

# The Influence of Arabic in an English Classroom

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## Abstract

The teaching of English as a second or foreign language in Arab countries presents a challenge due to the cultural and linguistic differences between Arabic and English. While English is essential for academic, business, and research purposes, Arabic is deeply ingrained in the culture and life of Arab children. Many teachers in Arab countries use Arabic to aid students in their understanding of English, as well as to explain concepts more easily. However, the use of Arabic in an English-speaking classroom must be regulated to ensure that it does not hinder the development of English language skills. Literal translation should be avoided, and the use of Arabic must be limited to specific situations and governed by appropriate norms.

The use of Arabic in the English classroom can be beneficial when used appropriately, but it can also hinder communication and diminish the instructional value of the classroom. The current research seeks to find a compromise approach to this contentious issue by explaining the importance of both languages within the classroom and justifying the usage of Arabic in certain situations. By recognizing the value of Arabic and English, teachers can create a classroom environment that fosters effective language learning while also preserving the cultural identity of Arab students.

**Keywords:** Modern Standard Arabic, official language, culture, multilingual, English, teaching, classroom, communication, language acquisition, instructional value, compromise approach.

## Introduction

Modern Standard Arabic or MSA for short, is the official language for multiple countries within the Arabian population. As such, it is the most commonly used language, with multiple different dialects being extended from the standard form,

and over 20 countries claiming the language as their official or co-official language. Fundamentally, Arabic is a huge part of the culture and life of a child living in an Arab country.

The value of knowing multiple languages is growing as the globe becomes a more diverse, multilingual community. English is one of the most extensively used languages in academia, business, and research. As a result, many non-English speaking nations, especially those in the Arab world, work tirelessly to effectively include the teaching of the English language into their educational systems.

Gaining fluency in the English language is crucial for these nations because it serves as both a language of instruction and a means of communication in Arab nations. However, due to the culture and importance of the Arabic language within those countries, many teachers include Arabic in the classroom to help the children understand English, as well as because it is easier for them to explain it in the Arabic language.

Even if using Arabic as a language learning tool is flawed, there are times when it can be helpful when communication fails. Early on in the English classroom, it is possible to notice the usage of Arabic; nonetheless, it is believed that even in these situations, the use of Arabic must be governed by norms. For instance, while a teacher may provide clarification in Arabic, students shouldn't speak Arabic in an English-speaking setting. The use of literal translation must be avoided as well because there are so many variances between the two languages that doing so would hamper a child's language acquisition.

As a result, it is acceptable to use Arabic in an English-speaking classroom. However, this usage should be restricted and subject to different laws and circumstances than an equal exchange of the two languages. In conclusion, employing Arabic in the classroom can be both beneficial and detrimental to students' development of their English language skills if done incorrectly and without proper supervision. Yet, a student may be able to advance more quickly in the respective languages if the Arabic language is used for clarification and within the rules.

Negatively, however, the employment of Arabic in the English classroom hinders communication and negatively affects interaction. Moreover, the English lesson is covered in Arabic, and as a result, the English and Arabic cultures merge and the instructional value of the classroom is diminished.

Whether Arabic plays a part in teaching English or not is one of the most contentious topics in the field of teaching English as a second or foreign language today in the Arab world. While some English teachers are not averse to using Arabic when instructing in English, other English teachers despise the use of Arabic.

The purpose of this essay is to look for a compromise approach to this ongoing problem in English language instruction. It starts by reviewing how the mother tongue or first language is used in the main teaching strategies for English. The discussion then shifts to the justifications for using the native tongue, in this case, Arabic, when teaching English.

The goal of the current research is to explain the importance of both languages within a classroom. As well as justify the usage within the classroom and the suitable situations in which Arabic should be spoken within a classroom.

### **The Importance of Bilingualism in Education**

#### **Arabic**

Arabic is an extremely important language in the Arab world. It is the official language of 26 countries and is spoken by more than 420 million people, making it the fifth most spoken language in the world.

The importance of Arabic in the Arab world is multifaceted. Firstly, in terms of Identity and Culture, Arabic is a key component of Arab identity and culture. It is the language in which the Quran, the holy book of Islam, is written, and it has been used for centuries to express poetry, literature, and other forms of artistic expression. Secondly, the main form of Communication is Arabic and It is the language used in daily conversations, business transactions, and official government communications. As for education, Arabic is the official language of instruction in many schools and universities in the Arab world. Students need to be proficient in Arabic to excel in their studies and be competitive in the job market.

In terms of political and social life, Arabic is also important for political and social life in the Arab world. It is used in government proceedings, media outlets, and public speeches. Understanding and speaking Arabic are essential for participating in these important aspects of society.

