new vocabulary and students repeating the words or sentences. However, all teachers did take a holistic approach to language teaching, which is often advocated as being the most effective approach (VanPatten, 1998; Lightbrown and Spada, 2013, Fotos: 2013; Hinkel, 2013; Ellis, 2013), as we do not yet have definite answers to which approach works best (Ellis, 2013). However, it must be noted that one session is not sufficient to analyse a teacher's capabilities (Macalister and Nation, 2010). The lessons observed by the research team were typical lessons, skills taught and lesson activity vary from one lesson to the next. Many teachers who completed the survey are unfamiliar with the approaches to language teaching. This would lead to anomalies in the findings and indicates a need for further teacher professional development to deepen understanding of the various pedagogic approaches to language learning.

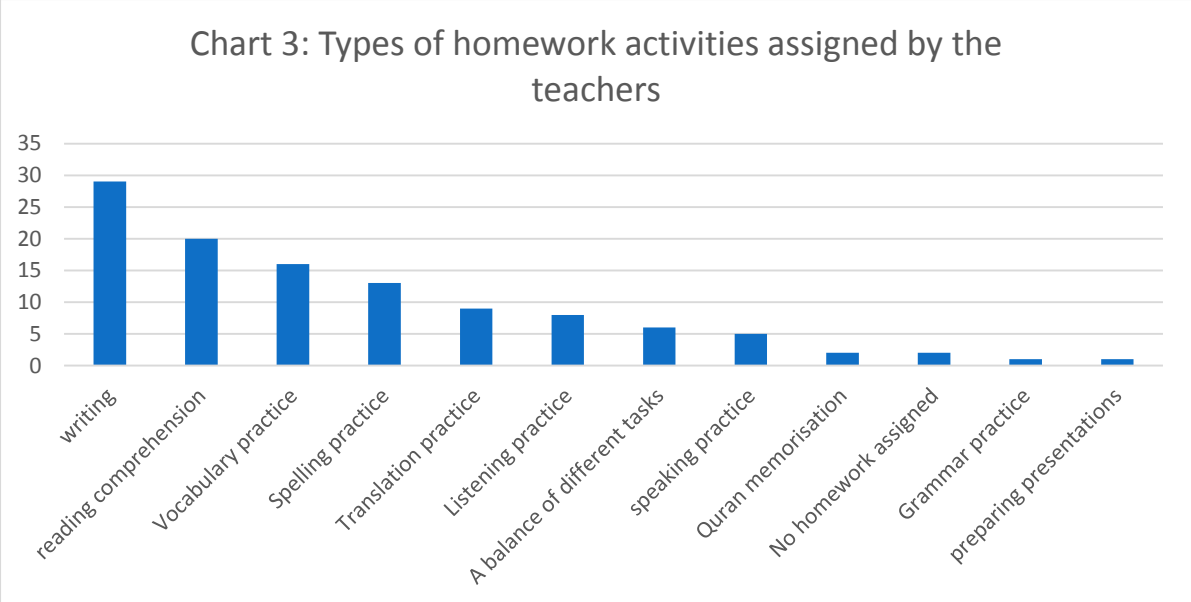
The teaching of the four language skills in Arabic

When asked about the importance of teaching the four skills, almost all the teachers recognised the importance of balancing the four skills in second language learning and teaching and giving them

[4] The Audiolingual method of teaching relies on imitation and repetition as the base of learning. Grammar and vocabulary is presented in examples that are to be repeated a number of times by the teacher and students. This habit-formation method is seen to reinforce learning. Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching.* (2th ed.). Oxford University Press

equal attention. However, when they were asked about how much of their class time is devoted to each skill, the writing skills seemed to be the one taking most focus with 22 (51%) teachers stating that they allocate a lot of class time to it, followed by reading as the second skill. Chart 2 shows the number of responses regarding giving a lot or most of the class time to each skill. Similarly, when the teachers were asked about the types of activities that they usually assign for homework, responses included a number of different tasks with writing and reading tasks being mentioned more than the other activities. Chart 3 shows how many times each of these tasks was mentioned for assigned homework.





One may argue that focussing on writing and reading more than other skills suits the nature of MSA being mostly used in written form; however, from a Second Language Acquisition (SLA) perspective, practising a balance of the four skills is necessary for learning (Ellis, 2013; Lightbrown and Spada 2013).

Although the skills of writing and reading were highlighted by the teachers in the questionnaire and interviews, classroom observation showed the use of games and tasks to facilitate speaking and listening activities. In nine of the eleven lessons observed students were involved in pair or small group work where they engaged in learning activities designed to promote speaking and listening skills. This included a matching pairs exercise, a snap game, use of letter cards and puppetry to facilitate learning. In all instances a thematic approach underpinned the activity and provided both content and context to promote learning and a good balance of the four skills was observed in most of the lessons we attended.

Assessment activities included exam preparation and formative methods of assessment such as the use of traffic lights, peer assessment and mini whiteboards. During exam preparation past papers and exam style questions were routinely used to consolidate learning.

Application of language proficiency scales into the teaching of Arabic

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) was fully developed by the Council of Europe in 2001 as a crucial step in standardising outcomes of learning second languages across Europe (Council of Europe, 2001). Since then, it has been used as a guideline for European language teachers to aid them in what to teach and what to assess. The framework has gained more popularity in the last decade among non-European languages as well (North, 2014)). As part of this research, the team wanted to know whether the Arabic school teachers are aware of the framework and whether they apply it in assessing Arabic language and in designing their curriculum. We also wanted to know whether the teachers resort to another framework of proficiency.

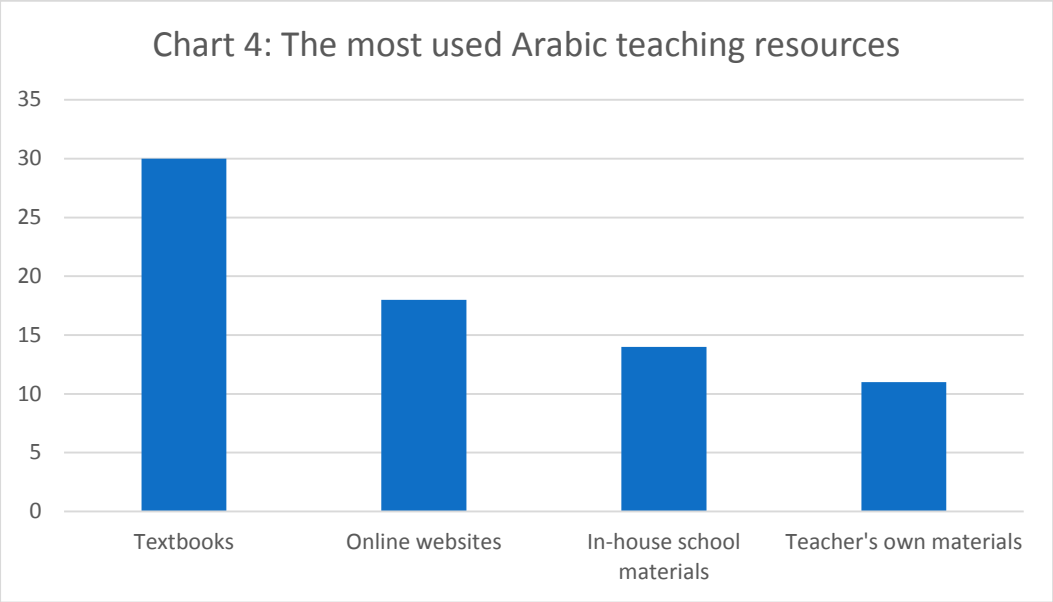
Four out of the nine teachers who were interviewed stated that they were familiar with the scale with only one teacher saying that s/he applies the scale to their teaching and assessment. Three teachers stated that they were not familiar with the CEFR and two did not comment. Two teachers commented that they rely on the content assigned by the GCSE and A Level examinations. Two teachers also mentioned that they develop their own curriculum based on their intuition and experience.