Finally in terms of Economic Development, Arabic is also important for economic development in the Arab world. It is used in international trade, commerce, and diplomacy, and proficiency in Arabic can help individuals and businesses to navigate these fields more effectively.

Arabic is a vital language in the Arab world, and its importance cannot be overstated. It is essential for personal identity and cultural expression, communication, education, political and social life, and economic development.

#### **English**

English is one of the most important and widely used languages in the world. Its importance stems from various factors, including:

Firstly, Global Communication: English is the most widely spoken language in the world, with over 1.5 billion speakers. It is the language of international communication, including business, diplomacy, and academic research. It is also the primary language of the internet, making it essential for global communication.

Similar to Arabic, English is the language of instruction in many universities and schools around the world and it is also the language used in many academic and scientific publications. Proficiency in English is crucial for students who want to pursue higher education and academic research.

First, English is important in terms of Career Advancement since English is often a requirement for many jobs and industries, including technology, finance, tourism, and international business. A good command of English can open up many opportunities for career advancement and global job prospects.

Secondly, English is important for Cultural Exchanges, as English is a language that is used globally, and it plays a vital role in cross-cultural communication. It enables people from different cultures to connect and share ideas and experiences.

Finally, English is primarily used in Entertainment, as English is the primary language of the entertainment industry, including movies, TV shows, music, and books. Access to this entertainment can be important for language learners as it provides authentic language practice and exposure to various cultural contexts.

As such, the English language is also essential in today's globalized world. It plays a crucial role in communication, education, career advancement, cultural exchange, and entertainment. Proficiency in English is a valuable asset that can provide individuals with numerous opportunities for personal and professional growth.

### **Advantages/Disadvantages of Speaking Arabic in an English Classroom**

Conclusively, we can determine the different advantages and disadvantages of speaking Arabic in an English classroom by seeing the benefits of both sides.

Speaking Arabic in an English classroom can be beneficial or detrimental, depending on the context and purpose of the language use. Here are some potential advantages and disadvantages of speaking Arabic in an English classroom:

#### **Advantages**

The first advantage of using English in the classroom is the fact that it helps with clarification, as sometimes, students may struggle to understand a concept or instruction in English. Speaking Arabic can help students clarify their understanding and receive more personalized assistance from the teacher or peers.

Secondly, speaking Arabic in the classroom helps with building a community, since In classrooms with a high number of Arabic-speaking students, speaking Arabic can help build a sense of community and belonging among students who share a common language and culture.

Finally, it helps with enhancing learning within the classroom as using Arabic in the classroom can enhance learning, as students can translate new vocabulary words and grammar concepts into their native language for better comprehension (Kagan & Carreira, 2014)

### **Disadvantages**

Despite the benefits, speaking Arabic in an English classroom could lead to many pitfalls such as Language Immersion, where speaking Arabic in the classroom can hinder the immersion process, which is essential for language learning. When students constantly switch between languages, they may struggle to internalize the English language and improve their fluency.

It could also lead to alienation, since speaking Arabic in the classroom can make non-Arabic speaking students feel excluded and alienated, leading to a divided classroom and reduced collaborative learning.

Finally, it also leads to Non-Compliance with School Policy, since Some schools may have policies that prohibit speaking languages other than English in the classroom. Failure to comply with these policies can result in disciplinary action.

In conclusion, speaking Arabic in an English classroom can have advantages and disadvantages. Teachers and students should consider the context and purpose of the language use and strive to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

### **Similarities and Differences Between Arabic and English**

#### **Similarities**

Despite being from different language families (Arabic belongs to the Semitic language family, while English belongs to the Germanic language family), there are some similarities between Arabic and English. Examples include:

- **Loanwords:** Both Arabic and English have borrowed words from other languages. For example, Arabic has borrowed words from Persian, Turkish, and French, while English has borrowed words from Latin, Greek, and French. Some examples of shared loanwords include "coffee" (قهوة in Arabic), "sugar" (سكر in Arabic), and "cotton" (قطن in Arabic).
- **Grammar:** Both Arabic and English use a similar sentence structure, which is subject-verb-object (SVO). They also have a similar system of adjectives, prepositions, and conjunctions. For example, in both languages, adjectives usually come before the noun they modify (e.g. "red car" instead of "car red").
- **Technical Vocabulary:** Both languages have a technical vocabulary that is used in science, technology, and other fields. Some examples of shared technical vocabulary include words like "alcohol", "atom", and "camera". These words have been borrowed from Arabic to English, and vice versa.