The lack of application of a standardised proficiency scale continues to be a challenge in teaching many non-European languages at school level as well as in Higher and Further Education (Byram & Parmenter, 2012). It leads teachers having to rely on content of various textbooks and exams or on their own experience of what to teach and assess at different learning stages which can, of course, lead to significant variation in learning outcomes. If a proficiency scale can be designed for teaching Arabic language, it will provide standardisation in learning and in assessment.

Materials used in teaching Arabic and the use of technology

The participating Arabic teachers were asked in the questionnaire as well as in their interviews to give details regarding the resources that they use and comment on their suitability and efficiency. Reliance on textbooks was the main source of teaching materials as indicated by 30 (70%) of teachers. Most of these are exam-based textbooks and past exam papers. The teachers mentioned the following textbooks: MM textbooks which are designed according to the Edexcel Exams, Mastering Arabic series, Al-Kitaab Fii Taallum Al'arabiyya, BBC Talk Arabic, Al-Bujayra Series, Al-Arabiyya Bayna Yadayk and Routledge Egyptian Arabic. 18 teachers (42%) also mentioned the use of online resources and they included examples like: arabilicious.com and arabicplayground.com. 14 (33%) teachers mentioned that they use in-house designed materials in their schools and 11 (26%)

teachers said they design their own teaching materials. Chart 4 shows the four main resources of Arabic teaching materials and the number of responses for each of them.



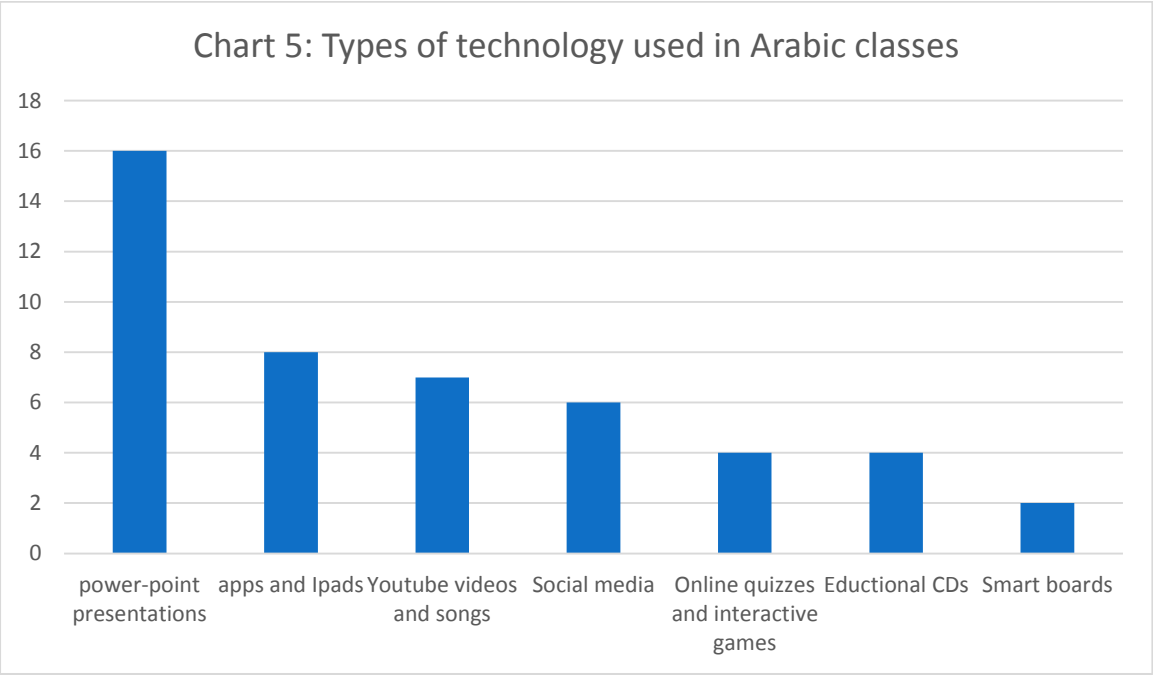
In commenting on the efficiency of these resources, most teachers stated that they are happy with what they use as they provide good activities, clear explanation of grammar, good references for teachers and learners but few mentioned some challenges such as:

- Some materials are not of good quality
- Some contain mistakes and typographic errors
- They are not comprehensive and sufficient
- There are limited resources and that is why teachers have to always supplement with their own materials
- Lack of availability of teaching materials in different dialects.

It could be argued here that the listed challenges above are common to any language textbook and it might just be important to make the teachers aware that supplementing textbooks is a good practice in every language. It would also be very efficient and useful for every teacher who designs their own materials to share these on a common online platform which would easily make a lot of resources available to all and free to use and adapt.

The use of technology also seems to be common in the teaching of Arabic in schools. Ten teachers stated that they rely on technology in a lot of their teaching, while eight teachers stated that they use technology in some of their lessons. Five teachers said that they do not use any technology in teaching with some stating that lack of funds in supplementary schools is one of the reasons. Another said that they worry about online security and they refrain from using technology and social media. This may point to a need for further training in this area, due to the many benefits of using technology in foreign language learning. Teachers who apply technology to their teaching mentioned the use of power-point presentations, online quizzes and smart phones and tablets applications, YouTube videos, social media (including twitter and WhatsApp), educational CDs and

smart boards. Chart 5 presents the type of technology used in teaching and the number of times they have been stated by the participating teachers.



Eight out of eleven lessons observed during the research project made use of technology to support learning. The extent to which technology was embedded in the lesson activity ranged from simple projection to, using video and video play back enabling students to record and listen to their own voice. Two lessons observed, from the same school, made use of IPads to project letters. The teacher also recorded pupils speaking on an iPad then played it back to them. This is particularly beneficial for language learners as they can hear how they sound in practice and learn from their own mistakes. One teacher asked students to research information on their smart phones. This helps them develop skills for using the language outside the classroom. The majority of teachers participating in the questionnaire and lessons observed do make use of technology in the classroom which is a positive finding due to the many benefits of this especially to language learning. Further teacher development in this field would be beneficial so teachers can use technology effectively and securely.

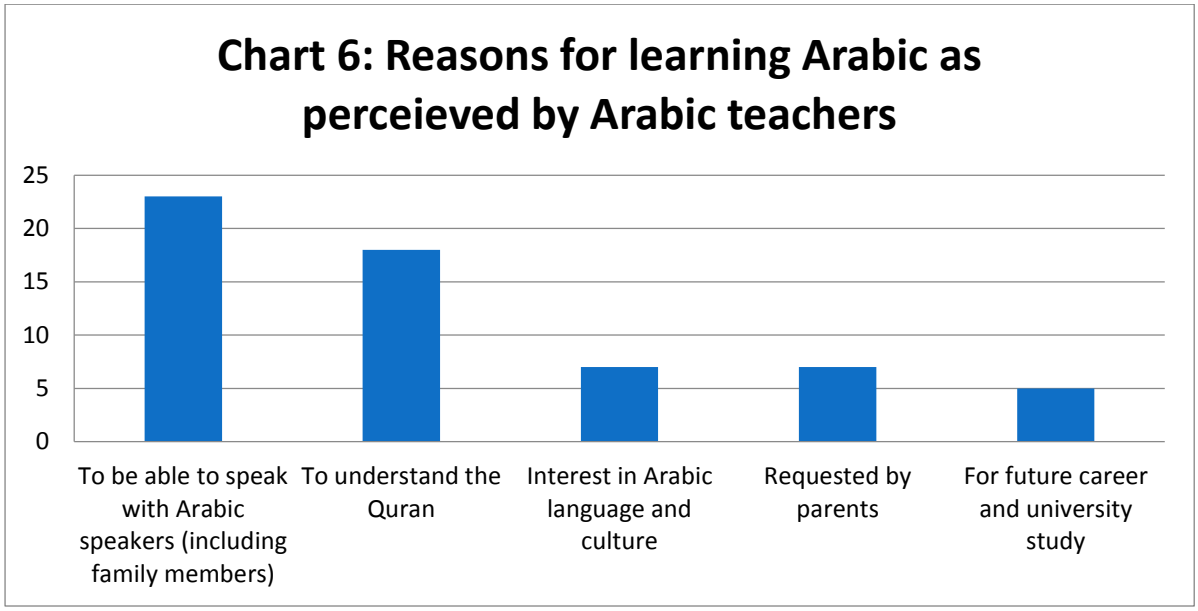
Language variation and diglossia in the teaching of Arabic

The question of which varieties are currently taught in UK schools makes an important part of this research. This question has been academically debated for decades and although some institutions in the UK and abroad have made significant changes to the teaching of Arabic by including the teaching of more than one variety, there are still many that focus only on MSA for various reasons. The decision of whether to teach MSA only or to teach more than one variety depends on a number of factors such as the school's staff members who are available and can teach more than one variety, the access to teaching materials in different varieties, the focus on exams which assess only MSA and the needs of the learners. In order to investigate the teaching of variation in Arabic classrooms, we asked the teachers to comment on the learning needs of their students including the

need to communicate in spoken dialects, how they see themselves providing for these needs and what their perceptions were regarding teaching more than one variety.

Teachers' perceptions of why their students choose to learn Arabic

The teachers were asked to give some background information of their students and list the reasons for learning Arabic which they think their students have The reasons stated by students for opting for Arabic language study are covered in a separate report (Tinsley, 2016). However, for the purposes of this study we sought to include the perspective of the teacher, because they understand the needs of their students (Jolly and Bolitho, 2010). Research on engaging students in learning supports the importance of including students' perceptions to ensure courses meet their needs (Alghazo, 2015; Levin, 2000; Cook-Sather, 2002; Jenkins, 2008). Therefore, language teachers should be aware of these needs to ensure students are benefiting from their studies. 32 (74%) of the teachers said that the majority of their students are from Muslim backgrounds. 19 (44%) said that the majority of their students are from Arab backgrounds. 18 (42%) teachers believe that understanding the Quran was an important reason for learning Arabic. 13 (30%) teachers said that their students mostly learn Arabic in order to communicate with their family members. 10 (23%) teachers that their non-heritage students want to speak Arabic with Arabs in general. These last two reasons for learning, although may come from different groups of learners "heritage versus non-heritage", they are similar and one can say that when the results of these two motivations are added, we can see that 23 (54%) out of the 43 teachers said that speaking with Arabs was a main reason for choosing to learn Arabic. Seven (16%) teachers mentioned that learning Arabic has been a tradition mostly for Muslim families and that their students were required by their parents to study Arabic. Seven (16%) teachers mentioned that majority of their students learn Arabic because of their general interest in the language and the Arab culture. Five (12%) teachers also mentioned that their students feel that learning Arabic would positively impact future employability, university admission and being global citizens. Chart 6presents the reasons for learning Arabic as perceived by teachers.