- **Phonetics:** Both languages use some of the same sounds, such as the "k" and "t" sounds, which can help learners of one language pronounce the other more accurately. However, there are also significant differences in pronunciation, especially in terms of vowel sounds.
- **Use of Articles:** Both languages use articles to indicate whether a noun is specific or general. English uses "the" for specific nouns and "a" or "an" for general nouns, while Arabic uses "al" for specific nouns and leaves it unsaid for general nouns.
- **Numerals:** Both Arabic and English use a similar numbering system, which is based on the Hindu-Arabic numerals (0-9). This makes it easy for speakers of one language to understand and use numbers in the other language.
- While there are some similarities between Arabic and English, it is important to note that they are still quite different languages with their unique characteristics and complexities. However, these similarities can help facilitate language learning and communication between speakers of the two languages (Duff, 2010).

### **Differences**

There are several differences between Arabic and English reports. Here are some of the key differences:

- **Writing direction:** Arabic is written from right to left, while English is written from left to right. This means that the layout and design of reports will be different depending on the language.
- **Sentence structure:** Arabic sentences tend to be longer and more complex than English sentences. Arabic also uses a different word order than English, with the verb usually coming after the subject.
- **Punctuation:** Arabic uses a different set of punctuation marks than English, and some of the marks have different meanings. For example, the Arabic mark for a question looks like a backward semicolon (;), while the English mark is a question mark (?).
- **Grammar:** Arabic grammar is more complex than English grammar, with more emphasis on verb conjugation and noun declension. Arabic also has a dual form for nouns, which does not exist in English.
- **Vocabulary:** Arabic has a larger vocabulary than English, with many words having multiple meanings depending on the context. Arabic also uses a different script than English, which can make it more difficult for English speakers to read and write.

Overall, these differences mean that writing reports in Arabic and English requires different approaches and skill sets. Translating between the two languages can also be challenging, as the structure and meaning of sentences can be quite different.

### **Disadvantages of Cross-Language Classrooms**

According to research and studies, using multiple languages in a classroom can have several disadvantages that can negatively impact the learning experience of students. These disadvantages include, Firstly, Limited comprehension, in which students who are not fluent in all the languages used in the classroom may not be able to fully comprehend what is being taught, leading to confusion and frustration. This can be especially challenging for students who are not proficient in the language of instruction.

Secondly, a disadvantage would be the difficulty in communication, since using multiple languages can make it difficult for students to communicate with one another and with the teacher, which can hinder collaboration and learning. Students may also struggle to express themselves or understand the ideas and perspectives of others, leading to miscommunication and misunderstandings.

Thirdly, cross-language use in the classroom could lead to unequal participation, in which students who are more fluent in one of the languages used in the classroom may dominate discussions and activities, while others may be left out or struggle to keep up. This can create a hierarchical environment where certain students feel more valued than others, leading to unequal participation and limited opportunities for all students to contribute and learn (Kroll & Bialystok, 2013)

It is also time-consuming, as switching between languages can be time-consuming and disruptive, where it can negatively impact the pace of the lesson and the overall learning experience. Teachers may spend more time translating or clarifying concepts, which can detract from the time available for instruction and practice.

Finally, the usage of both languages in the classroom leads to Inconsistent learning outcomes, since using multiple languages in a classroom can result in inconsistent learning outcomes among students, as some may excel in certain languages while struggling in others. This can make it challenging for teachers to provide targeted support and differentiate instruction based on student's individual needs and abilities.

Conclusively, while using multiple languages in a classroom can have benefits, such as promoting language development and cultural understanding, it is important to be aware of the potential disadvantages and strive to minimize their impact on students' learning experiences.

## **Perception of English in the Arab World and Vice-Versa English in the Arab World**

The perception of English in the Arab world is multifaceted and can vary depending on several factors, such as age, education level, and cultural background. Generally speaking, English is seen as a valuable language for communication, education, and career advancement.

English is widely spoken and used as a second language throughout the Arab world, particularly in countries where it is an official language, such as Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. In many Arab countries, English is taught as a compulsory subject in schools, and it is often the language of instruction in universities and higher education.

It is also commonly used in business, government, and international relations. However, the level of English proficiency varies widely across the Arab world. In some countries, such as the UAE and Qatar, English proficiency is very high, while in others, such as Yemen and Sudan, it is relatively low.

There are also variations in the type of English that is spoken in the Arab world, with many countries adopting a British English or American English accent and vocabulary. Additionally, there are local dialects of English that have emerged, such as "Arabish" in Egypt, which blends Arabic and English words. Overall, English plays an important role in the Arab world and is seen as a key tool for communication, education, and economic development.