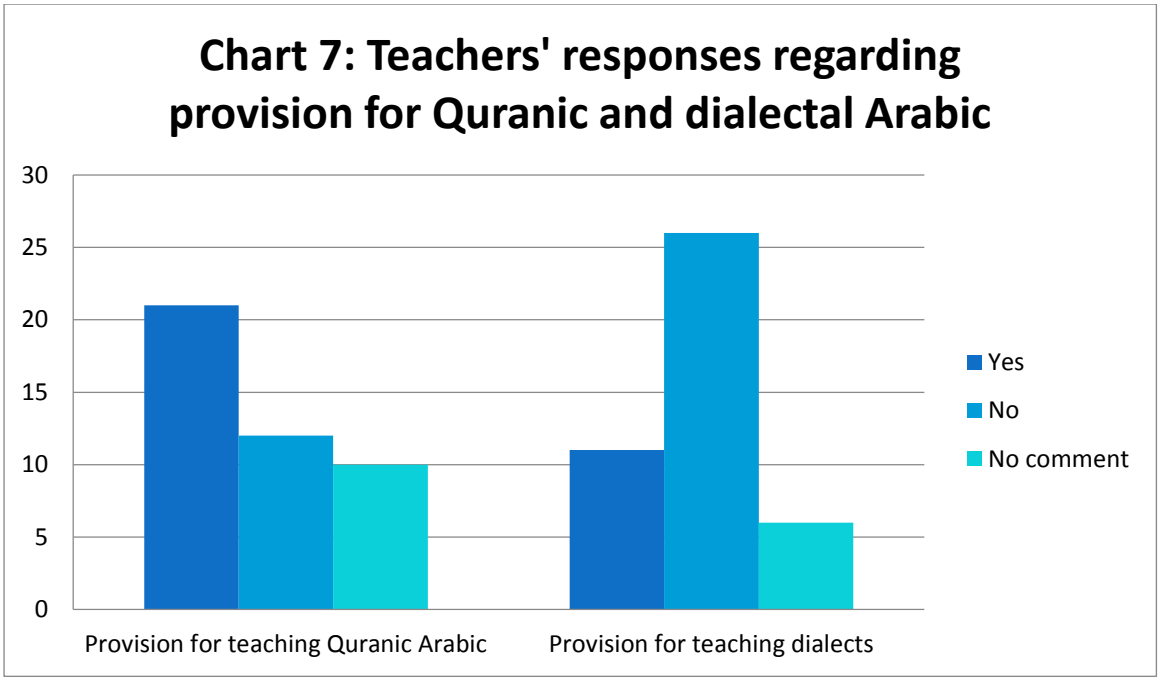


Providing for learners' needs

The data above clearly shows that understanding the Quran and being able to communicate with Arabic speakers are perceived by majority of teachers to be the main reasons for learning Arabic. This leads to the next question regarding provisions for supporting these learning needs. In the questionnaire, teachers were asked to comment on how they see their Arabic programs and schools provide for the learners' needs. Notably, most teachers said that their programs take learning motivations and students' views into consideration with 32 (74%) teachers confirming that they listen to their students and ask them for feedback regarding the classroom activities. However, most of these comments were in fact related to the particularities of lessons and teaching activities and not necessarily related to reasons for learning the language. This high number of responses regarding providing for learners' needs is natural as most teachers would, of course, want to do their best to support learning, but it is also possible that teachers might not be aware of whether what they do does indeed provide for the learning needs. There were also two (5%) teachers who said that they believe that what they teach does not provide for the learning needs, one teacher felt they were providing for some of the learning needs, two teachers said that they are not sure of why the students are learning Arabic and that it would be useful to find out while six (14%) teachers did not respond to this question. This could suggest that teachers need to engage more with learners' needs due to the importance of this dialogue for effective language learning.

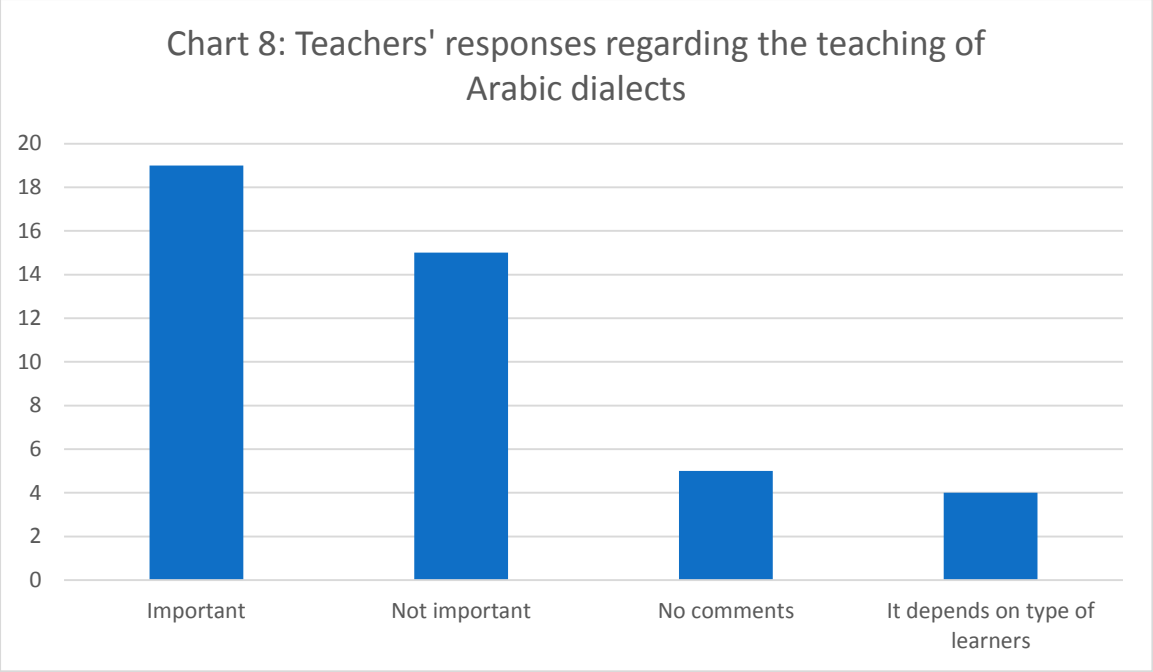
In order to get more details on how the teachers see their Arabic programs address the learners' two main motivations, they were asked to comment on how much their programs support learning Quranic Arabic and spoken dialects. Almost half of the participating teachers 21 (49%) stated that they support learning Quranic Arabic through explanation of meanings in the Quran, reciting versus aloud and assigning homework of memorising Quranic chapters. Regarding provision to support learning spoken dialects, 26 (61%) teachers said they do not with a comment from one teacher who felt teaching a dialect was 'inappropriate', 11 (26%) teachers do support the learning of dialects and 6 (14%) teachers did not comment. Those who teach the dialect commented that they teach it using resources available on YouTube and textbooks such as BBC Talk Arabic which one teacher said that it helps in incorporating more than one dialect. One teacher commented that s/he encourages the heritage learners to use their dialects outside the class. Two teachers said that they ask and encourage parents to help their children with the dialects.

In the interviews with the nine teachers, one teacher mentioned that s/he integrates the teaching of Egyptian, Levantine, Iraqi and North African dialects into his/her classes. One teacher said that s/he allows and encourages students to speak their own different dialects in class but they are not taught. Three teachers said that they do not teach dialects nor encourage learning them as the focus of exams is on MSA only. Chart 7 summarises the teachers' responses regarding provision for Quranic Arabic and spoken dialects.



Teachers' perceptions of the importance of teaching dialects

In order to gain an insight into reasons for including or for not including the teaching of dialects, the teachers were asked in the questionnaire to give their opinions regarding the importance of teaching the dialects with their reasons. 19 (44%) teachers believe it is important with two of them expressing their concern that it still should not be on the expense of teaching MSA which they believe is more important. 15 (35%) teachers stated that it is not important to teach the dialect at all but with three of them saying that students should still be exposed to the dialects or a "soft MSA" – which would have some linguistic elements from the dialects. Four (9%) teachers did not have a strong opinion and said that it depends on the type of learners and settings while five (12%) teachers chose not to respond. Chart 8 presents the teachers' responses regarding teaching Arabic dialects.



The teachers who believe that teaching Arabic dialects is important gave the following reasons:

- It is essential for teaching the students to communicate in real life situations.
- Teaching the dialects provides for the heritage learners' needs and helps them to connect with their background.
- It is motivating.
- It supports learning about the Arabic culture.

In the interviews, five teachers also stressed the importance of teaching dialects and stated that it is essential for effective communication and that the students should be educated about Arabic diglossia. The teachers who stated that teaching dialects is not important gave the following reasons:

- Dialects are not pure
- Dialects are not clear or standard
- MSA is sufficient to make you understand all dialects
- Learning the dialects will be confusing to the children.
- There are many dialects and it is not possible to know which one to teach
- Exams are in MSA
- My job is to teach MSA only.

Two of the lessons observed incorporated regional Arabic varieties into their teaching. One of these was a class of heritage learners. The pupils spoke in educated spoken versions of their regional varieties and the teacher incorporated a mixture within his speech. In their regional varieties, they were discussing a book written in MSA, which is reflective of the situation in the Arab world. Pupils were also familiar with other varieties as they were used so freely in the classroom and hence benefited from the exposure. The other lesson which supported language variation was a class with a majority of L2 language learners and only one heritage learner. When a new word was introduced, the teacher would provide the pronunciation in the Egyptian, Levantine, North African, Gulf and Iraqi dialects to familiarise students with the language variation. Pupils were free to speak in the spoken

variety of their choice. These two lessons demonstrate how it is possible to effectively include language variation within the classroom, regardless of whether the pupils are heritage or L2 learners. Given the importance of regional varieties for communication, further teacher development may be needed to encourage other teachers to effectively incorporate more varieties into their classrooms.

Challenges that impact the efficiency of teaching Arabic in UK schools

It was important in this research project to have a discussion with the Arabic teachers regarding any challenges that they regard as affecting how they teach and to gain insight into their ideas for improvement. Therefore, the interviewed teachers were asked to provide information regarding the number of hours they teach, the number of hours required for self-study/homework and what they think would be a suitable/ appropriate number of contact hours. They were also asked to compare the teaching of Arabic and European languages in schools, to comment on how teaching Arabic in the UK differs from teaching it in the Arab World and possible connections and collaboration with other schools that teach Arabic in the UK and in the Arab World.

Number of Arabic teaching (contact) hours in UK schools

As most of the participating teachers teach Arabic in independent and state schools, we asked them of whether the Arabic provision they have is timetabled or an extra-curricular activity and how much class time is allocated to Arabic. Most of the participating schools have timetabled Arabic classes with an average of 14 students per class. When asked in the interviews about the number of teaching hours a week for Arabic, their answers varied between as little as 45 minutes up to four and a half hours a week. The higher number of contact hours was dedicated more to those who study Arabic for an exam e.g. GCSE. Teachers who stated that they have one hour or less of Arabic per week, were not happy with such provision as it does not give enough to time for consolidating language learning and introducing a new language and makes learning very slow. They expressed that a minimum of two hours of instruction per week would be required to achieve progress in language learning. The teachers also acknowledged that it is not very easy to increase the contact hours due to restrictions in timetables, unless extra hours of instruction would be considered an extra-curricular activity in addition to the timetabled hours. The teachers were also asked about how much self-study time is asked of the students. Only four out of the nine interviewed teachers mentioned between two to four hours a week while the rest do not specify self-study time.

Comparisons with the teaching of European languages in schools

In the interviews with the nine teachers, they were asked whether they taught other languages and if so, how they would compare the teaching of Arabic to these languages in terms of availability of resources, training support, students' progress and any challenges that impact teaching and learning. Four of the interviewed teachers taught European languages in addition to Arabic. Three of them commented on Arabic having a lot less teaching materials than European languages and one teacher felt that the availability of resources and materials was quite similar. Those who felt that there was a lack of resources said that it had an impact on the ease of planning lessons as they find it harder to plan Arabic lessons compared to European languages.

In terms of students' attitudes and progress, two teachers said that Arabic is a challenging language and that is why it takes longer to reach a certain proficiency level. However, two teachers commented that Arabic can be perceived by some students to be more interesting and feel more motivated to put more effort in studying it than in European languages which could be due to the fact that it is very different linguistically and culturally. Two teachers – who were the only two of the four with experience teaching both languages who had entered pupils for the GCSE/ A-Level exams - also commented strongly about the Arabic exams being much more difficult than exams for European languages and they felt that these exams aimed more at native Arabic speakers rather than non-native learners.

Regarding career development and training support for teachers, one teacher was quite optimistic about the amount of support available these days compared to ten years earlier and two teachers mentioned the significance of the support that has been received from the British Council. However, it was also highlighted to us that European languages teachers receive much more support than Arabic teachers and they felt that most Arabic teacher training support is in or around London with much less opportunities in the North.

Collaboration with other Arabic teaching schools

The teachers were asked to state whether there are opportunities for collaboration between the schools that teach Arabic. Three schools said that they collaborate with other schools in the creation of resources and curriculums as well as teach training workshops. One teacher said that s/he used to cooperate with another school but teaching commitments can sometimes be too time-consuming to enable continuity of collaboration and networking. Three teachers said that they do not have links with other schools.

Comparisons with the teaching of Arabic in Arab countries and possible cooperation

Unfortunately, most participating teachers have not had the experience of teaching Arabic in an Arab country. One teacher who taught Arabic in Egypt and in Kuwait commented on an obvious difference in the amount of support given to teaching Arabic there being much higher than what is available in the UK. S/he also mentioned that the contact hours is a big challenge as they are much less in UK schools compared to schools in the Arab World.

Two schools, however, managed to establish links with schools in Jordan and in Dubai for exchanging ideas, teacher training workshops and students' trips. It is to be noted though that these were independent schools that have access to funds to enable such provision and it would probably be more difficult for state schools to establish similar links and exchange trips due to limited funding.

List of challenges as expressed by teachers, HoLs and head teachers in the questionnaires and interviews.

The participating teachers, HoLs and head-teachers were asked to list the challenges that they feel have a negative impact on the Arabic teaching provision and on expanding it. They provided a long list of challenges which were grouped into the following four themes:

1. Staffing: Eight teachers stated that it is not easy to find suitable Arabic teachers with the subject knowledge and with the appropriate training in teaching second languages. Six

teachers also said that continuous professional development and training is limited for Arabic teachers. It can be stated here that this staffing shortage is not limited to Arabic.

2. The Arabic language: 11 teachers said that the Arabic language itself is a challenging language to teach due to its script, some mentioned the detailed and complicated grammar, a large amount of vocabulary to memorise, its pronunciation and diglossia. With all of these linguistic elements that are considerably from European languages, the teachers feel that it needs more time and dedication to be learnt. Four teachers also commented on the Arabic language being stereotyped as the language of Muslims only and linked to certain culture that might not appeal to some students and/or their parents.
3. Examinations: Six teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with the current system and content of Arabic exams and two of them felt the need for a newly developed qualification for Arabic. One teacher found the fact that oral exams are conducted in MSA in the GCSE exams does not reflect real use of Arabic and one teacher was against the cancelation of oral and aural assessments in A-Level examinations.
4. The setting: The restriction on providing more hours in the teaching timetable was mentioned by two teachers to be a challenge that impacts learning. Three teachers also mentioned the limitation of resources which has been highlighted in the sections above. Four teachers spoke about the limited funding and one teacher spoke about the differences in teaching and learning style between English and Arabic schools implying that the limitation in funding, resources and having well-trained teachers can be felt by the students and can impact their enjoyment of learning Arabic.

Conclusions and recommendations

How is Arabic being taught in UK schools today and how it can be improved?