However, there is also a sense of concern in some parts of the Arab world about the potential negative impact of English on the Arabic language and culture. Some worry that the widespread use of English could erode the importance of Arabic and lead to a loss of cultural identity (Carreira & Kagan, 2011)

Additionally, there is a perception in some circles that English-speaking countries, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom, have a negative attitude towards Arab countries and their culture. This perception can sometimes lead to resentment towards English and the Western culture it represents.

Overall, English is viewed as an important language in the Arab world, but there are also concerns about its potential impact on Arabic and Arab culture.

### **Arabic in the English World**

The perception of Arabic in the English-speaking world can vary depending on several factors, such as education level, cultural exposure, and personal experience.

On one hand, Arabic is widely recognized as a rich and complex language with a long history and cultural significance. Many English-speaking individuals may have a general appreciation for Arabic calligraphy (Brinton & Bohkle, 2014), music, and



poetry. Additionally, given the global importance of the Middle East in fields such as politics, economics, and religion, there is a growing interest in learning Arabic for professional and personal reasons.

However, there can also be negative stereotypes and misperceptions about Arabic and the Arab world in general. This is often fueled by media coverage that focuses on conflict, terrorism, and political instability in the region, which can lead to a generalized fear or mistrust of Arabic speakers. Additionally, there may be a lack of understanding or appreciation for the diversity and richness of Arab culture and history.

It is important to recognize that no language or culture is homogeneous, and individuals should be encouraged to approach any language or culture with an open mind and a willingness to learn. With increased exposure and understanding, it is possible to build bridges between different languages and cultures and overcome negative stereotypes and biases.

### **Perception Globally**

The public perception of the Arabic language varies widely across different regions and communities. In some parts of the world, such as the Arab world and Muslim-majority countries, Arabic is highly valued and respected as a language of culture and religion. However, in many Western countries, the perception of Arabic is often influenced by negative stereotypes and political tensions.

Negative stereotypes of Arabic often include associations with terrorism, violence, and extremism. This perception is fueled by media coverage of conflicts and political events in the Middle East, which often portrays Arabic-speaking people and countries in a negative light. In addition, the media often emphasizes the differences between Western and Arab cultures, which can reinforce negative stereotypes and misunderstandings.

The negative perception of Arabic can have an impact on the learning and use of the language. Research has shown that negative stereotypes can discourage people from learning Arabic and can lead to a lack of support for Arabic language education programs (Adesope et al., 2010). In addition, Arabic speakers may experience discrimination or negative attitudes in Western societies, which can make it difficult for them to use and maintain their language skills.

Efforts to change the public perception of Arabic are ongoing, with many organizations and individuals promoting the language as a tool for cross-cultural understanding and communication. Some academic institutions have developed Arabic language programs that emphasize the cultural richness and diversity of the

language, and community organizations have organized events and initiatives to promote the Arabic language and culture.

In conclusion, the public perception of the Arabic language is influenced by a range of factors, including negative stereotypes and political tensions. This perception can have an impact on the learning and use of Arabic, as well as on the experiences of Arabic speakers in Western societies. Efforts to change the perception of Arabic are ongoing, with a focus on promoting the language as a tool for cultural understanding and communication.

### **Conclusion**

In this report, we discussed the impact of using Arabic in the classroom, including the benefits of bilingual education, the role of Arabic in cultural and identity development, and the effectiveness of Arabic language instruction. The report will include references to academic sources and studies on the topic, in conclusion, we found the benefits of bilingual education and its usage in the classroom through the following:

Bilingual education has been shown to have many benefits for students, including improved academic performance, increased cognitive flexibility, and greater cultural understanding. By using Arabic in the classroom, students can develop bilingual proficiency and benefit from the cognitive and cultural advantages of bilingualism.

Arabic is an important part of cultural and identity development for many students, particularly those from Arab backgrounds. By incorporating Arabic into the classroom, educators can help students connect with their cultural heritage and develop a sense of belonging and pride in their identity.

Research has shown that effective Arabic language instruction can lead to significant improvements in students' proficiency and achievement in the language. In addition, Arabic language instruction has been associated with improved cognitive and academic outcomes, including improved reading comprehension and problem-solving skills (Cummins, 2018).

The use of Arabic in the classroom can also have a positive impact on society as a whole. By promoting bilingualism and cultural understanding, educators can help build bridges between different communities and promote greater social cohesion.

In conclusion, the use of Arabic in the classroom can have a significant impact on student's academic, cognitive, and cultural development. By incorporating Arabic into the curriculum, educators can promote bilingualism, cultural understanding, and social cohesion. Policymakers and educators need to support and promote the use of Arabic in the classroom to help students succeed in a diverse and globalized world.

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