This research sought to investigate how Arabic is being taught in schools and how it can be improved. Teachers stated they are most familiar with the Communicative Approach but, in practice the Audiolingual Approach was the most frequently used, with students listening to and repeating Arabic words and sentences. However, all teachers observed did take a holistic approach to language teaching, which is a positive finding as it is frequently advocated as being the most effective approach (VanPatten, 1998; Lightbrown and Spada, 2013, Fotos: 2013; Hinkel, 2013; Ellis, 2013). For example, one lesson observed included listening to a dialogue and identifying words, role play, a grammar task, a vocabulary exercise and translation, which meant the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing were effectively practiced within the session. Many teachers who completed the survey are unfamiliar with the approaches to language teaching, this would lead to anomalies in the findings which may indicate a need for further teacher professional development to deepen understanding of the various pedagogic approaches to language learning.

Teachers do see the four skills, listening, speaking, writing and reading as being equally important. However, they do record giving more time to writing within their classroom activities and homework. It could be said that writing takes longer to practice which is why it is allocated more time. Also the focus on MSA in examinations could mean that teachers spend more time on it due to exam preparation. Further research should be done to investigate the rationale behind this. It is also important to note that in the lessons observed, a balance of the four skills was applied which is an effective example of good practice. This was done by incorporating a variety of tasks into the classroom, such as translation exercises, role play, listening to and repeating new vocabulary and phrases. Primary school sessions incorporated games and songs, making the sessions more interesting and memorable for their pupils.

The following account is an example of good practice observed by Fatimah Khaled in one of the lessons:

“I observed a lesson about the topic of smoking. Prior to writing the objectives, the teacher gave the students a few terminologies in both English and Arabic and told them to link every Arabic word with its appropriate English meaning. Thereafter in order to help the students practise their speaking skills, she granted them a few statements in Arabic, and allowed them to discuss in Arabic, whether each statement encourages or discourages smoking. I highly admired the way she presented her objectives as one showed what all students should achieve. Another good practise was when giving the students a group task she places the success criteria on the interactive whiteboard, as a constant reminder and guide. The teacher gave each student coloured cards in green yellow and red. At the end of accomplishing each aim she read the objective aloud and will allow each student to share how much they achieved these objectives by using their colours. This way of engaging the learners motivate them and give them a sense of where they are in the proficiency level and which points/skills they are yet to practise further”.

The following are examples of good practice observed by Melissa Towler in two of the lessons:

“One of the lessons I observed was a speaking class focusing on the Arabic numbers. The lesson covered speaking, listening and reading skills as well as providing students with the opportunity to use the numbers in practice. Students were already familiar with numbers one to ten, so the teacher started the class by reviewing the numbers. He went around the class, asking each student to participate in counting to ten, which they repeated numerous times. I thought this was very effective

as students were renewing, repeating and practising the pronunciation of the numbers. Every student had the opportunity to participate and was therefore engaged in the session. The teacher asked students if they knew the word for 200 before confirming the answer. This tested the students' knowledge on the dual and engaged them deeply in learning as opposed to the teacher simply transmitting information. The listening exercise also tested students' knowledge on the numbers. They listened to a song in the Egyptian dialect and were asked to write down the number that was mentioned. They each had to hold up the number they had written after listening to the song twice, meaning every student in the class participated, before the teacher wrote the correct number on the board. The teacher asked the students to look up the Arabic numbers on their smart phones before projecting them on to the board. This was an effective way to incorporate technology into the classroom as well as helping students to develop research skills they can use outside of the classroom. To practice their reading skills, the teacher held up football shirts and went around the class, asking each student to read the number, once again ensuring every student participated. They then moved onto a collaborative learning exercise, students were asked to go to a page in their handbooks with various drinks listed. They practiced saying the drinks in pairs before the teacher opened it up to a class discussion. I also particularly admired how the teacher included language variation into the classroom. When a new word was introduced, the teacher wrote the different regional pronunciations for the words on the board."

"Another lesson I observed which demonstrated good practice was an A-level class. This lesson centred around reading a novel which students had to prepare for their final exam. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher handed essays back to students, which had previously been peer reviewed. This is a great practice as it deepens the students' understanding of the subject. The only part of the session which was conducted in English was when the teacher went through the mark scheme on the board. This is great for language learning, as students require as much exposure to the language as possible. There were many other things I admired about this lesson. The students read and wrote in MSA but would speak in Educated Spoken Arabic, which is reflective of the situation in the Arab world. The teacher also used variation in his speaking, drawing mainly on Educated Iraqi Arabic but also including Levantine and Egyptian words and phrases, exposing students to a variety of dialects. After receiving their feedback, the lesson focused on reading the novel. The students had prepared for the lesson by reading a chapter of the book prior to coming to the session. Initially, they worked on a collaborative learning exercise, in which students discussed the chapter they had read in pairs, giving every student the opportunity to participate in the lesson before the discussion was opened up to the whole group. The teacher then read through the chapter with students. Students took turns in reading aloud and the teacher stopped them at various points to question their understanding of the novel. I particularly liked how he questioned certain things happening in the novel which made students analyse what was going on in depth leading to deep learning."

Four of the nine teachers interviewed claimed they are familiar with the CEFR proficiency scale and only one stated that s/he applies it to their teaching. The range of proficiency scales used in teaching may point to the need of a single scale being adopted at a national level to make the teaching of Arabic more uniform. Using the CEFR proficiency scale would enable the outcomes for teaching of Arabic to be standardised alongside other modern languages taught in schools. However, this would have to take the specific details and challenges of learning the Arabic language into consideration. It would also provide standardisation in learning and assessment. However, it would require investing

in further teacher professional development to familiarise teachers with the scale in application to the Arabic language.

The majority of teachers rely on textbooks, which received both positive and negative reviews. It could be argued that the challenges cited by teachers to this end are common to any language textbook and it might just be important to make the teachers aware that supplementing textbooks is a good practice in any language. As many teachers and schools are currently designing their own materials, it would be very efficient and useful for them to be shared on a common online platform which would make a lot of resources available to all and free to use and adapt.

The majority of teachers participating in this research did state they make use of technology in their classrooms. Only 11% of teachers who participated in the questionnaire claimed they do not make use of technology in their teaching and eight out of the eleven lessons observed made use of technology to support learning. However, some of the comments on technology, such as a teacher voicing concerns about online security, do point to a need for further teacher development so teachers can use technology safely and securely. Furthermore, there are many benefits of technology for language learning, especially the vast and diversified authentic materials it provides, which teachers should be encouraged to exploit.

What varieties of Arabic are being/should be taught and to what extent is attention being paid to the diglossic nature of the language?

It is important that students are learning the correct variety of Arabic to fulfil their purpose for learning the language so they can benefit from their education in practice. This research reveals that understanding the Quran and being able to communicate with Arabic speakers are perceived by a majority of teachers to be the main reasons for learning Arabic. This means that it is important that varieties other than MSA are supported in learning. However, the fact that GCSE and A-Level examinations only include MSA, makes it unlikely that those studying for national examinations will receive instruction in the other varieties.

Nearly half (49%) of teachers who completed the survey stated that they incorporate Quranic Arabic into their teaching. The majority of teachers (61%) stated that they do not support learning regional Arabic varieties. Only 26% of teachers support the learning of dialects but this does not mean they are taught in the classroom. Some teachers who stated they support learning dialects said that they encourage students to learn them outside of class, which is only of real benefit to heritage learners. The lack of provision for teaching dialects is something that should be addressed for the benefit of pupils who do not come from an Arab background. Most pupils are learning Arabic to communicate with other Arabic-speakers, which they are unable to do given the current focus on MSA. A slight majority of teachers do believe that learning regional varieties is important. Many teachers commented in the research on the importance of regional varieties for effective communication. Two of the lessons observed for this research, did demonstrate effective ways of incorporating regional varieties into both a classroom of heritage learners and one of L2 learners, meaning it is an attainable goal. Given the importance of regional varieties for effective communication, more research should be done into ways of incorporating variation into the curriculum and providing teacher training so it can be effectively implemented.

What are the challenges faced by Arabic learners and teachers which may have an impact on the efficiency of Arabic learning and teaching?

The amount of class time allocated to the teaching of Arabic varies from as little as 45 minutes to four and a half hours a week. A higher number of contact hours is dedicated to those who study Arabic for either GCSE or A-Level exams. Teachers at schools providing one hour or less a week were not satisfied with such a limited provision, suggesting that at least two hours a week is required to achieve progress in learning the language. The teacher who had experience teaching Arabic in the Arab world stated that a big challenge for them in the UK is the limited contact hours. Teachers cited restrictions on timetables as being the reason that contact hours for Arabic cannot be increased. Encouraging more schools to introduce Arabic as a GCSE may help to overcome this issue.

The research revealed that Arabic does offer less in comparison to other European languages in terms of availability of resources, training support and students' progress. However, it is important keep in mind that Arabic is not as established in schools as other European languages so, to some extent, this is to be expected. Also, learning a new alphabet coming to grips with a non-European language does delay initial progress in acquiring the language. This can however have a positive impact on student motivation as teachers expressed that it makes the language very interesting and appealing to students. One teacher was optimistic about the amount of resources and teacher support available today in comparison to the situation ten years ago, which does indicate that the teaching of Arabic is progressing well. However, as teachers highlighted, most support is available in and around London, so it would be beneficial to support more events and teacher training at locations in the North.

The challenges expressed by teachers, HoLs and head teachers can be grouped into four main themes: staffing; the Arabic language; examinations and the setting. Many teachers expressed the difficulties of finding suitable Arabic teachers and others expressed a need for more training. This does point to a need to invest in teacher training and to make the courses more accessible. Teachers elaborated on certain challenges for students in learning the Arabic language due to its script, a large number of vocabulary to memorise, its pronunciation and diglossia. The teachers who participated in this research do therefore believe that learning Arabic requires more time, so if more schools were to introduce the language as a GCSE, this may mean more contact hours can be dedicated to the subject. Many teachers however expressed dissatisfaction with examinations, claiming that they need to be made more doable for L2 learners. For this reason, some schools are teaching their own syllabus, but would prefer to be offering their students a nationally recognised qualification. This is definitely something that needs to be addressed if the provision for teaching Arabic in schools is to successfully be increased and links with Higher Education institutions might be beneficial in establishing a nationally recognised qualification for Arabic. The challenges mentioned regarding the setting brought up issues discussed previously such as limited funding, lack of resources and qualified teachers will need to be addressed on a national scale.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Teacher questionnaire

Review of the Teaching of Arabic as a Second Language in the UK Schools - Teacher Questionnaire

You are being invited to participate in this research project funded by the British Council and conducted by Alcantara Communications, Goldsmiths University of London, University of Edinburgh and University of Leeds. This research aims to investigate the ways that Arabic is taught as a foreign language in UK schools and to examine the challenges that may face this field.

This questionnaire will take you approximately 15 minutes to complete. By filling in this questionnaire, you agree for us to use your responses for the research purpose. We would like to confirm that your responses will be anonymous in presenting the findings of the research and nobody will be able to connect your responses with you as an individual or your institution. We believe there are no known risks associated with this research study; however, as with any online related activity the risk of a breach is always possible. To the best of our ability your participation in this study will remain confidential, and only anonymised data will be published. We will minimise any risks by keeping the data accessible and maintained only by the researchers and will ensure that raw data will be destroyed/deleted once the project is finished. All personal data will be kept secure in line with the Data Protection Act. Taking part in the study is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time before the end of this research project on the 30th of November, 2016 without giving reason and without penalty.

About you:

1. Which school/s do you work in currently?
   _____
2. What is your role? *Arabic teacher, Head of Modern languages, etc. Do you teach any other subjects besides Arabic?*
   _____
3. Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male
4. Are you a native speaker of Arabic? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   a. If yes, which Arabic dialects do you speak? *i.e. Sudanese, Kuwaiti, Iraqi, etc.*
      _____
   b. If no, do you speak any Arabic dialects? Which dialects?

About your teaching:

1. How many years/months have you been teaching Arabic for?

   _____

2. Your teaching qualification_____
   Awarding institution: _____ Year awarded_____
3. At which levels have you taught Arabic? *Primary, Secondary, which KS?*

   _____
4. Which of the following language teaching methods are you familiar with?
   - ☐ Communicative approach
   - ☐ Audio-Lingual approach
   - ☐ Grammar-Translation method
   - ☐ Community language learning
   - ☐ Total Physical Response
   - ☐ Thematic approach
   - ☐ Content & Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)
   - ☐ Other: _____
5. How important do you think the teaching of the following language skills is: Writing, Reading, Listening, Speaking and Cultural Awareness?

   _____
   _____
   _____

6. How much time of your teaching do you think you devote to each skill?

   _____
   _____
   _____

7. How important do you think the teaching of Arabic dialects is? Why?

   _____
   _____
   _____

8. What types of homework do you assign? *Mostly writing, reading, translation, listening, memorisation of vocab/spelling, etc.*

   _____
   _____
   _____

9. What materials do you use? *Which textbooks? Online resources? In-house designed materials?*

   _____
   _____
   _____

10. How do you find these materials? *Useful? Easy to use? Adaptable? Relevant? Clarity? Quality?*

   _____
   _____
   _____

11. How much technology do you think you apply in teaching Arabic? *PP presentations, online quizzes? CALL tools such as Rosetta stone CDs? Smart tablets and Ipads? Social media tools?*

_____
_____
_____

About your school:

1. Who teaches Arabic in your school? (please complete the boxes with the number of teachers in each category)
   - ☐ Native-speaker teacher trained abroad
   - ☐ Native-speaker teacher trained in the UK
   - ☐ Native-speaker not qualified as a teacher
   - ☐ Non-native Arabic speaker trained abroad
   - ☐ Non-native Arabic speaker trained in the UK
   - ☐ Non-native Arabic speaker not qualified as a teacher
   - ☐ Other (please specify)……

2. How many pupils are being taught Arabic in your school?

	On timetable	Extra-curricular	Other
Year 7			
Year 8			
Year 9			
Year 10			
Year 11			
Year 12			
Year 13			
Other			

3. About pupils learning Arabic in your school. Are pupils learning Arabic in your school generally[5]…

☐ Higher ability
☐ Lower ability
☐ Mixed abilities
Comments….

☐ Eligible for FSM[6]
☐ Not eligible for FSM

[5] i.e. if 75% or more pupils fall into this category. If there is a majority of pupils in one category, but less than 75% please tick the last option
[6] Free School Meals

Mixed socio-economic backgrounds
Comments…

☐ From Arabic national backgrounds
☐ From UK backgrounds
☐ From other national backgrounds
Comments…

☐ From Muslim families
☐ From non-Muslim families
☐ From both Muslim and non-Muslim family backgrounds
Comments…

☐ Recently arrived in the UK
☐ Born abroad
☐ Born in the UK
☐ Mix of immigration statuses
Comments…..

☐ Well-supported educationally by their parents
☐ Receive little educational support from parents
☐ Mixed in terms of parental support

☐ Have chosen to learn Arabic
☐ Have not chosen to learn Arabic
☐ Mixed in terms of personal motivation

4. Where you have students from Arabic national backgrounds, which parts of the Arab World do they come from?
   Mostly are from:_____
   Some are from: _____
   Rarely are from:
   _____

5. Is there a provision in supporting the learning of their spoken dialects?
   _____
   _____
   _____

6. What is the approximate percentage of your students who received Classical/Quranic Arabic lessons before?
   _____
7. Is there a provision in supporting their learning of Classical/Quranic Arabic?
   _____
   _____
   _____

8. In your experience, what are the top reasons for your students to choose to learn Arabic?

   _____
   _____
   _____

9. Do you think learners' views and needs are taken into consideration for the purpose of developing the curriculum and assessment methods? What are your views?

   _____
   _____
   _____

Any more comments to add:

Thank you very much for your participation!

Appendix B: Questions for Teacher's interview

Review of the Teaching of Arabic as a Second Language in the UK Schools

Research project funded by the British Council and conducted by Alcantara Communications, Goldsmiths University of London, University of Edinburgh and University of Leeds

Questions for Teacher Interviews

About Arabic teaching:

1. Why does your school teach Arabic?

   _____
   _____
   _____

2. Are there any barriers to expanding the teaching of Arabic in your school, and if so, what are they and how can they be overcome?

   _____
   _____
   _____

3. In your experience, what are the challenges that your students face when learning Arabic?

   _____
   _____
   _____

4. Are you familiar with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) proficiency levels? Do you apply the framework to the curriculum/lesson content and testing? Do you use another framework? Which?

   _____
   _____
   _____

5. How many hours of teaching do you do during the school year to cover a certain level i.e. GCSE, A year in KS2, etc.?

_____
_____
_____

6. How many self-study hours do you think are required to achieve a certain proficiency level?

_____
_____
_____

7. Have you taught other languages in schools? Which? How do you compare these with the teaching of Arabic in terms of: availability of resources, ease of planning lessons and teaching, students' progress and attitudes, curriculum and content covered, tests available, teacher support available, i.e. training and development, lesson observations, meetings at national level?

_____
_____
_____

_____
_____
_____

8. Have you taught Arabic in the Arab World or outside the UK? Reflect on differences and similarities between your experience in Teaching Arabic in the UK schools and abroad.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

9. Do the Arabic schools that you know collaborate with each other to develop the Arabic teaching and learning? How?

_____
_____
_____

About Arabic exams and accreditation:

1. What are the accreditation systems for learning Arabic at schools in the UK?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. How many students in your school take the tests every year?

   _____

   _____

3. What are your views on the efficacy of these tests?

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. What are your suggestions for improvement?

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. Are diglossia and language variation dealt with in assessment? Do they think they should be incorporated? Why? How?

   _____

   _____

   _____

About Arabic teaching career development:

1. Do you think there is a need for more qualified Arabic teachers? ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. If yes, how can the supply of Arabic teachers be increased?

_____

_____

_____

3. What Arabic teacher training resources and Arabic teaching qualifications are you aware of?

_____

_____

_____

4. Are there any challenges you are aware of affecting recruiting new teachers and accessing teacher training events?

_____

_____

_____

5. What opportunities are available for Arabic teachers to engage in curriculum development and influence assessment and language teaching policies?

_____

_____

_____

Any more comments to add:

Appendix C: Parental information sheet and consent for lesson observation

Information Sheet for Parents of Children Learning Arabic

TEACHING ARABIC AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN UK SCHOOLS

We are a group of Arabic specialists and researchers from the University of Leeds, University of Edinburgh, Goldsmiths University of London and Alcantara Communications who have been commissioned by the British Council to gather data from schools that are currently involved in teaching the Arabic language. As part of the research, we are collecting information on the way that Arabic is taught as a foreign language in UK schools. We are therefore conducting classroom observations and interviews with Arabic language teachers.

The classroom observation will be conducted by one of our researchers who will be sitting in one corner of the Arabic class and noting down observations. It is expected for the observing researcher to take at least 20 minutes observing the lesson. The classroom observation aims to collect data on the teaching methods and techniques used by Arabic teachers at different stages of teaching the language. It is hoped that the results of this research will enhance the teaching of Arabic in UK schools and support sharing good practice. Your child might be one of the children attending the observed class. The children are not asked to do anything different from their usual attendance and they are not the focus of our research. We will only be looking at the teacher's techniques and materials. However, we feel it is important to keep you informed and to assure you that this research will not involve your child in anyway. The classroom observation is expected to take on …[date]…….

We would like to inform you that as a parent you have the right to decide whether you are happy for your child to be attending the observed class and if you decide for your child NOT to be attending the observed Arabic class, please fill in the section below and hand it to the teacher within a week from the date of receiving this information sheet. If you have any questions or concerns regarding our research, please do not hesitate to contact Professor James Dickins at: J.Dickins@leeds.ac.uk or Dr Rasha Soliman at R.K.Soliman@leeds.ac.uk.
We see this as a first step in a long-term plan to support mainstreaming Arabic as a curriculum subject in a small critical mass of schools which can ensure a place for Arabic alongside other languages being taught. Thank you very much for taking the time to read this.

I do not want my child _____[name] to be attending the observed Arabic class as part of the research project reviewing Arabic Language Teaching in UK School.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Participant consent form

Consent for Arabic teachers taking part in the research titled "TEACHING ARABIC AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN UK SCHOOLS"	Add your initials next to the statement if you agree
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated…… explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project and that I was given a duration of 7 days to decide whether to take part.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time up until the 30th of November 2016 without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. In case I wish to withdraw, I was made aware that I can contact Professor James Dickins at J.Dickins@leeds.ac.uk or Dr Rasha Soliman at R.K.Soliman@leeds.ac.uk I understand that following withdrawal, any data collected from me will be deleted or destroyed immediately.	
I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.	
I agree for the data I provide to be archived at the University of Leeds intranet drive.	
I understand that other genuine researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	
I understand that other genuine researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	
I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study, may be looked at by individuals from the University of Leeds or from regulatory authorities where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records.	
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the lead researcher should my contact details change.	

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	
Name of researcher taking consent	
Signature	
Date*	

*To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant.