

UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

Learning Arabic as a Foreign Language on Undergraduate Degree Courses in England

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UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

ABSTRACT

Learning Arabic as a Foreign Language on Undergraduate Degree Courses in England

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Communicative Language Teaching has been changing the way foreign languages are taught since the 1970s. Arabic degree courses responded to this by teaching Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) communicatively, meaning essential components of communicative competence, notably sociolinguistics, were absent, making courses at odds with the approach. In the majority of English Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), students are taught to speak, listen, read and write in MSA and often expected to pick up a regional variety (RV) during their year abroad. This study has revealed that some HEIs have introduced RVs into the curriculum or classroom. However, an important component of degree-level Arabic is missing: a background understanding and awareness of the language situation. This absence of what makes Arabic so unique, which starts with diglossia, means courses cannot do justice to the language itself. When developing the curriculum, a shift has been identified in the wider field of HE due to the changing climate in which HEIs operate. Engaging students in their education and making approaches more student-centred is advocated in the wider literature as a solution to face the changes of the modern-day world, making HEIs more competitive, accountable and inclusive, and improving the student experience. To date, no comprehensive research has investigated what this means for undergraduate degree-level Arabic or how it can be drawn on when developing the curriculum. This study addresses this gap through mixed-methods research to explore multiple perspectives, data was gathered from eight of the nine English HEIs offering undergraduate Arabic: 122 student questionnaires and 15 student interviews, 12 tutor interviews and 14 classroom observations. This three-dimensionality was crucial to achieve as comprehensive a picture of the discipline as possible. There is a long-standing debate on whether degree-level courses should include practical or theoretical knowledge. As Arabic is learnt at university *ab initio*, the practical acquisition of the language is expected. It requires a different approach to other L2s due to the complexity of the language situation. Some components of communicative competence may need to be discarded on Arabic beginner levels by using MSA in inauthentic situations. However, an awareness of the language situation complements practical skills acquisition and is consistent with what universities are for: providing a fuller understanding of the subject matter. This study urges HEIs to experiment with including a module on Arabic linguistics, which would raise awareness surrounding the language situation as well as promoting student agency, academic conversation and transparency.

Table of Contents

Declaration and copyright statement.....	1
Acknowledgements.....	2
ABSTRACT.....	3
Table of Contents.....	4
List of tables.....	9
List of figures.....	10
List of abbreviations.....	11
Phonemic transcription.....	13
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	14
1.1. TAFL in England.....	16
1.2. Overview of chapters.....	19
Chapter 2: Arabic, L2 teaching & acquisition, & TAFL.....	20
2.1. Arabic sociolinguistics.....	20
2.1.0. Introducing Arabic.....	20
2.1.1. Arabic diglossia.....	21
2.1.2. Urban varieties.....	25
2.1.2.1. Egyptian Arabic.....	26
2.1.2.2. Levantine Arabic.....	27
2.1.2.3. Gulf Arabic.....	28
2.1.2.4. North African.....	28
2.1.3. The language situation in the Arab world.....	29
2.1.3.1. ESA.....	29
2.1.3.2. Arabic 'levels'.....	30
2.1.3.4. Code-switching.....	32
2.1.4. Effects of Arab perceptions on the L2 classroom.....	33
2.1.4.1. Classical / colloquial battle.....	33
2.1.4.2. Perceptions of diglossia.....	34
2.1.4.3. Inter-Arab dialect perceptions.....	36
2.1.5. Concluding remarks.....	37
2.2. Second language teaching & acquisition.....	37
2.2.1. The GTM.....	38
2.2.2. Introducing communicative competence.....	41
2.2.3. Communicative language teaching.....	44
2.2.4. FonF.....	47

2.2.5. Concluding remarks	48
2.3. Teaching Arabic as a foreign language.....	49
2.3.1. Approaches to TAFL	51
2.3.1.1 MSA	51
2.3.1.2 The colloquial approach.....	53
2.3.1.3. The integrated approach	54
2.3.1.3.1. The issue of confusion	58
2.3.1.3.2. The IA: Success stories	59
2.3.1.4. The simultaneous approach.....	63
2.3.1.5. Which approach?	65
2.3.2. Students' reasons for learning Arabic.....	66
2.3.2.1 Belnap (1987; 2006)	66
2.3.2.2. Husseinali (2006a).....	67
2.3.2.3. Further US studies.....	68
2.3.2.4. English studies into the reasons for learning Arabic.....	69
2.3.3. TAFL.....	70
2.3.4. Concluding remarks	73
Chapter 3: Directions for Arabic from HE	75
3.1. QAA subject benchmarks and programme specifications	75
3.1.1. Curriculum aims	78
3.2. Student-centred learning.....	80
3.3. Engaging with students.....	84
3.4. Concluding remarks	88
Chapter 4: Methodology.....	89
4.1. Introduction	89
4.2. Related studies.....	89
4.3. Research questions	92
4.4. Overview of the research design	93
4.5. Research methods	94
4.5.1. Strand 1: Questionnaires	94
4.5.2. Piloting the questionnaire.....	95
4.5.3. Questionnaire procedures	96
4.5.4 Strands 2 and 3: Interviews.....	97
4.5.5. Strand 2: Student interview procedures.....	99
4.5.6. Strand 3: Tutor interview procedures.....	99
4.5.7. Transcription	100

4.5.8. Strand 4: Classroom observations	100
4.5.9. Strand 4: Classroom observation procedures.....	102
4.6. Data analysis	102
4.7. Ethical considerations	104
Chapter 5: Student expectations	106
5.1. Student incentives to learn Arabic.....	106
5.1.1. Speaking.....	106
5.1.2. Culture.....	109
5.1.3. Politics and the media.....	111
5.1.4. Career.....	113
5.1.5. Family members.....	116
5.1.6. Religious texts	117
5.2. Concluding remarks	119
Chapter 6: HEIs and their curriculum.....	120
6.1. Introducing the courses	120
6.2. Language diversity	122
6.2.1. Views on including RVs	122
6.2.2. Rationale behind approach.....	127
6.3. Is learning RVs confusing?.....	135
6.4. Which variety?	138
6.5. Students' views on varieties	140
6.5.1. Inter-dialect perceptions.....	140
6.5.2. RVs only needed when travelling abroad	144
6.6. Students' experiences using RVs.....	150
6.6.1. Does knowledge of RVs help?.....	155
6.6.2. Importance of learning RVs.....	157
6.7. Classical/ colloquial battle	159
6.8. MSA as the 'academic' variety	161
6.9. Concluding remarks	164
Chapter 7: Pedagogy	165
7.1. Sociolinguistics	166
7.1.1. Arabic linguistics module	170
7.1.2. RVs in the UK.....	171
7.1.2.1. Use of RVs in the Classroom	172
7.1.2.2. Examinations.....	178
7.2. SLA & SLT.....	180

7.2.1. Holistic approach	181
7.2.2. The GTM.....	182
7.2.3. Communicative language teaching.....	183
7.2.4. Teaching	193
7.2.4.1 Teaching RVs	196
7.2.5. Coursebook	204
7.2.6. Arabic compared to other L2s.....	213
7.2.6.1. A challenging language	216
7.2.6.2. How easy or difficult is it to learn Arabic?	218
7.2.6.3. Grammar	219
7.2.6.4. Vocabulary & pronunciation	220
7.2.6.5. Diglossia & inaccessibility	223
7.2.7. Concluding remarks	224
Chapter 8: Conclusion & recommendations.....	227
8.1. Conclusions	227
8.1.1. What factors are specific to the Arabic language situation?	227
8.1.2. What are students expecting from their degree course in Arabic? Which varieties would they need to learn to meet their goals?	228
8.1.3. Is including regional varieties in the undergraduate curriculum supported by:	231
8.1.3.1. Research?	231
8.1.4.2. Tutors?	232
8.1.3.3. Students?	233
8.1.4. How is Arabic currently treated in the curriculum? Does it do justice to the reality of Arabic?	234
8.1.5. How is Arabic it taught? Does it do justice to the reality of Arabic?	235
8.1.5.3. Language diversity in the classroom.....	236
8.1.5.4. SLA.....	237
8.1.5.5. Availability of materials.....	238
8.2. Recommendations	238
8.2.1. How could the curriculum better reflect the reality of the Arabic-speaking world?	238
8.2.1.1. A linguistic understanding.....	238
8.2.1.2. Introducing RVs?	240
8.2.1.3. The 'Arabic linguistics' module	242
8.2.2. Pedagogy.....	243
8.2.2.1. Which approach?	243
8.2.2.2. Tutor development	245

8.2.2.3. Coursebook	245
8.2.3. What are the obstacles (if any) to curriculum change?	245
8.2.3.1. Confusion	246
8.2.3.2. Which variety?	246
8.2.3.3. The Arab world.....	247
8.2.4. What needs to be considered when making changes to the undergraduate Arabic language curriculum?.....	247
8.3. Concluding remarks	248
Bibliography	250
Appendix 1: Pilot questionnaire.....	290
Appendix 2: Questionnaire to be distributed to Arabic language students	298
Appendix 3: Information sheet	306
Appendix 4: Interview consent form	307
Appendix 5: Classroom consent form.....	308
Appendix 6: Samples of transcripts	311

List of tables

Table 1: Key to figure 2.

Table 2: Overview of approaches to teaching L2s.

Table 3: Overview of approaches to TAFL.

Table 4: Top three reasons to study Arabic. (Belnap, 1987: 33)

Table 5: Top five reasons to study Arabic. (Khalil, 2011: 34)

Table 6: The top five learning needs with the highest agreement responses. (Soliman, 2014: 126)

Table 7: The universities that the survey is sent to.

Table 8: Responses to why students opted for Arabic language study (in percentages).

Table 9: Responses to ranking the importance of speaking, listening, reading and writing (in percentages).

Table 10: Arabic courses in England.

Table 11: Place of RVs on Arabic undergraduate courses in England.

Table 12: Classroom observations.

Table 13: Approaches taken to L2 teaching in classroom observations.

Table 14: English spoken in observed Arabic language classrooms in percentages.

Table 15: Summary of students answers (in percentages) to survey question 24, "How do you find learning Arabic in comparison to other languages?"

Table 16: Arabic words derived from the root كَتَبَ /kataba/ (to write).

List of figures

Figure 1: Map of North Africa and the Middle East (Ohio University, 2015).

Figure 2: 'Overlapping multiglossia': the language situation in the Arabic-speaking world.

Figure 3: Badawi's diagram "Five Levels of Egyptian Arabic" (1973 in Freeman, 1998).

Figure 4: Responses to, "To better understand Arab culture" as a reason for learning Arabic.

Figure 5: Responses to, "To better understand Arab politics" as a reason for learning Arabic.

Figure 6: Responses to, "To better understand Arab politics" as a reason for learning Arabic.

Figure 7: Responses to, "To read the Quran or religious texts" as a reason for learning Arabic.

Figure 8: Varieties of Arabic spoken, learnt and preferred to learn by participants.

Figure 9: Responses to question 19, "What is your preferred regional Arabic dialect?"

Figure 10: Answers to question 19, "Do you think students should be taught a regional Arabic dialect before the year abroad?"

Figure 11: Responses to question 18, "How important is it to you to learn a regional Arabic dialect?"

Figure 12: Responses to question 21, "Who or what shaped your opinions about learning an RV?"

Figure 13: Answers to question 26, "How easy or difficult do you find learning Arabic?"

List of abbreviations

ALM	Audiolingual method
CBI	Content-based instruction
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
CLA	Classical Arabic
CLT	Communicative language teaching
CPH	Critical Period Hypothesis
ECA	Egyptian Colloquial Arabic
ELA	Educated Levantine Arabic
ESA	Educated Standard Arabic
FonF	Focus-on-form
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GTM	Grammar-translation method
H	High variety
HEI	Higher education institution
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
IA	Integrated approach
IWLP	Institution-wide Language Programme
L	Low variety
L1	First language
L2	Second language
L4	Level four (first year of degree course)
L5	Level five (second or third year of degree course depending on which year is spent abroad)
L6	Level six (fourth year of degree course)
MLE	Multicultural London English
MSA	Modern Standard Arabic
PAL	Peer Assisted Learning
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
RV	Regional variety

SA	Standard Arabic (both CLA and MSA)
SLA	Second language acquisition
SLT	Second language teaching
ST	Student talk
T AFL	Teaching Arabic as a foreign language
TT	Teacher talk
UKPSF	UK Professional Standards Framework

Phonemic transcription

The in-text transcription adheres to the below phonemes from the international phonetic alphabet (IPA):

Consonants

Arabic	IPA	Arabic	IPA
ء	ʔ	ض	ɖ
ب	b	ط	t
ت	t	ظ	ʊ
ث	θ	ع	ʕ
ج	dʒ	غ	ɣ
ح	ħ	ف	f
خ	x	ق	q
د	d	ك	k
ذ	ð	ل	l
ر	ɹ	م	m
ز	z	ن	n
س	s	ه	h
ش	ʃ	و	w
ص	ʂ	ي	j

Vowels

Arabic Short & Long Vowels	IPA	Arabic Diphthongs	IPA
اَ	a/ɑ	أَي	eɪ
إِ	ɪ	إِي	aɪ
أُ	ʊ/o	أَي	ɔɪ
أَ	a:	أَو	əʊ
يَ	i:	أَو	aʊ
وَ	u:		

Chapter 1: Introduction

The study of languages within degree programmes in the UK, especially traditionally favoured languages such as German and French, has been declining, to the extent that language departments and degree courses are closing (Sausman, 2016).¹ However, the number of students opting for Arabic language study is on the rise. There was a surge in students studying Arabic in universities across the US with a 92% increase in numbers between 1998 and 2002 (Welles in Al-Batal, 2007: 269), which subsequent studies reported is still increasing (Abdalla & Al-Batal, 2012; Al-Batal, 2007; Ryding, 2006), and was mirrored in the UK (Towler, 2018; UCML-AULC, 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016).

There are many reasons that Arabic is becoming a more popular language to learn. 9/11 was followed by numerous terrorist attacks in Western cities, which are still dominating news headlines, most recently, the Manchester Arena bombing in May 2017, the Berlin Christmas market attack in December 2016 and the Paris attacks in November 2015. Social unrest has plagued many Arabic-speaking countries, leading to the so-called Arab Spring and the overthrow of some once very powerful dictators.² Terrorists took advantage of the instability in Arab countries leading to a war raging in Syria since 2011 which also spread to Iraq.³ All these events kept the region at the forefront of world affairs. Due to the correlation between terrorist attacks carried out in the West by Arabic speakers and wars raging in Arab countries, it could be that the increased number of second language (L2) students is politically motivated.

¹ HESA data shows that between 2007/08 and 2012/14 entrants for modern language degree courses fell by 16%. In 2013/14 there were only 615 entrants for German degree courses, a decrease of 34% since 2007/08, and entrants for French dropped by a quarter to 1775 in 2013/ 14.

² These dictators were, for example, President Hosni Mubarak (Egypt), Colonel Gaddafi (Libya) and President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali (Tunisia).

³ There was already conflict in Iraq, but this was further intensified as a result of the conflict in Syria.

There is a growing Muslim community within England; according to the 2011 Muslim Council of Britain census, 2.71 million lived in England and Wales, compared with 1.55 million in 2001 (Gani, 2015), and many Muslims regard understanding the Quran as important.⁴ This means they are likely to opt for Arabic language study. Furthermore, increasing numbers of immigrants are reaching European borders, and bringing with them a rich Arab culture, which could be attracting the interest of Westerners. While we cannot underestimate the influence politics has had on the increased interest in the language, many other factors could be at play.⁵ With students arriving at university with such diverse expectations, clarity is needed surrounding the question of what is or should be included in the undergraduate degree-level Arabic curriculum.

The climate in which higher education institutions (HEIs) are currently operating is changing, due to developments in technology, the effects of globalisation, an ever more diverse student body, and high university fees. HEIs are under pressure to make improvements to undergraduate courses so they can compete in the global market. In the midst of these changes and the seemingly never-ending debate on whether universities should provide practical or theoretical knowledge, the role of the university in contributing towards a deeper understanding of a subject matter needs to be considered. Are undergraduate courses providing this understanding of Arabic? What should be included in a curriculum to meet this aim?

When the numbers of students opting for learning Arabic dramatically increased in the US, departments were not ready to deal with the number of students (Al-Batal, 2007: 269), nor were

⁴ This is consistent with the 2011 census data, which reported 2.7 million Muslims living in England and Wales in 2011 compared with 1.5 million in 2001 (Office for National Statistics, 2012: 1).

⁵ Current students may have also been influenced by the political and social situation in Europe and what BREXIT entails in terms of relations between the UK and Arabic-speaking countries. However, as my questionnaire data was collected in February 2016, this would have not been a motivating factor for students at the time, as England voted to leave the EU in June 2016.

English universities. Despite the surge reported in 2002 (Welles in Al-Batal, 2007: 269), L2 Arabic pedagogy is still severely lagging behind other foreign language instruction (Ryding, 2013: 396; Wahba, 2006: 151).⁶ Arabic was traditionally learnt by a minority in the same way as classical languages. It is, however, a living language: treating it solely as classical is outdated. Traditional approaches to L2 learning, such as the grammar-translation method (GTM) and audiolingual method (ALM) have been criticised for their failure to produce competent communicators in a foreign language (see section 2.2.1). Communicative language teaching (CLT) is a supported method in producing competent communicators in the L2 and has been changing the way languages are taught since the 1970s (see section 2.2.4). However, when incorporating CLT into the Arabic classroom, the specifics of the L2 need to be considered to ensure that courses do justice to the language itself, and an approach tailored to Arabic SLA. This thesis investigates how it is currently done and if any changes are necessary and justifiable.

1.1. TAFL in England

This thesis focuses on the undergraduate language curriculum and pedagogy because what is offered on such courses differs from other Arabic programmes (see section 3.1). The L2 is currently offered at universities *ab initio*: there is no current pathway for students to progress from GCSE and A-Level to an undergraduate degree (British Academy, 2018). UK schools offering GCSEs and A-Levels in Arabic focus on Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) because it is the variety students are examined in. This is despite 44% of teachers stating that learning regional varieties (RV) is important (Soliman, Towler & Snowden, 2017: 18).⁷ An Arabic A-Level qualification includes no oral examination at all,

⁶ This is in regard to research supporting how to teach Arabic as a diglossic language (see section 2.3); The increase in student numbers effected pedagogy as Arabic language departments could not deal with the demand or diverse needs of the new student cohort. Tutors were appointed simply for being native speakers of Arabic and followed textbooks provided page-by-page. These textbooks were largely outdated as, due to the low demand to learn Arabic, they centred around the GTM/ ALM, which was not in line with more current SLA research (see section 2.2).

⁷ The profile of learners at schools differs greatly to those at universities: 74% of teachers were reported as saying that the majority of their students were from Muslim backgrounds and 44% stated a majority from Arab

which is inconsistent with examinations in other A-Level languages. However, most students who take A-Level Arabic are heritage learners, many of whom have opted for the L2 for UCAS points and have no intention of taking further studies. Some schools have created their own communicative courses which are not part of the GCSE or A-Level programmes, but aim to help students speak Arabic and focus on diversity within the language (ibid: 23f). Teachers state this provides a useful introduction to the language for learners who want to learn Arabic at HEIs, but is only available at a limited number of schools. Schools without this option are unable to advise on degree programmes. It is outside of the scope of this study to discuss GCSEs and A-Levels, but it is worth noting the parallels facing the subject on incorporating RVs into the curriculum.⁸

To date, no comprehensive research has been conducted into degree-level Arabic in England. An overview was produced in 2006 by Dickins & Watson, in which the universities of Cambridge, Durham, Exeter, Manchester, Oxford and the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London) were identified as offering undergraduate degrees in the language in England. The University of Cambridge was the only institution identified as adopting a communicative approach and supporting an RV in the curriculum, through teaching students to speak in Palestinian Arabic from the start of the course (Dickins & Watson, 2006: 110). Recently, the British Academy (2018: 34)

backgrounds (Soliman *et al.*, 2017: 16). In this study, 85.4% of respondents identified themselves as being non-Arab and 27.6% as being Muslim (see section 5.1).

⁸ See Soliman, Towler & Snowden, 2017; Khamam & Snowden, 2017; Ramezanzadeh, 2016.

identified that the overwhelming majority of HEIs solely teach MSA.⁹ However, as these numbers include HEIs offering Institution-wide Language Programme (IWLP) Arabic, they do not provide a detailed picture of undergraduate degree courses offering a major component in the language. This study focuses on mapping out a picture of the current situation, and aims to investigate the overarching theme of how courses can best do justice to the language itself, through the following research questions:

1. What factors are specific to the Arabic language situation?
2. What are students expecting from their degree course in Arabic?
3. Which varieties of Arabic would they need to learn to reach their goals?¹⁰
4. Is learning RVs supported by:
 - a. Research?
 - b. Tutors?
 - c. Students?
5. How is Arabic currently treated in the curriculum? Does it do justice to the reality of Arabic? How could the curriculum better reflect this?
6. How is Arabic taught? Does it do justice to the reality of Arabic? How could courses better reflect this?
7. What are the obstacles (if any) to curriculum change? What needs to be considered when making changes?¹¹

The lack of up-to-date, comprehensive research on Arabic at English HEIs highlights the pressing need for this study. HEIs can learn from the experiences of other institutions and, if necessary, update the curriculum accordingly. This research has revealed that the situation has changed quite drastically since Dickins & Watson's 2006 article: RVs are now taught at more HEIs. No research has been done to investigate their approaches to teaching Arabic as a foreign language (TAFL), if an understanding of the Arabic language situation is included or how they are received by students and tutors. Whilst there is some research touching upon student expectations and various pedagogical approaches to TAFL (see section 2.3), the question of how to do justice to Arabic in the undergraduate curriculum has not been addressed. Through mixed-methods research drawing upon

questionnaires, student and tutor interviews and classroom observations, this study aims to investigate how the language is currently treated in the curriculum, assessing if any changes can or should be made.

1.2. Overview of chapters

The following chapters include a review of the literature included within the theory chapters, which commences in chapter 2 with a discussion on Arabic sociolinguistics and is followed by a discussion on second language acquisition (SLA), second language teaching (SLT) and TAFL. Chapter 3 explores the current place of Arabic in HE and any directions which can be extracted from it. In chapter 4, the methodology of the study is presented. Data is analysed in chapters 5, 6 and 7, with 5 focusing on the students' reasons for learning Arabic, 6 on the curriculum and 7 on pedagogy. Conclusions and recommendations are presented in chapter 8, directly addressing the research questions.

Chapter 2: Arabic, L2 teaching & acquisition, & TAFL

As the thesis is investigating a set of research questions (see chapter 1; section 4.3), which act to serve the overarching theme of how undergraduate degree courses can best reflect the reality of Arabic, this section seeks to provide a background on the surrounding issues. Section 2.1. aims to answer to the question of what the L2 is, defining the linguistic reality of the Arab world. Students applying for Arabic through UCAS may perceive the language as constituting a coherent whole, much like the German, French or Spanish; but the linguistic reality of Arabic is more complex, and needs to be outlined in its religious and regional aspects before investigating the difficulties in teaching such complexity. Section 2.2. looks into SLA and SLT: doing justice to the language reality has implications for the way Arabic is acquired and taught. In Section 2.3, the approaches advocated to deal with diglossia are discussed and relevant research carried out in TAFL.

2.1. Arabic sociolinguistics

2.1.0. Introducing Arabic

The Quran, revealed to the Prophet Mohammed in 609 CE, provided Arabic with an elevated status amongst its Muslim speakers, emphasising within its chapters that it is a recitation revealed *in Arabic* (Versteegh, 2014: 42). The language enjoyed a certain level of prestige prior to its revelation: it has a strong cultural history that pre-dates Islam, reflected in the pre-Islamic poetry, the *mu'allaqaat* (Eisele, 2013: 6). However, the Quran has provided Arabic with a 'sacred' status throughout the Muslim world, not mirrored by languages used in other religions, as the Quran is only ritually valid in the language of its revelation (Bassiouney, 2009: 270).¹² The Quran in its original Arabic form is recited by Muslims at least five times a day in their prayers and is used in supplications and sermons, giving the language an important role in the daily lives of every practicing Muslim.¹³

¹² This is different to the status of Latin in Christianity and Hebrew in Judaism: whilst some segments of these communities use Latin or Hebrew for religious rituals, it is obligatory on every Muslim to use Arabic to pray, supplement, read the Quran, etc. In Judaism, for example, most of the Sages rule that prayers can be read in whichever language is understood by the worshiper (Posner, 2015).

¹³ Muslims who do not speak Arabic learn how to read and recite the Quran from a young age without understanding the meaning.

The Quran was revealed in the variety later referred to as Classical Arabic (CLA), adopted for religious scripture and ritual. MSA, a modernised version of CLA, is employed throughout the Arabic-speaking world as the medium of communication in education, the media and other ‘formal’ contexts.¹⁴ Ideologically, CLA and MSA are the same variety but in practice it is easy to see differences (Versteegh, 2014: 233). Native-Arabic speakers generally do not distinguish between CLA and MSA (Zughoul, 1980: 207; Bassiouney, 2009: 11), and CLA and MSA are both referred to as *الفصحى* /fuṣḥā:/ in Arabic.¹⁵ Standard Arabic (SA) is regarded very highly by Arabic speakers, as clarified by Abdel-Jawad (1987: 67), “[i]t is closer to the root, a symbol of nationalism and Arab unity, the language of religion, the carrier of culture and civilization, and more effective for communication since it is mutually intelligible over the entire Arab world.” MSA is used for written discourse throughout the Arabic-speaking world and is generally uniform apart from some minor lexical differences, in Arabised versions of administrative, political or technological terms (Al-Wer, 2008: 1917).

2.1.1. Arabic diglossia

The language situation in the Arabic-speaking world was initially described by Ferguson (1959: 244f) as being diglossic:¹⁶

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.

¹⁴ There are visible differences between MSA and media Arabic so it could be that a different register of MSA is used in that context.

¹⁵ Throughout this study Standard Arabic (SA) will be used to refer to both CLA and MSA.

¹⁶ The term “diglossie” was first used in French by William Marçais to describe the Arabic linguistic situation (1930).

Ferguson clarifies that diglossic language situations are to be distinguished from the alternate use of a standard language and an RV.¹⁷ He emphasises that diglossia is limited to two varieties of the same language, ruling out distantly related or totally unrelated languages. The superposed variety is referred to as the high (H) and the dialect as the low (L). 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 (e.g. Gumperz, 1962; Fishman, 1977). It is generally how Arabs would describe their own language situation to date (Suleiman, 2013: 278).

Ferguson (1959) focused on four languages, Arabic, Swiss German, Haitian Creole and Greek. More research has been done since Ferguson published his paper, as I will show, but Ferguson's work made the initial link between the social and linguistic aspects to better understand processes found across speech communities (Walters, 2003: 103). The case for Arabic is unusual even in comparison to other diglossic languages because there is a large degree of difference between MSA and RVs (Versteegh, 2014: 172); MSA does not represent the speech of an actual community (Gibson, 2013: 24) and no one acquires it as a mother tongue (Habash, 2006: 12).¹⁸

Fishman (1967) expanded on Ferguson's definition of diglossia, to include several separate language varieties or codes, termed 'broad diglossia'. He (1972: 92) supports Gumperz's (1962) view that:

Diglossia exists not only in multilingual societies which officially recognise several "languages" and not only in societies that utilize vernacular and classical varieties, but also in societies which employ separate dialects, registers, or functionally differentiated language varieties of whatever kind.

¹⁷ Some academics draw parallels between Arabic and other languages. For example, Alish (2018: 270f) stated, "Only Arabic varieties are tested separately, something that is never attempted with other diglossic languages like German, or even with English and French, which have varieties that are distinctly different from the standard language." Although it can be argued learners experience difficulties when encountering other varieties, Arabic diglossia, which is different from using a standard and RVs, set it apart from other L2s. Notably: there is no country or region L2 learners can travel to where MSA is spoken.

¹⁸ Contrary to popular belief in the Arab world, research supports the notion that RVs do not originate from CLA (Wilmsen, 2014; see section 2.1.3).

Fishman eases Ferguson's restriction of diglossia to cases in the middle range of linguistic relatedness, expanding it to cover any degree of linguistic difference, but retaining Ferguson's definition of their functionally distinguished roles within a society. Fishman distinguishes between diglossia and bilingualism, defining bilingualism as a psycholinguistic analysis of the language situation, as an individual's ability to use more than one language variety (ibid). Diglossia is defined under sociolinguistics, as the distribution of more than one language variety to serve different communicative purposes in a society. Four types of language situations are identified in his work (1967: 360), both diglossia and bilingualism, bilingualism without diglossia, diglossia without bilingualism and neither diglossia nor bilingualism. Fishman categorises the situation in the Arabic-speaking world as being diglossic with bilingualism, adding the existence of a Western language for intragroup technological or scientific communication to H and L varieties.

Describing Arabic speech communities as being diglossic and bi- or multilingual does not cover the full scope of the situation in the Arab world. Local, urban dialects are emerging with a prestige of their own (see section 2.1.2). This means there are three linguistic repertoires which have implications for the study of diglossia (Eisele, 2013: 22), so the language situation has been referred to as 'triglossic' (Cote, 2009: 87; Meiseles, 1980: 122).¹⁹ Ferguson's classic diglossia identifies prestige through pan-Arab sentiment, Fishman's analysis incorporates international prestige from the language of colonialists, and, recently, Arab sociolinguists have been looking at intranational prestige based on local cities (Eisele, 2013: 22).

Ferguson (1959: 249) predicted that, for Arabic, over the next two centuries, there would be a "slow development toward several standard languages, each based on an L variety with heavy admixture of H vocabulary." Although prestigious varieties of RVs have emerged (see section 2.1.2), the H

¹⁹ The idea of 'triglossia' was first developed by Abdulaziz Mkilifi in 1978 to refer to the language situation in Tanzania which is based on three languages: an indigenous language or mother tongue, a *lingua franca* (Swahili), and an international language (English) (Rondyang, 2007: 52f).

variety is by no means disappearing, with most Arabs keen to maintain MSA (Ibrahim & Karatsolis, 2013: 135). What is popularly known as MSA today, the H variety, is almost identical to the form of Arabic broadly described by the late 2nd/8th century grammarian Sibawaih (Owens, 2013: 4), which is proof of how, unlike other languages, Arabic has been very resistant to change.²⁰ This has made it difficult to modernise the language (see section 2.1.2.1).²¹

Despite not learning SA until they start school at six years old, native speakers do not hold their RV in the same esteem as MSA (see Versteegh, 2014: 242). The 1951 UNESCO report recommends that children are educated in their mother tongue, even if this means a local dialect (Fasold, 1984: 293).²² This would mean standardising the RVs. Suleiman (2013: 269) states that there have been attempts at establishing the dialects as national languages, but, to date, none have succeeded in either establishing RVs as widely recognised in print, within education, or even to dent the authority of MSA in these domains to any significant degree (see section 2.1.2).²³

Hamad (1992: 351) argues the opposite to Ferguson's prediction, claiming that the political, social and educational developments in the Arab world suggest that the role of the standard variety will be enhanced in the future. He states that Ferguson and some Arab scholars have underestimated the relationship between the Quran and SA, which cannot be compared to the role of religion with regard to other languages (see 2.1.0).²⁴

²⁰ 2nd century refers to the Islamic lunar calendar.

²¹ The Arabic language has been modernised to some extent, with words being coined or adopted for new terminology and the influence of European grammar on media Arabic (Versteegh, 2014). However, it is still almost identical to 8th century Arabic (Owens, 2013: 4), which suggests that it is resistant to change, compared to other languages.

²² For native Arabic speakers, the RV is their mother tongue.

²³ On the internet, RVs, or code-switching, are used extensively in written form (Khalil, 2019). However, this has not yet impacted the educational domain.

²⁴ Hamad (1992) does not indicate the 'Arab scholars' referred to, but, from my own research, Anis (1990), Al-Mousa (1987), and Moustouai (2013), are examples of this stance.

2.1.2. Urban varieties

Starting in the 1980s, studies within various Arabic-speaking countries and regions investigated urban varieties in more detail, and revealed that speakers tend to switch to non-standard but locally prestigious varieties (Holes, 2008; 1986; Walters, 2003; Abdel-Jawad, 1986; Abu-Haidar, 1989; Ibrahim, 1986). In Jordan, Abdel-Jawad notes that several language loyalties exist which determine whether speakers will switch to the locally prestigious variety or MSA (1986: 67). He argues that the variety chosen often depends on the linguistic feature concerned and the stylistic or social context (1986). The emergence of locally prestigious varieties has not affected the status of MSA as, by using it, speakers can hide or suppress their localisms and elevate their speech. Local varieties are associated with social status and mobility and reveal the speakers' class, which would be unidentifiable by using MSA (Ibrahim, 1986: 125). The prestigious local varieties are based on the urban centres of Arabic-speaking countries such as Cairo, Damascus, Jerusalem, Baghdad and Tunis.²⁵ Stigmatised rural and Bedouin features are replaced with urban, more prestigious variants, such as the glottalising of the uvular /q/ or its Bedouin pronunciation /g/ to the urban form /ʔ/ (Abdel-Jawad, 1986: 55f).²⁶ Further research is needed to provide a more up to date analysis of the situation to date, but those studies provided evidence of local varieties carrying prestige, as opposed to solely MSA.

In most Arab countries, excluding Iraq where Kurdish is also recognised, SA is the official language (Bassiouney, 2009: 269). However, the linguistic situation differs in each Arabic-speaking country, as they, "are as different as they are similar and attitudes are as diverse as they are coherent" (Bassiouney, 2009: 268). Dialects are often grouped into regions due to the closely related sociolinguistic histories of the areas. These varieties are categorised in this study as Levantine

²⁵ Ibrahim (1986: 120) notes that as well as 'a well-established supra-dialectal H' (SA) there exists a 'thriving supra-dialectal H' based on the speech of Cairo, Damascus and Palestine in particular.

²⁶ Abdel-Jawad (1986) does not give an example, but the SA pronunciation of طريق (way) would be /t̪ari:q/, the Bedouin pronunciation /t̪ari:g/ and the urban pronunciation /t̪ari:ʔ/.

(Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestine), Gulf (Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman and the UAE) and North African (Morocco, Algeria and Libya), with separate varieties for Egypt and Iraq (see figure 1).²⁷



Figure 1: Map of North Africa and the Middle East (Ohio University, 2015).

2.1.2.1. Egyptian Arabic

Egypt is the most inclined country to use the RV in a wider variety of contexts (Versteegh, 2014: 251). It has long been characterised with a strong sense of regional nationalism, directed at establishing an Egyptian identity, and the RV is an important part of this (ibid). Egyptians use the dialect in more settings than any other Arabic-speaking country including television interviews, children’s programmes and literary works, such as dialogues and theatre plays. Speeches in the Egyptian parliament are often given in a variety close to the RV, which is unheard of in other Arabic-speaking countries (ibid). The RV has been influenced more by Turkish than any of the other regions, as it was ruled directly by Turkish-speaking elites (Al-Wer, 2008: 1922). English is the most widely used foreign language in Egypt, and is taught in schools and HE (ibid). The prestigious dialect, which developed in Cairo, Cairene, is perceived as being the most widely understood dialect in the Arabic-speaking world, dominating the film industry, soap operas and theatre productions (Al-Wer, 2008:

²⁷ This is in accordance with other divisions found in the literature, Versteegh separates the dialects into dialects of the Arabian Peninsula (Gulf), Mesopotamian dialects (such as Iraqi), Syro-Lebanese dialects (Levantine), Egyptian dialects (Egyptian) and Maghreb (North African) dialects (2014: 189).

1923; Hachimi, 2013: 275, Chakrani, 2015; Zaidan & Callison-Burch, 2014: 173). Many Egyptian teachers have migrated to other parts of the Arab world due to shortages in teaching staff, spreading the variety further afield (Versteegh, 2014: 252). The cultural significance of Egyptian Arabic is now facing competition from Levantine and, to a lesser extent, Gulf Arabic (Hachimi, 2013: 275), discussed below.

2.1.2.2. Levantine Arabic

Levantine Arabic has been said to share the highest amount of lexis with both MSA and other RVs (Younes, 2006: 161ff).²⁸ The Levantine varieties are mutually intelligible, due to their genealogical relationships, geographical proximity, frequent contact between their speakers and dialect exposure through the mass media (Al-Wer, 2008: 1918).²⁹ Across this region, people can communicate in their dialects without needing to switch to a mutually intelligible variety (ibid). In spoken discourse, MSA is generally used in education and the mass media. Within classrooms, a mixture of standard and non-standard Arabic is used, which is also the case in TV and radio where scripts are read in MSA and subsequent discussions involve in a mixture of MSA and an RV. Soap operas, game shows and cookery programmes are normally broadcast in an RV. Levantine Arabic, in particular the Lebanese, has recently been dominating the music industry with an estimated 40% of all Arabic music production and the majority of high budget pan-Arab entertainment shows are filmed in Beirut (Hachimi, 2013: 275). Syria is the only country in which Arabic is the only medium of instruction at school in all subject areas (Al-Wer, 2008: 1918). Bassiouney (2009: 258ff) argues that Syria focuses on the Arabic language to emphasise pan-Arab ties, demonstrated when President Assad gives

²⁸ More research is needed to support this claim.

²⁹ To Al-Batal's knowledge, the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation International (LBCI) is the only television in the Arab world to employ a mix of the Arabic varieties; MSA is used in headlines, news briefs, Arab and international news but on location reports, as soon as the camera leaves the station, a mix of MSA and Levantine Arabic is used (Al-Batal, 2013: 93).

television interviews through his exclusive usage of MSA, in comparison to his Yemeni counterpart, who switches to the RV.³⁰

2.1.2.3. Gulf Arabic

Holes (2008: 1939) states that there is a new koine in the Gulf, “based on a set of phonological, morphological, and syntactic features which are shared by most Gulf varieties with an admixture of H vocabulary.” The dialect is becoming more widely understood in the Arabic-speaking world. Gulf music is increasing in popularity and Dubai has recently emerged as a new cultural centre for performing arts (Hachimi, 2013: 275). Despite its geographic location, the varieties of Iraq differ to the rest of the Gulf and are therefore treated separately, as they, “have distinctive features of its own in terms of prepositions, verb conjugation, and pronunciation” (Zaidan & Callison-Burch, 2014: 174). Tourism could also be playing a role in the increasing popularity of the Gulf dialect.

2.1.2.4. North African

Due to the influence of Berber and French colonialism, North African dialects are viewed as being less intelligible than other dialects (Zaidan & Callison-Burch, 2014: 174). None of the RVs have been standardised and lack the purist ideology associated with such processes making them open to lexical borrowing, often perceived negatively by Arabs from other regions (Walters, 2008: 1944). Code-switching is a common feature, not just between varieties of Arabic, but also European languages such as French, Italian, Spanish and English (Walters, 2008).³¹ French is considered as a second or third language rather than a foreign language, with its wide usage in broadcast and print media as well as education. Despite the Arabisation of school systems following the colonial periods, French remains to be viewed as a marker of education, social distinction and class privilege (Walters, 2008: 1944; Versteegh, 2014: 267). Literacy in Arabic amongst North Africans is higher than at any

³⁰ This could also be connected to social factors, such as economic wealth, literacy rates, social structures and western vs more traditional social structure.

³¹ Code-switching is discussed further in section 2.1.3.4.

other time and Arabic is increasingly occupying new roles (Walters, 2008: 1945f).³² North African dialects do not have a cultural presence in other Arabic-speaking countries as is the case with Levantine, Gulf and Egyptian dialects. North African films and television series are a rarity in the wider Arab world and North African singers are only given airtime if they produce music in one of the other dialects or MSA (Hachimi, 2013: 275).³³

2.1.3. The language situation in the Arab world

Since Ferguson described the situation in the Arab world as being diglossic (1959), others have provided a more detailed analysis of the situation. Through identifying ESA and the existence of more than one H and one L variety, academics now describe the situation as composing a continuum with speakers code-switching across the scale (see section 2.1.).

2.1.3.1. ESA

Meiseles (1980: 120) argues that, “Ferguson’s description of diglossia cannot offer a framework for handling the linguistic range between the poles of Arabic diglossia.” To address this, some (el-Hassan, 1978; Mitchell, 1978, 1990; Meiseles 1980; Agius, 1990a) have identified the emergence of an additional variety, a middle way between MSA and RVs, termed Educated Spoken Arabic (ESA).³⁴ Through a process of koineization, speakers have minimised features peculiar to their dialects and maximised borrowings from MSA (Agius, 1990a).³⁵ This means a speaker loses perceived stigma but

³² Walters does not define his use of literacy in the article; after the colonisation of North Africa, each country followed a course of Arabisation. The specifics of which differed from country to country but Arabic, as a symbol of nationalism, has provided the language with a new status.

³³ Music, performing arts and plays are produced in either MSA or an RV (Hachimi, 2013: 275). However, in plays in Egypt, female writers have been integrating the two discourses, particularly since the second half of the twentieth century (Eid, 2013: 225); more research is needed into these claims as speakers of North African varieties are increasingly using their own varieties on the internet, which is spreading their comprehensibility.

³⁴ Abu-Absi (1986) used the term ‘Cultivated Spoken Arabic’ in his description of ESA. Abdulaziz termed it, ‘Inter-Arabic’, see section 2.1.3.

³⁵ As defined by Tuten (2006: 185) “the term koineization refers to a process of mixing of dialects (or mutually intelligible varieties of language) which leads to the rapid formation of a new dialect or koine, characterized by mixing, levelling and simplification of features found in the dialects which formed part of the original mix”; Stigmatised forms of, for example, the MSA ولد /walad/ (boy) and بنت /bint/ (girl), such as /wa:d/ and /bit/ are eliminated (Mitchell, 1986: 14) and highly formal forms (Younes, 2006: 161) such as the MSA ذهب /ḍahaba/ (to go) is replaced with /ra:ħ/ (راح).

is understood by other Arabic speakers. Some claim that ESA is used as a *lingua franca* when communicating across borders (el-Hassan, 1978; Younes, 2006), which has been contested by others due to the existence of other communicative strategies to facilitate communication (see below).

2.1.3.2. Arabic 'levels'

Since the 1970s, some, who also identified the existence of ESA, have been arguing that there are more 'level(s)' existing between the two (Wahba, 2006; el-Hassan, 1978; Agius, 1990a; Mitchell, 1978, 1990; Badawi, 1973 in Hary 1996). The language situation has been referred to as being 'triglossic', referring to the existence of CLA, MSA and the RVs (Meiseles, 1980: 122; see section 2.1.1). Later, it was referred to as multiglossic (Hary, 1996: 69), because more than two or three varieties were identified by analysing the speech of Arabic speakers. In the Arab world, the function of the H is covered by more than two varieties: CLA is used for religious and literary purposes, MSA for education and the media, a Western language for technological or scientific communication and an urban variety for social prestige. This is a phenomenon I will refer to as 'overlapping multiglossia' (see figure 2 & table 1), 'multiglossia' due to the four prestigious varieties mentioned and 'overlapping' as their domains overlap. Academics have also been researching more varieties between the H and L poles.³⁶

³⁶ According to Abu-Melhim (2014) and Younes (2015), Blanc (1960) carried out the first major study into the use of RVs in inter-dialectal communication, who identified more 'levels' of Arabic (see Blanc, 1960). Further research was presented by Badawi (1973) and Meiseles (1980), also supporting the existence of more varieties of the language. Unlike Mitchell, they see ESA as "one of a series of separate varieties, on a par with MSA and the vernaculars" (Mitchell, 1980: 12ff).

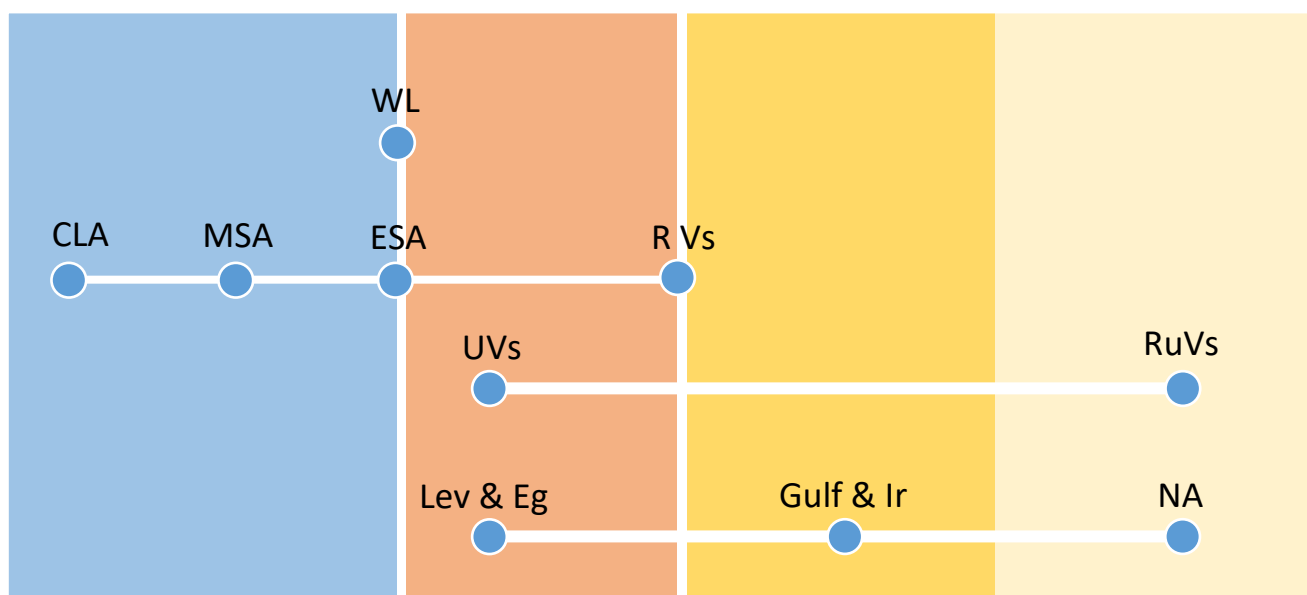


Figure 2: 'Overlapping multiglossia': the language situation in the Arabic-speaking world.

Table 1: Key to figure 2.

	Formal	ESA	Educated Spoken Arabic
	Informal and prestigious	UVs	Urban varieties
	Less prestigious	Lev & Eg	Levantine and Egyptian varieties
	Stigmatised	Gulf & Ir	Gulf and Iraqi varieties
WL	Western language	RuVs	Rural varieties
CLA	Classical Arabic	NA	North African varieties
MSA	Modern Standard Arabic	RVs	Regional varieties

Researchers were unable to agree on how many varieties exist between CLA and the local varieties (Suleiman, 2013). Therefore, others suggested they are placed on a continuum so there is no need to establish any finite number of levels as categorisation (Hary, 1996; Ferguson, 1996; Williams, 1990). A continuum has the advantage of a seamless transition rather than a distinct and rigid switch from one variety to another. This could pose a challenge for SLA and SLT which usually require a well-defined description of the variety to teach.

2.1.3.4. Code-switching

There are communicative strategies that native speakers use when selecting a suitable variety across the continuum. Rouchdy (1992: 36) states that, “whenever languages are in contact, three major processes occur: code-switching, borrowing and interference.” As clarified by Safi (1992), some consider switching to involve entire phrases (Schaffer 1978), while others include single words but distinguish them from borrowings. This thesis supports the definition of Valdes (1981) due to the analysis of code-switching in Arabic viewing code-switching as the alternating use of two varieties at the word, phrase, clause and sentence levels (Abu-Melhim, 2014). A closer look at the language situation has led academics to believe that code-switching is the preferred medium for communicating (Wahba, 2006; Abu-Melhim, 2014; S’hiri, 2013b).³⁷ As code-switching in Arabic is between MSA and RVs, if students learn only one of these varieties, they may struggle to understand Arabic used in practice.

Abu-Melhim (2014) concludes that, when communicating across borders, speakers code-switch adopting MSA for important details that need to be understood, ESA when the colloquial is unintelligible and CLA for religious references with additional utterances made in RVs. This suggests, as described by Safi (1992), there can be many different codes used in the same sentence. Abu-Melhim (2014) refers to these strategies as diglossic code-switching and linguistic accommodation. Rather than using a *lingua franca*, native-Arabic speakers adopt these linguistic accommodation strategies for intranational communication. Others (Chakrani, 2015; Hachimi, 2013; S’hiri, 2013b; Soliman, 2012; 2014) found that these accommodation strategies are most commonly used by North African speakers, as their RV is perceived as being the furthest from MSA and other RVs (see section 2.1.2). Soliman (2014) stated that, when discussing non-formal topics, apart from North African, Arabic speakers remain largely in their own RVs. However, a whole sentence was rendered in MSA

³⁷ This means that they do not communicate in one variety.

when the topic of discussion became more formal (Soliman, 2014: 8).³⁸ This suggests that an understanding of the ‘overlapping multiglossic’ nature of Arabic would not only provide a deeper understanding of the language, but aid communication.

2.1.4. Effects of Arab perceptions on the L2 classroom

This research suggests that some perceptions of the language situation in the Arab world are impacting the way they are treated in the L2 classroom (see sections 6.7. & 6.8). This includes the classical/ colloquial battle; a negative view of diglossia; the way Arabic is acquired by native speakers; and, the ‘hierarchy’ of Arabness of RVs.

2.1.4.1. Classical / colloquial battle

In the Arab world, towards the end of the 19th century, academics started debating the perceived crisis of the diglossic situation or the “classical / colloquial battle,” as the argument is traditionally referred to (Abu-Absi, 1986). One side calls for MSA to be used in all situations and others claim that countries should adopt forms closer to local dialects as national languages.³⁹ This research suggests this debate is being played out at TAFL conferences, where academics scold one another for teaching cross-dialectal strategies and, consequently, it is having an impact on the TAFL classroom (see sections 6.7. & 6.8), where MSA is prioritised and RVs are branded as inferior.⁴⁰ This need to find a solution for the “issue” of diglossia feeds into its negative perception, discussed below.

³⁸ A conversation between two participants from Oman and Tunisia changed, “from the informal topic of the activities that parents do with their children to a more formal topic of how to bring up Muslim children in a non-Muslim environment” (Soliman, 2014: 8).

³⁹ For further discussion on the MSA side, see Salah, 2015; Zughoul, 1980; Al-Bani-Hani, Abu-Melhim & Al-Sobh, 2015; Hamad, 1992; For the RVs, see Cote, 2009; Abdulaziz, 1986; Abu-Absi, 1986; Kaye, 1972; Moustou, 2013; Anis, 1990; & Al-Mousa, 1987s.

⁴⁰ See section 2.1.4.2. for discussion on dialect prejudice.

2.1.4.2. Perceptions of diglossia

Attitudes voiced at TAFL conferences can be attributed to some academics in the Arabic-speaking world viewing diglossia as representing an obstacle for children to succeed in school (see Alrabaa, 1986; Ayari, 1996; Saiegh-Haddad, 2004). Bani-Hani *et al.* (2015) argue in favour of preserving SA, claiming that “problems” of diglossia start with native Arabic speakers at a very early age as children acquire an RV first before learning MSA at school, so their language becomes distorted.

In the West, sociolinguists started fighting dialect prejudice in the 1960s (Snell, 2013: 110). The ‘language deficit’ was blamed for “unacceptable levels of illiteracy in school leavers” (Jones & Grainger, 2013: 95). This is similar to ideas proposed by Bernstein in 1971, when he introduced the concepts of restricted and elaborated language codes (see Bernstein, 2003). The idea that the restricted code acts as a barrier to succeeding in school was voiced in Germany through works by Ammon (1977) and also supported by proponents of the verbal deficit theory, such as Bereiter and Engelmann (see Gordon 1981: 48-65). When discussing the case in Germany, Mattheier (1980) argued that this disadvantage only arose when non-standard speakers were brought into contact with standard speakers, meaning that the problem is related to social attitudes as opposed to the linguistic characteristics of non-standard German (Stevenson & Barbour, 1990: 191). The restricted code or language deficit was famously challenged in the US when Labov (1972) opposed the assumption that working class children converse in dialects because, as they are economically deprived, their language is disadvantaged. These arguments were echoed in Britain by sociolinguists such as Trudgill (1975), Stubbs (1976, 1986), Cheshire (1982) and Edwards (1983) who had “moderate” success in challenging the ideas (Jones & Grainger, 2013: 95). Jones & Grainger (2013: 95) argue that this debate reveals a worrying lack of linguistic and sociolinguistic expertise, similar to the debates in the Arabic-speaking world. As SA is the mother tongue of nobody, the situation does differ somewhat. The idea that acquiring RVs prior to commencing school acts a barrier to academic

success should be challenged. The argument is, however, notoriously persistent and pervasive, no matter the amount of research showing the opposite.

Despite perceived shortcomings in the education system in Arabic-speaking countries, diglossia can not be eradicated through education because the H and L varieties serve particular purposes.⁴¹

Education in a different variety than the mother tongue does not put students at a disadvantage (see Fasold, 1984). Arabic-speaking children are exposed to SA prior to starting school (see Al-Khawaldeh & Jaradat, 2015: 494).⁴² In her study into the interaction between MSA and Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA) in the speech of Egyptian academics and writers, Mejdell (in Bassiouney, 2009: 72) argues that, “[t]he access to both varieties [MSA and Educated Standard Arabic (ESA)] with the wide span of cultural and social connotations attached to them, is a rich stylistic resource for speakers to use creatively.” Further studies support speakers of diglossic languages having the same cognitive advantages of bilinguals (see Ibrahim & Aharon-Peretz, 2005; Ibrahim, 2009), suggesting that it could reflect positively on education. Despite these strong counterarguments, it is important to note this negative perception of diglossia in the Arab world is still being imported into the L2 classroom, with SA being seen as the only variety worthy of academic study (see section 6.8).

⁴¹ As most regional governments have not invested a sufficient part of their national resources in public education, it remains unclear as to whether perceived shortcomings can actually be attributed to diglossia, or a need for more effective teaching materials and teacher-training programs (Haeri, 2000: 71).

⁴² CLA is frequently referred to in Muslim households, as the Prophet Muhammed was reported to have said, “no sooner the child is born, recite the adhan [أَذَانٌ /ʔðɑ:n/] (the Call for Prayer) in the right ear and the iqamah [إِقَامَةٌ /Iqɑ:ma/](the Call to rise for offering the prayer) in the left” (quoted in Amini, 2012: 172). Children are told stories, taught prayers and watch children’s programmes and cartoons in SA (Al-Khawaldeh & Jaradat, 2015: 494). MSA is the mode of communication used in all satellite Arabic channels for children, for example Spacetoon, MBC3, Baraem, Jeem, Ajial, CN Arabia (Ibid); there is evidence to say that diglossia has existed in Arabic speech communities since the time of the revelation of the Quran (Belnap & Bishop, 2003; Versteegh, 1996), which supports the notion proposed by Ferguson (1959) that diglossia in the Arabic-speaking world is a stable language situation.

2.1.4.3. Inter-Arab dialect perceptions

This research suggests that inter-Arab dialect perceptions, notably that some RVs are ‘closer’ to MSA than others, have been imported into the L2 classroom which are not supported by research (see section 6.5.1). Previous research (Chakrani, 2015; Hachimi, 2013; S’hiri, 2013b; Soliman, 2014) suggests that this was reflected in inter-Arabic speech, with the communicative burden being placed on speakers of North African dialects. Chakrani (2015: 26) claims that speakers of varieties that he categorised as being more prestigious, such as Egyptian and Gulf dialects, do not attempt to understand those he regarded as less prestigious varieties and expect accommodation. S’hiri (2013b: 168) described this as their resistance to observe “passive accommodation.” Speakers of Eastern Arabic dialects were reported as viewing Maghrebi varieties as not being ‘Arabic’ enough (Chakrani, 2015: 24). Hachimi (2013) analyses the speech between Maghrebis and Mashreqis from television clips posted on YouTube and Arabic speakers’ remarks on the language used. Those comments suggested that Mashreqi Arabic, especially Lebanese, seems to be an object of stylised adulation and validation, whereas Maghrebi Arabic, Moroccan in particular, is viewed as being unintelligible and, consequently, non-Arab (Hachimi, 2013: 283ff). An alternative explanation could be that Maghrebi Arabic had low levels of comprehension as a result of little exposure, leading to a lack of confidence in understanding them as opposed to prestige. More recently, Arabic speakers are staying in their RVs, including those who speak in more distant dialects which can be observed through YouTube and the media.⁴³

S’hiri (2013b) analyses linguistic accommodation in the speech of Tunisians with Arabic speakers from Eastern Arab countries. She states that speakers of the Tunisian dialect accommodate other speakers solely due to incomprehensibility. She (2013b: 168) adds “passive accommodation” to accommodation theory, as, in that research, Eastern Arabic speakers did not attempt to understand the Tunisian dialect and, Tunisian Arabic speakers wanted to “show off” their linguistic skills (ibid:

⁴³ This is not to say that dialect prejudice does not exist, it could be a generational issue, but it warrants a deeper and more up-to-date study to reach a more valid conclusion.

173). S'hiri quoted a Tunisian respondent who, due to the influence of Eastern Arabic speakers, had adopted many of their dialectal features. This respondent “reports surprising her family in Tunisia, when she speaks to them in the language of ‘songs and soap operas’” (2013b: 159). It appears that MSA is perceived as being too formal for day-to-day speech, dialects from outside the major cities are stigmatised, and Levantine and Egyptian are seen as being “the language of songs and soap operas.” Although further research does need to be done in this field, it seems that, in such a vast Arabic-speaking world, one cannot escape the stigma or connotations associated with a certain variety.

2.1.5. Concluding remarks

The language situation in the Arabic-speaking world is complex, with more than one prestigious variety of the language and a ‘classical/colloquial battle’ leaking through into the L2 classroom. This makes the Arabic language unique and, to do justice to the language, these factors need to be considered when developing a curriculum. What is expected specifically from a university education needs to be considered (see section 3.2). It would be very difficult to prepare L2 learners to be effective communicators drawing from each of the four linguistic repertoires which have implications for the study of diglossia and in every Arabic-speaking country. For the purposes of this study, I investigate if students are prepared for the ‘overlapping multiglossic’ language situation, whether amendments are needed and if so, how?

2.2. Second language teaching & acquisition

Many changes have been made to teaching L2s since the introduction of CLT as there was a need for people who can communicate in the language. The Arabic language profession, in general, responded to this by teaching MSA communicatively, which may not do justice to the reality of the language or how it is used by its speakers (see section 2.1).⁴⁴ The approaches to Arabic teaching

⁴⁴ This was the case both in the UK and USA.

impact what is acquired and how it is used by its learners. Arabic-specific research is needed due to the ‘overlapping multiglossic’ language situation described previously to ensure it is done effectively.

Table 2 provides an overview of the approaches taken to teaching L2s discussed in this section.⁴⁵

Table 2: Overview of approaches to teaching L2s.

Approach	Focus	Origin	Tasks	Advantages	Disadvantages
GTM	Linguistic form	Teaching classical languages such as Greek and Latin	Vocabulary lists, translation equivalents and grammar rules	A good mental exercise to help develop intellectual and academic abilities	Failure to develop communicative skills, focus on word and sentence level meanings, and tendency to use the L1
CLT	Communication	Founded as GTM and ALM were not producing competent speakers in L2	Communicative tasks	Practice speaking	Accuracy neglected in favour of portraying the meaning.
FonF	Communication with a focus on linguistics	Founded early 1980s, due to shortcomings in CLT	Communicative tasks but students’ attention overtly drawn to linguistic elements as they arise	Lessons remain communicative but also have structural elements	Still not clear which activities and techniques make certain aspects of FonF effective

2.2.1. The GTM

The GTM was the main language teaching pedagogy in Europe and North America from the 1840s to the 1940s and is the preferred method of use in some L2 classrooms (Fotos, 2005: 662; Lightbrown

⁴⁵ The ALM and content-based instruction (CBI) have not been included as they were not found used in any of the classrooms observed for this research. However, despite falling out of favour since the 1960s (Hinkel, 2005), Arabic-specific materials in the ALM were published later in the 1970s and 1980s (such as *Elementary Modern Standard Arabic* (1983) and *Modern Standard Arabic: intermediate Level* (1971) and were widely used up until 2000 with some programs still following them today (Wahba, 2018: 236). For further details on the ALM see Shahheidari, 1997; Lightbrown & Spada, 2013. CBI, has been mentioned as currently being a favoured approach for TAFL (see Yacout, 2018), but was not found in the undergraduate degree-level classrooms observed. For a discussion on CBI, see Snow, 2005; Brinton & Holten, 2001, Ellis, 2005.

& Spada, 2013: 154).⁴⁶ This approach regards linguistic form as being the primary object of teaching and learning. It originates from teaching classical languages such as Greek and Latin, when students were provided with vocabulary lists, translation equivalents and grammar rules. The method was tailored to help learners read literature rather than to develop conversation skills. It was thought to provide students with a good mental exercise to help develop their intellectual and academic abilities (Lightbrown & Spada, 2013: 154). Despite the criticism of the GTM, it does serve this purpose.

The GTM has been criticised over the past few decades for its focus on word and sentence level meanings, its tendency to use the first language (L1) and its failure to develop communicative skills (Fotos, 2005: 666). Doughty (1998) advocates that these factors along with the GTM ignoring the existence and ordering of natural acquisition processes means it is ineffective as a teaching method.

VanPatten (1998) draws on SLA research to argue against the GTM, claiming that the ordering of the natural acquisition process or developmental stages should be followed in L2 learning. He bases his argument on Pienemann's (1985) Teachability Hypothesis, claiming that there is an order in which learners acquire language through Processability Theory which cannot be violated.⁴⁷ Structures could still be taught through the GTM, whilst taking into account the order of acquisition.

⁴⁶ Arabic-specific materials focusing on the GTM were still the focus of L2 textbooks in the 1950s and 1960s, such as G.W. Thatcher's *Arabic Grammar of the Written Language* (1958) and W. Wright's *Grammar of the Arabic Language* (1967) (Wahba 2018: 236).

⁴⁷ Pienemann's Processability Theory (1989; 1998; 2005) states there is a predictable order for any person from any L1 learning any L2 to acquire the L2; Although Lightbrown & Spada (2013) have contested this, their critique has been questioned as they have ties with publishers of EFL coursebooks who have a preference for minimal localisation.

Studies on L2 acquisition (Zhang, 2005; Kawaguchi, 2005; Di Biase, 2002) including Arabic (Mansouri, 2000; 2005) provide evidence in support of the Teachability Hypothesis, suggesting that formal teaching, “is only effective when it focuses on the linguistic structures which learners are ready to process” (Mansouri, 1999: 83). However, given more stringent requirements, Mansouri’s studies “neither support nor counter the predictions of Pienemann’s Processability Theory” (Gass & Mohamed, 2018: 46). Other studies specific to Arabic provide counter evidence to the order in which the skills are acquired through Pienemann’s Processability Theory, suggesting it is not entirely applicable to learning Arabic as an L2 (See Nielsen 1997; Alhawary, 2003; 2009; Al-Amry, 2014; Husseinali, 2006b).⁴⁸ This suggests that the order of acquisition specific to Arabic should be taken into account when teaching the L2.

SLA research does not compose a united front of how L2s are learnt, there are other ways of looking at processing such as linguistic-based research which further explores the effects of L1 on L2 acquisition. Some suggest that if L2 features are not in the L1 they cannot be acquired, whilst others argue that this is not a deficit but a complication of mapping between surface morphology and underlying representation, which could be “derailed” by phonology or pronunciation difficulties (Lardiere, 1998; 2003).⁴⁹ Azaz (2014) found that L2 learners of Arabic mirrored the use of their L1, but higher proficiency learners were able to overcome L1 influence. This suggests that there are added difficulties for L1 English speakers when learning Arabic due to the numerous structures not found in English, and highlights a need for further research into acquiring Arabic so the specific complexities of the language can be considered.

⁴⁸ It has been suggested that SLA research is skewed in the direction of a few languages and Arabic is not one of them, which could explain why Pienemann’s Processability Theory has counterevidence specific to the field of Arabic SLA; For example, Alhawary’s (2003) study focused on subject-verb and noun-adjective agreement amongst L1 English and French speakers. Subject-verb agreement is predicted to be acquired later but was acquired before noun-adjective agreement, despite being exposed to the latter before the former.

⁴⁹ This is suggested through the ‘Representational Deficit Hypothesis’ (Hawkins, 2005) and the ‘Failed Functional Features Hypothesis’ (Hawkins & Chan, 1997).

The GTM remains widespread in L2 classrooms. Ur (2011: 94) states that, whilst teacher education in EFL focuses on a strong application of CLT hoping that teachers will apply some in their classrooms, it has been counterproductive. Instructors either realise a strong CLT model is inappropriate for their home context and reject it completely, or attempt to implement it in full, often with negative results (see Carless, 2003; 2007; Hu, 2002; see section 2.2.4). Lightbrown & Spada (2013) claim that many adult learners, especially those with a good metalinguistic knowledge of their L1s, prefer structure-based approaches. When discussing EFL, they (2013: 154ff) state that, both learners and teachers whose previous language learning was in the GTM tend to prefer such instruction. This poses further potential issues for TAFL.⁵⁰ Firstly, the focus in the Arab world itself is on SA grammar, reading and writing at academic levels, and RVs are not formally taught. In the West, programmes have traditionally focused on what Wahba (2018: 236) refers to as, “literary content curriculum that aims for religion, literacy, meaning and accuracy.” It could be that, due to numerous structures in Arabic for the L1 English speaker, this explicit focus on grammar is useful. However, SLT research suggests it needs to be complemented with other approaches for students to acquire all skills.

2.2.2. Introducing communicative competence

CLT has been significantly affected by theories on communicative competence. Chomsky’s model (1965) of communicative competence was based on linguistic competence and performance, which was challenged as its focus on a grammatical and psychological approach made it too limited.⁵¹ Hymes (1972) argued that the model was flawed as it does not include sociocultural factors.⁵² He (1972: 292) suggests three concepts to be used for a framework in sociolinguistic description, “the capacities of persons, the organisation of verbal means for socially defined purposes, and the

⁵⁰ This research has revealed some tutors using the GTM in classes allocated for speaking skills (see section 7.2.2).

⁵¹ See Chomsky (1965; 2006)

⁵² Pinker (1996) counters this attack by observing that Chomsky is a theorist and was concerned with learning, not teaching. He also argues that production must come before pragmatics.

sensitivity of rules to situations.” He (1967; 1972) argues this needs to be included in a theory of competence as, when a child acquires language, they also need to know when it is appropriate to use certain language, without which language would be “useless.”⁵³ Hymes introduces the idea of communicative competence (1967; 1972), which contains several factors with grammatical competence being only one of them. There are many factors at play when opting for the correct mode of communication. Hymes (1972: 281) proposes that a theory on communicative competence should be based on four categories:

1. Whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible;
2. Whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the information available;
3. Whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated;
4. Whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually performed and what it’s doing entails.

Canale & Swain (1980: 6) expand on Hymes’ model and also see sociolinguistics as being as essential to communicative competence as grammar. They (1980: 8) reject Hymes’ inclusion of ability for use, stating that psycholinguistic factors are normally seen as general psychological constraints on the actual production and comprehension of sentences and, therefore, should not be included in the theory. Canale & Swain (1980: 28) suggest three main competencies: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence.⁵⁴ Sociolinguistic competence, of direct importance to this study, consists of sociocultural rules of use and the rules of discourse. They (1980: 30) define sociocultural rules of use as, “the ways in which utterances are produced and understood appropriately with respect to the components of communicative events outlined by Hymes (1967, 1968).” Rules of discourse refer to the combination of utterances and communicative functions, as well as notions such as topic and comment, in the linguistic sense of these terms (ibid). Equal

⁵³ Although it could be argued that the vast majority of language communities tolerate odd pragmatics from children, it is still something that is expected to be learnt.

⁵⁴ Strategic competence “will be made up of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence” (1980: 31f).

importance is distributed to each of the components in communicative competence, and notions which overemphasise communicative functions are rejected, which is the case with some CLT approaches (see section 2.2.4).

Olshtain & Celce-Murcia (2005) build on Hymes' (1972) & Canale & Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence, which they state should minimally consist of linguistic competence, sociocultural competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. They (2005: 730) argue that discourse competence is the core competence, defining it as:

an integrated ability that one needs in order to make use of one's sociocultural and linguistic competence to select or interpret words, phrases and sentence structures that produce coherent and cohesive segments of language that appropriately communicate an intended meaning to a specific audience.

For Arabic, discourse competence could require a greater emphasis. Ryding (2018b: 15) states:

A crucial point to note is that the differences between primary and secondary discourses in the Arabic language are substantially greater than those in European languages. The forms of language use are not only different, they bear sharply distinct values in Arab society.

Applying the above to the situation in Arabic, suggests that students would need to learn how to use both MSA and an RV.⁵⁵ Hymes (1972), Canale & Swain (1981) & Olshtain & Celce-Murcia (2005) each refer to sociolinguistic or sociocultural competence, outlining the importance of knowing when it is appropriate to use certain language. An Arabic learner would need to understand when it is appropriate to use MSA or an RV. This could be applied to any TAFL course using CLT, what would be expected from a university course?

⁵⁵ As discussed in section 2.3.3, having a command of any RV in addition to MSA, facilitates the understanding of most RVs.

2.2.3. Communicative language teaching

Savignon (1972) researched adult L2 acquisition at the University of Illinois which revealed the importance of communicative instruction. She analysed the linguistic and communicative skills of 48 students enrolled in French language courses at the university. Learners were divided into three groups and, in addition to their regular grammar focused instruction, one group received an extra hour a week on communicative skills, one on culture and the other on grammar. The results showed that students who took the communicative classes performed with accuracy on grammar tests, and their communicative competence measured in terms of fluency, comprehensibility, effort, and amount of communication in unrehearsed oral tasks was significantly higher than learners who did not take the communicative classes (Savignon, 2013: 636). Savignon concluded that L2 programmes that focus only on accuracy and form do not provide sufficient opportunity to develop communication abilities in an L2. Lightbrown & Spada (2013: 158) highlighted that study suggests that meaning-based instruction is advantageous, not that form-based instruction is not, as students continued to receive their normal classes. Traditional methods should not be replaced by CLT, but some of the effective methods of the GTM can be accommodated within a CLT background, which is more flexible and adaptable.

As above mentioned, when it was highlighted that 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 elicited teaching of language structures to focus on communication. The Natural Approach, proposed by Terrel (1977), is largely based on how a child acquires language. Krashen's (1981) approach proposes a language teaching programme often referred to as 'function first' or 'function over form' prioritising usage over learning. However, Ellis (2005: 714) notes that because acquisition is a very gradual process, involving constant restructuring of the interlanguage grammar and due to the limited classroom time for L2 learners, these approaches are not sufficient to learn an L2. Ellis (ibid) states that, "there is now ample evidence to

show that grammar instruction can help learners to perform grammatical features more accurately in experimentally elicited performance.” Grammar instruction can help learners to progress quickly during their studies. This is particularly important for Arabic due to its unfamiliar structures to the L1 English learner (see section 2.2.1).

Loewen *et al.* (2009) asked 745 learners of different languages about their views on grammar instruction and collective feedback.⁵⁶ The results revealed that learners did not value corrective feedback as much as grammar instruction, except for those learning Chinese and Arabic who valued both. Loewen *et al.* (2009: 102) state that this difference could be due to these two languages being non-Indo-European and therefore perceived as being more challenging than languages such as Spanish or German. It could be, for Arabic, as previously mentioned, due to the unfamiliar structures.⁵⁷ Loewen *et al.* note that further investigations into learners’ beliefs are needed to test this hypothesis (*ibid*), but it suggests that Arabic learners value grammar instruction.

After being too focused on grammar and accuracy, L2 teaching pedagogy reacted in concentrating too heavily on meaning, which did also not produce effective language users. This is despite early studies such as Savignon’s (1972) highlighting traditional methods being complemented with speaking rather than abandoning them. As clarified by Doughty (1998: 143), “communicative language teaching has not given learners the means to assess what is and what is not possible in the second language as they formulate and test out their interlanguage hypothesis.”

⁵⁶ In this study, the views of learners are considered as an important part of curriculum development (see chapter 3).

⁵⁷ Research suggests that at a certain point in a language, not knowing the grammar becomes a plateau inducing moment (see Appleby, 2013).

The accuracy of L2 learners' communication skills is not the only challenge which has been faced by L2 teachers, but ineffective implementation of the approach has been widely reported (Ur, 2011; Savignon, 2013; Fotos, 2005; Uysal & Bardakci, 2014; Khuwaileh, 2000). Savignon (2013) analyses many global studies on English language teaching to reveal its dynamic and contextualised nature. She reveals the major challenges in CLT which require attention for future advancement, such as teacher education and course assessment. Fotos (2005) expands on the problems faced in implementing successful CLT models in the foreign language classroom. She states that large amounts of input and output are needed, but access to the L2 is limited. Many EFL teachers are unfamiliar with western style CLT methodology and either they may not feel competent enough in the language to adopt the approach, or, the CLT pedagogy may not match the teaching styles of the culture (i.e. Clark, 2008; Uysal & Bardakci, 2014; Khuwaileh, 2000). For Arabic, a western approach to CLT may be incompatible with the language, but further research into this is needed. Furthermore, accommodating pedagogic expectations can be difficult for teachers with multi-L1 groups. Examinations tend to be based on the GTM, meaning passing them has remained central to the teaching objective. Fotos (2005: 667) supports Savignon's claim (1991) that "the failure to change evaluative procedures has often rendered curricular innovations useless."

Whilst some of the above issues have been identified in this research (see section 7.2), there were additional Arabic-specific issues when CLT was introduced. SLA research is skewed in favour of a selective number of L2s, and Arabic is not one of them. When CLT was imported into the L2 Arabic classroom the focus remained on MSA and, "diglossia was essentially sidelined as unimportant for academic purposes" (Ryding, 2018b: 14), which is incompatible with the idea of communicative competence (see section 2.2.3). The absence of RVs from courses has led to a gap in lower levels of communicative competence which acts to undermine the higher levels (ibid: 15). This is the polar opposite to the situation in other L2 classrooms. Byrnes discusses (2002: 49), "the extraordinary

privileging of discourses of familiarity” in CLT classrooms, while the discourses of “the professions, the academy, and civil society are largely discarded.” The field of Arabic has, however, done the opposite, which Ryding (2006; 2013) refers to as reverse privileging. This suggests that further research needs to address what CLT means for Arabic.⁵⁸

2.2.4. FonF

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 with a focus on linguistics. The language lessons are allocated to other subject areas, such as biology, mathematics, history, geography, culture of the native L2 speakers, etc. as opposed to linguistic form. During a session students’ attention is overtly drawn to linguistic elements as they arise with the overriding focus remaining on meaning or communication (Long, 1991: 45f). There are different views on how to achieve this, but Long (1991: 46) has suggested they are brought to a learner’s attention in a way appropriate to a student’s age, proficiency level, etc.⁵⁹

The inclusion of FonF in CLT was an important step to improve learners’ accuracy whilst communicating in the L2. Ellis (2005: 726) argues that research shows that instruction on form does work, but the question remains as to which instruction works best. Olshtain & Celce-Murcia (2005: 733) suggest that, in general, younger and low proficiency learners may benefit more from implicit instruction, whereas older and more advanced learners can benefit more from explicit. It may be more efficient to change the focus of a course as learners develop their language skills. Variety is needed within the classroom because there are differences amongst individual learners.

⁵⁸ Many academics argue that the IA is more in line with CLT (see section 2.3.1.3).

⁵⁹ For further discussion on FonF, see Doughty (1998) and Williams (2005).

2.2.5. Concluding remarks

Although communicative competence has affected L2 learning pedagogy, there is still a lot to be done within the classroom, especially for Arabic. Due to the unfamiliar structures in the language, it could be argued that explicit grammar instruction should compose a specific component on courses. SLA research suggests that aspects from various approaches should be adopted, to enable students coming from different backgrounds to benefit from each approach (Lightbrown & Spada, 2013; Hinkel, 2005; Ur, 2011; Ellis, 2005 & Fotos, 2005). When identifying the right balance for Arabic, as with any L2, the nature of the language should be taken into account. Although learning MSA communicatively is not consistent with CLT, it could be that an entirely authentic solution is not suitable for beginners, making communicative competence a longer-term goal.⁶⁰

If a course is aiming for students to reach communicative competence, learners would need to use more than one variety of Arabic. Despite the recognition since the 1970s that sociolinguistic factors need to be included within L2 teaching (Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1981), this has not been reflected in the university curriculum in England. Dickins & Watson (2006) stated that of the nine universities offering degree courses in Arabic, only one taught students to speak in an RV. This HEI teaches and examines students to speak and listen in an RV and read and write in MSA, which may not prepare students for the sociolinguistic reality of Arabic.⁶¹ The British Academy (2018) identified nine HEIs in England offering degree courses with a major component in Arabic. There is no up-to-date research looking into how RVs are dealt with at these HEIs. It is unclear from the course specifications at the universities whether students are made aware of the diglossic nature of the language. This will become apparent through this research. Due to the unique Arabic language

⁶⁰ Further research is needed into this.

⁶¹ See section 2.3.1.3 for a discussion on the Integrated Approach (IA) to TAFL; See section 2.1.1., for a discussion on Arabic diglossia.

situation outlined in 2.1, Arabic-specific SLA research is needed to assess the implications of teaching two different language varieties side-by-side.

2.3. Teaching Arabic as a foreign language

Traditionally, Arabic was studied by a minority of learners in the same way classical languages would be, focusing on CLA (Versteegh, 2014: 8; Eisele 2013: 12). In response to CLT (see section 2.2.4), most HEIs in England moved their focus to MSA. Many (Ryding, 2013; Wahba, 2006; Nicola, 1990; Wilmsen, 2006; Younes, 1990; Al-Batal, 1992; Nielsen, 1996) have criticised this approach, stating that due to the diglossic reality in the Arabic-speaking world, it has a very serious shortcoming: students are taught to speak a variety which is not used for everyday communication. They argue that using MSA in classrooms in this context creates an unreal, inauthentic situation and renders meaningless the claim that instruction is proficiency-based (Al-Batal, 1992). For example, Arabic speakers do not order a coffee in MSA, this would be in a regional or national variety (Wilmsen, 2006: 132). In this section, each of the approaches to TAFL is presented which have recently been advocated within the literature analysed for the purposes of this study: the MSA approach (Alosh, 1992; Jaradat & Al-Khawaldeh, 2015; Alhawary, 2013; Eisele), colloquial approach (Edwards, 2015; Woidich, 2007), IA (Zaki & Palmer, 2018; A-Batal, 2018; Younes, 2015; Wilmsen, 2006; Nielsen, 1996) and simultaneous approach (Wahba, 2006; S'hiri & Joukhadar, 2018).⁶² Table 3 provides an overview. Then, the studies investigating TAFL and the reasons students are learning Arabic at HEIs are reviewed.

⁶² The CLA focus has not been included as it does not traditionally include spoken Arabic. It focuses on the study of CLA as it is manifested in the Quran and medieval texts. Instruction is largely based on syntactic and morphological analysis of texts using the GTM (Rammuny quoted in Al-Batal, 1992: 293); This is important for this study because many tutors cited the issue of how to teach RVs as a reason not to include them in the curriculum (see section 6.2).

Table 3: Overview of approaches to TAFL⁶³

Approach	Definition	Advantages	Disadvantages
MSA Approach	Read, write, speak and listen in MSA with the potential option of learning an RV at advanced levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -MSA understood easily across the whole Arab world (Alosh, 1992; Jaradat & Al-Khawaldeh, 2015) -Solves the dilemma of which RV to teach (Jaradat & Al-Khawaldeh, 2015) -Access to the Arab media (Alosh; 1992; Jaradat & Al-Khawaldeh (2015) -Viable link with the past (Alosh, 1992; Jaradat & Al-Khawaldeh, 2015) -Developing skills in the same variety advances all skills at the same time (Eisele, 2006) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Speaking in MSA is not authentic in certain contexts (Younes, 2015; Al-Batal, 2018)
Colloquial Approach	Learn an RV first and MSA at more advanced levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Arabic acquired in the same way as natives -Learning both varieties means the appropriate variety can be selected depending on context -More advanced speaking and listening skills in practice (Edwards, 2015; Woidich, 2007) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Two varieties could confuse students (Parkinson, 1985; Featherstone, 2018) -Some important aspects of MSA, such as the root system, can be neglected (Woidich, 2007) -Raises the dilemma of which variety to teach (Younes, 2015)
Integrated Approach	Learn to speak and listen in an RV and to read and write in MSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Learning to speak in a variety that is more authentic than MSA -Students are not duplicating learning as words and phrases are assigned to certain contexts (Younes, 2015; Al-Batal, 2018) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Learning to read and write in one variety and speak and listen in another contradicts some SLA concepts (Eisele, 2006; Soliman, 2017) - In practice, there is cross over between the domains of speaking and writing (Najour, 2018) -Reading and writing in one variety and speaking and listening in another could be confusing for students (Parkinson, 1985; Featherstone, 2018)

⁶³ This table provides a summary of the literature reviewed in the following sections (2.3.1.1 to 2.3.1.4).

Until recently, researchers provided their opinions on which way was the most effective to learn Arabic with regard to which varieties should be introduced and why. Suggestions predominantly referred to the reasons students learn Arabic without drawing on empirical research. Recently, a volume was released by Al-Batal (2018a) which aims to address this gap. However, it still leaves questions unanswered, notably, the extent to which students are made aware of the language situation itself. Furthermore, an approach suitable specifically for the university curriculum needs to be identified.⁶⁴

2.3.1. Approaches to TAFL

2.3.1.1 MSA

Focusing on MSA entails students learning to listen, speak, read and write in MSA. Some academics (Eisele, 2006; Alish, 1992; Jaradat & Al-Khawaldeh, 2015; Alhawary, 2013) argue that students should be given an additional option of learning an RV at advanced levels.⁶⁵ At English HEIs, students often only have the opportunity to do so during their year abroad. This approach to TAFL is currently adopted at the majority of HEIs in England (Towler, 2018).

Alish (1992) and Jaradat & Al-Khawaldeh (2015) advocate teaching MSA in all settings with the introduction of an RV at advanced levels, and emphasise the importance of MSA for students to access the Arab media and, that it also serves as a viable link with the past. Alish (1992: 266) contests a foreigner speaking MSA not being authentic; as they are not from an Arabic-speaking country, their 'dialect' is the one they picked up learning MSA. Alish (1992: 264) and Jaradat & Al-Khawaldeh (2015: 495) claim that it is different for a foreign speaker to use MSA as, once the initial shock has passed, they tend to be accommodating, even admiring of the L2 speaker.⁶⁶ Therefore, it

⁶⁴ Whilst this research does not aim to provide a framework with which to teach Arabic at university, it assesses the suitability of advocated approaches to the role of the university.

⁶⁵ This level has not been specified by academics.

⁶⁶ This research provides evidence in support of this (see section 6.6).

could be that learning to speak MSA is not as counterproductive as some have argued.⁶⁷ Jaradat & Al-Khawaldeh (2015: 490) state the following to support advocating the approach:

MSA is still understood easily all over the Arab World; MSA is the variety of nobody and everybody at the same time; teaching MSA solves the dilemma of which dialect or variety to teach; MSA is the most prestigious variety of Arabic; the label given for varieties is generally an umbrella that covers different regional and social sub-dialects, teaching MSA may pave the way for further Arabic and Islamic Studies, teaching MSA will enhance job opportunity for learners in the field.

Although these are valid arguments, research suggests that MSA is not the only prestigious Arabic variety (see section 2.1). Many job opportunities, especially for the government, require knowledge of an RV/s.

Eisele (2006) suggests starting with MSA for the first few levels, then introducing an RV separately at later levels. He claims that developing writing and speaking skills together advances learners' development in both. When discussing L1 acquisition, Shanahan (2006: 179) identifies a clear and consistent connection between speaking and writing, adding that there is significant evidence to suggest that both skills, "draw on a common set of cognitive abilities, including working memory, linguistic cohesion, and morphological knowledge." Eisele (2006: 214) states that speech becomes an extension of writing, as "rehearsed speech" and writing become an extension of speech, as the learned rhythms and phrasings of speech are transferred to writing. Writing helps to foster the development of lower-level processes (for example accuracy in grammatical form, increased use in complex phrasings and abstract vocabulary, etc.) in speech, where memory and motor skill limitations hinder development. Speaking skills, especially at a higher level of proficiency, help writing skills by assisting the development of automaticity of higher-level processes, for example,

⁶⁷ Al-Kahtany (1997: 3) argues, "using MSA in a situation where the dialectal form is appropriate may expose the speaker to ridicule from his/her listeners."

Younes (2015) gives an example of this from his student testimonials. One of his students is discussing an experience in Egypt, "The well-meaning students around me were all being met with looks of confusion and even laughter from the Egyptian people they tried to engage in MSA." This has also happened to me when I was speaking MSA in some situations in Egypt. However, when speaking MSA in Jordan, Morocco and the UAE, my MSA was met with admiration, as described by Jaradat & Al-Khawaldeh (2015) and Alish (1992).

paragraph structuring, discourse structuring, etc. (2006: 215). Learning to speak and write in the same variety, reinforces students' understanding and leads to deeper learning.

There are many reasons behind MSA comprising an important component on an Arabic language acquisition course. However, section 2.1. demonstrates that RVs are important for communication in the Arab world, omitting them from courses or delaying them until intermediate levels could cause difficulties for the L2 speaker. They may experience listening comprehension difficulties when conversing with L1 speakers, and the approach is at odds with communicative competence (see section 2.2.3).⁶⁸

2.3.1.2 The colloquial approach

Some (Edwards, 2015; Woidich, 2007) argue that L2 learners should acquire Arabic in the same manner as those in the Arabic-speaking world, starting with an RV, then learning MSA later, referred to in this study as the colloquial approach. Its advocates claim that MSA is not the L1 of native Arabic speakers, who acquire an RV at home and learn MSA at school. However, children are exposed to MSA prior to commencing school so it is not an entirely new variety that they have just come into contact with (see section 2.1.3). This situation cannot be accurately reconstructed in non-Arab countries, especially as HE students are adults. Children acquire language differently (see section 2.2.), meaning this approach may not take advantage of the metalinguistic awareness of adult learners.⁶⁹

Woidich (2007) discusses the situation at Universiteit van Amsterdam where, since 1990, the university has been teaching students an RV first, then MSA. He claims it was introduced to meet the needs of students and teach Arabic as a living language (ibid: 82). In the first semester students are

⁶⁸ Although Arabic research is needed to develop a theory specifically for this L2.

⁶⁹ This is similar to the case with some CLT approaches which were found not to be sufficient to learn an L2 (see section 2.2.4).

taught Egyptian Arabic, followed by MSA in the second. MSA is used for writing letters, reading comprehension and listening and Egyptian for listening, conversation and reporting in oral form (ibid). In the third and fourth years, students are introduced to “mixed varieties” (ibid). Woidich (2007: 85) summarises the advantages of this approach as, “1) teach the language in real-life situations; 2) avoid the accumulation of learning problems and; 3) start with the simpler items (colloquial) and add more complicated ones (MSA) gradually.” The university has not had the opportunity to conduct an internal evaluation or comparison of the effectiveness of this approach as they do not have sufficient manpower to run two parallel courses, one starting with MSA and the other an RV, or to follow the further development of students’ proficiency (Woidich, 2007: 91). Woidich (ibid) claims that feedback from Cairo, the year abroad destination, suggests that students are better at speaking and listening than those who were not taught an RV first, but they are less skilled in reproductive activities such as reading aloud. It appears the course is effectively preparing students for communication in Egypt. It could be more advantageous for adult learners than that proposed by Wilmsen (2006) and Nielsen (1996) as there is more emphasis on understanding the structure behind MSA including its patterns and the root system (see section 2.3.1.3). However, communication skills in MSA could be neglected, which may be needed for formal situations and further studies in the language.⁷⁰ Woidich (2007) has not stated whether students are exposed to listening to more varieties than Egyptian and to what extent students are exposed to Arabic sociolinguistics.

2.3.1.3. The integrated approach

Many (Zaki & Palmer, 2018; Al-Batal, 2018; Younes, 2015; Wilmsen, 2006; Nielsen, 1996) advocate that Arabic should be taught through the IA, both MSA and an RV simultaneously from day one.⁷¹

Students learn to speak and listen in an RV and to read and write in MSA. RVs and MSA are treated

⁷⁰ If students wished to train as interpreters they would need to be able to speak fluently in MSA.

⁷¹ The IA is currently used at one HEI in England.

as one language and used in the same classroom from the beginning of the course.⁷² Not all advocates of the IA believe that there should be a rigid distinction of MSA for writing and an RV for speaking. When interviewing tutors teaching through the IA at the University of Texas, Najour (2018: 311f) found that 17/20 participants believed, “such a clear-cut dichotomy does not exist in the speech of educated native speakers who mix between MSA and dialect in many contexts,” meaning “the speech of these instructors, similar to that of educated speakers of Arabic, features a coexistence of between MSA and dialect and spontaneous movements back and forth between both varieties.” There is, therefore, variation within how Arabic can be taught through the IA and an awareness that the reality of Arabic is not speaking in one variety and writing in another.

Younes (2015) proposes students are taught to speak Educated Levantine Arabic (ELA), a variety similar to ESA that, he claims, educated speakers from the Levant use when communicating with one another and educated speakers from other parts of the Arab world.⁷³ He notes that stigmatised or less intelligible features of RVs are suppressed in favour of more common prestigious features.

Younes (2006: 161) argues that there is evidence that the overwhelming majority of lexical items are shared by MSA and ELA, and that instances of contrasts are limited to about 10% of the vocabulary.⁷⁴ These similarities, he claims (*ibid*), make it easier for students with knowledge of one variety to learn the other. Academics are still undecided on whether similarities between languages assist or hinder the acquisition process (Siegel, 2010). By teaching a mix of MSA and an RV as a standard, students are denied acquiring the skill of code-switching themselves.⁷⁵ Examination would also be difficult. For example, if a student code-switched for a setting that would be authentic in practice, but was

⁷² They are also exposed to listening tasks in MSA or a mixture of both varieties.

⁷³ Previously, Nicola (1990) and Williams (1990) argued for students to be taught to speak in ESA, compiling course material with the assistance of educated speakers of the five or six major RVs. Although this would address the question of which RV to teach, it entails a lengthy process.

⁷⁴ There is no empirical research known to the researcher claiming that any one variety is closer to SA.

⁷⁵ It could be that whilst this may be appropriate for students at a language centre, students studying towards a degree in Arabic require a deeper knowledge of the language.

not recognised as a part of the HEI syllabus, would their speech be rendered incorrect? This would need to be addressed prior to conducting examinations.

Others (Wilmsen, 2006; Nielsen, 1996) argue that students should be taught to speak in an RV and read and write in MSA. Wilmsen (2006: 130) advocates that students should be taught to speak about more complex subjects in an RV claiming, “Arab intellectuals (Egyptians at least) speak vernacular Arabic among themselves even at high-level meetings.” Egypt, however, uses the RV more than other Arabic-speaking countries (see section 2.1.2). For example, Ibrahim & Karatsolis (2013: 141f) note that the second series of the children’s programme, “Open Sesame” was only produced in an RV (Egyptian) for Egypt but in MSA for all other Arabic-speaking countries. The aim of this programme was to teach children cultural and social aspects and, whilst in Egypt they prefer this to be broadcast in the RV, other countries would not because education is the domain of MSA. In arguing that students should be taught to speak about more complex subjects in RVs, Wilmsen could be overestimating the role of RVs and underestimating the importance of learning MSA.⁷⁶ By teaching students to use the inappropriate variety for formal situations, they would not become sociolinguistically competent speakers of Arabic (see section 2.1.3). Research has shown that formal topics and important information is communicated in MSA in inter-Arabic speech (Soliman, 2012; 2014; Abu-Melhim, 2015). The Arabic root system is an important source of reference and prevents breakdown in communication (Soliman, 2012; see section 2.3.3.). It is important not to underestimate the usefulness of MSA as a tool for communication.

Nielsen (1996) bases her argument on communicative competence and teaching the relevant varieties to achieve this depending on the specific course goals. She opposes the ESA approach and

⁷⁶ This is not to say that advanced aspects of RVs do not exist and are not worthy of academic study, but that to replace SA with an RV is not an appropriate solution.

advocates learning to read and write MSA and to listen and speak in an RV. Nielsen (1996: 224)

claims this would be the best way to meet the following course goals:

- 1) How to handle everyday situations in an Arabic-speaking country; 2) How to get access to information in Arabic on economic, political, and, to a certain degree that can be useful to Danish and European companies and organisations;⁷⁷ 3) How to communicate with public institutions and private companies in the Arab world.

Nielsen, like Wilmsen (2006), bases her research on the situation in Egypt and could overestimate the status of RVs in the Arabic-speaking world as a whole. RVs are the best mode of communication for mundane topics such as ordering a coffee, as pointed out by Wilmsen (2006). For the third goal listed, an RV would not be appropriate in all Arab countries (see section 2.1.). It would not be logical to tailor a course to prepare students for informal settings when the course goals claim to prepare learners for formal ones. Nielsen underestimates the importance of learning the root system in Arabic which is crucial for independent study, as Arabic dictionaries cannot be used without it.⁷⁸

What use would it be for a learner reading a newspaper not being able to look up the words?

Woidich (2007: 90) stresses the importance of teaching the root system, as it can help students memorise vocabulary and recognise other words with the same root. As previously mentioned, it aids understanding RVs in inter-Arabic communication (Soliman, 2014; Trentman, 2011).

Al-Batal (1992: 298ff) advocated a similar approach, the “alternative approach,” introducing students to both varieties separately, then mixing them at later stages, which he has further advocated his support for in *Arabic as One Language: Integrating Dialect in the Arabic Language Curriculum* (2018a). He refers to this as a modification of the simultaneous approach (see section 2.3.1.4), as each variety would be associated with certain contexts and situations and the varieties treated as components of one integrated linguistic system. Although this solution is not as clear-cut

⁷⁷ These were the course goals in place at Odense University, Denmark, when Nielsen published her research, which is the reason behind referring to Danish and European countries.

⁷⁸ Although dictionaries can be ordered alphabetically, the *Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* is recommended for use on degree courses because it provides the most information about the language.

as categorising one variety as the written and another as the spoken, assigning certain phrases to MSA and others to RVs denies learners the opportunity to navigate the language situation themselves. Language is constantly changing, and exposing students to the reality of Arabic would enable them to make the conscious decision of which variety to use. Treating MSA and RVs as one ‘integrated linguistic system’ does not do justice to the varieties themselves as they have different linguistic systems. Al-Batal (2018; 1992) notes this approach could potentially cause confusion for students as they are introduced to two different varieties of the same language at the same time, but states that teachers should make it clear to learners that this confusion will gradually diminish as they become more proficient in the language.

2.3.1.3.1. The issue of confusion

The issue of confusion is a widely cited argument against integration (Parkinson, 1985: 27):

It is very difficult to incorporate Colloquial into a Standard Arabic Class without leaving the students hopelessly confused. Arabic is hard enough without having to remember from the first day you can say mish but you can't write it.

Featherstone stated (2018: 58), “I have asked UK colleagues why they refuse to teach a dialect alongside or even in addition to MSA, and many claim that it's too complicated, too confusing.” In response, Featherstone (2018: 59) claims that this fear, widespread amongst Arabic tutors, stems from their own confusion due to lack of training. He states, “they fear they do not have the expertise in teaching dialect because they were never taught it and they believe a dialect cannot be taught formally” (ibid; see section 7.2.4).

When arguing in favour of the IA, Younes (2015: 54) also discusses the confusion argument, stating:

Although the word “confusion”, when used in connection with an integrated approach might carry heavy negative connotations and might be in some cases an unavoidable consequence of the attempt to prepare students to deal effectively with Arabic sociolinguistic realities, the practice of teaching *Fusha* for conversation should be viewed as consciously and

deliberately misleading students by teaching them to use the wrong forms in certain situations.

He views potential confusion as being a lesser evil than teaching students to communicate inauthentically. However, being transparent about what students are learning, whether that be MSA or an RV, would not mislead learners. At HEIs in the US where the IA has been introduced, academics state that the initial confusion soon diminishes and does not represent a long-term difficulty (Al-Batal, 1992; S'hiri, 2013a; Younes, 2015); or that for students, confusion does not deter them from wanting to learn RVs (Al-Batal & Glakas, 2018; Zaki & Palmer, 2018).⁷⁹

2.3.1.3.2. The IA: Success stories

The IA has been adopted at many HEIs in the US and some recently published research into the effectiveness of the approach: Brigham Young University (Belnap, 2018), New Mexico University (Trentman, 2018), Williams College (Turner, 2018), Texas, Austin (Leddy-Cecere, 2018) and West Point (Ebner & Watson, 2018). Each of these studies draws on evidence from classroom observations and/ or proficiency tests to argue in support of the IA.

Trentman's research (2018) analysed 14 out of 19 first-year students' oral and written examinations to investigate the effectiveness of the IA. This led her to conclude that (2018: 128):

[W]hen exposed to opportunities to approach Arabic diglossia in genre-based pedagogies, students' sociolinguistic competence develops along with their overall linguistic competence [...] following an integrated approach of teaching both MSA and dialect in the classroom can support students' understanding of Arabic diglossia and guide them to make sociolinguistically appropriate choices.

⁷⁹ Participants in Al-Batal & Glakas' study who were learning Arabic through the IA strongly agree (14%) or agree (52%) that, "learning a dialect simultaneously with MSA is confusing" (2018: 267f). However, only 18% agree (14%) or strongly agree (4%) that they find that discouraging and 92% agreed that it is "empowering"; In Zaki & Palmer's study 69% students in the UAE who were taught Arabic through the IA stated that learning both MSA and an RV in the same course was beneficial and were optimistic about studying more than one variety, and this was despite 41% fearing that it could be confusing (2018: 292). This suggests that, although students agree that it can be confusing, it does not deter their enthusiasm to learn them. In another survey question, participants were asked to select a word which best represents their feelings on integration. The most frequently cited were "realistic" (24%), "necessary" (14%), and "crucial" (25%) and one of the least cited was "confusing" (3%), which further supports this idea (ibid: 269).

Her results make assumptions on the reasons students make these choices. To strengthen her argument, observations could have been supported by asking students why they chose a certain variety. It is not clear from the article to what extent students are educated on the Arabic language situation. She states (2018: 120):

Focusing on the can-do statements provided for a context that allowed for the natural incorporation of sociolinguistic information relevant to particular language functions [sic]. While this frequently focused on the imperfect distinction of spoken versus written genres, having a specific context made it easier to draw students' attention to the language sociolinguistically appropriate in that context.

Whilst this does address the inaccurate tendency of the IA to speak in an RV and write in MSA, assigning phrases to contexts does not prepare students to make those conscious decisions themselves. Her article does not indicate whether explicit instruction on the language situation is included on courses, but these comments suggest that students are learning the practical application of language use as opposed to understanding it themselves.

Nassif (2018) analysed data from first-year students' end-of-course interviews, second-year and third-year end-of-course presentations, and skits to detect and explore emerging speech patterns as opposed to assessing accuracy and fluency. She found features of both MSA and RVs in students' speech. In words, phrases and sentences, the learners code-switched between the varieties. Whilst this was more random at beginners' levels, as they advanced through their studies, their choices were more frequently determined by the suitability of the variety to the context. This study is particularly useful in that it investigated students' language skills from each level and shows a clear development through the IA. She concludes (2018: 194f):

that exposure to CA as early as the beginning of Arabic instruction does not hinder the development of the learners' linguistic competence in MSA; rather, it augments their understanding of its appropriate contexts of use and provides them with a richer repertoire of linguistic competence that feeds into their knowledge of Arabic speech.

Her findings support the IA helping students to choose a more appropriate variety for communication. Although not covered within the scope of her research, analysing students' writing skills could provide richer data.

Leddy-Cecere (2018) analysed the competence of students' Arabic language skills across all year groups (first to fourth years), through 24.5 hours of classroom observations. He identified four stages students pass through when acquiring both varieties at the same time, mainly correlating with each year group.⁸⁰ This study provides a strong argument in support of the IA helping learners to develop skills in accordance with Ferguson's 1959 analysis of the Arabic language situation and, that students are capable of learning more than one variety of the language at the same time.

Ebner & Watson's (2018) research investigated the effectiveness of the IA through assessing the different test scores of students who had learnt through the MSA approach in previous years and those who had learnt through the IA. The study (2018: 230) suggests that, for the Arabic beginners, there were no negative effects on test results. There was a difference prior to RV integration, but this was assigned to curricular change which affected proficiency ratings across all foreign language departments at the time (ibid). No difference was found in Arabic language majors (ibid). This leads Ebner & Watson (2018: 231) to conclude that there are challenges in the IA but it does not negatively affect students' skills in MSA.⁸¹ These results provide a counterargument to those who argue that including RVs in the curriculum could negatively affect students' proficiency in MSA.

⁸⁰ Stage one: MSA assists in a horizontal relationship alongside the RVs (ibid: 204-207); stage two: notable rise in congruent lexicalisation (Muysken, 1997 in Leddy-Cecere, 2018: 207), "a situation where the two [or more] languages share a grammatical structure which can be filled lexically with elements from either language", alternations, and insertions with a decrease in frequency of repairs (ibid: 207-210); stage three: similar to stage two with the instances of repairs continuing to decrease but a dramatic increase in the patterns of code-switching (ibid: 210-214); stage four: speech closely resembles the interactions of most native Arabic speakers: a single RV in a diglossic relationship with MSA (ibid: 214-217).

⁸¹ Issues during the implementation of the IA included the availability of suitable materials (Ebner & Watson, 2018: 225), teaching approach (ibid) and the need for teacher development specifically on diglossia and RVs (ibid: 226).

The IA, whether taught through ESA, ELA or an RV, makes language use more authentic in some regards. For example, students can use a more appropriate variety for day-to-day communication, as research has revealed that native speakers draw heavily upon their own dialect for intra-Arab communication (Soliman, 2014; see section 2.3.3). Macalister & Nation (2010: 76) argue that learners should, initially, only be presented with, “the most useful way of expressing a function [...] If a learner is to gain a useful coverage of language features, the genres that occur in the course should match the genres that the learner will need to work with outside of the course.” This supports commencing a course through the IA, then separating the varieties at later, more advanced stages. However, separating the domains between MSA and an RV or ESA, especially one for reading and one for writing, is not an entirely authentic solution, as native speakers make conscious decisions on which variety to use for which situation. When arguing for the IA, Younes (2015: 42) states:

As Ferguson put in 1959 and is still valid today, “it is typical behavior to have someone read aloud from a newspaper written in H and then proceed to discuss the contents in L”. And as Badawi wrote in 1973 (Badawi 1973: 150), a university professor reads his lecture notes in Fusha but he discusses the contents of his lecture in ‘Ammiyya [...] Arabic speakers [...] have access to the two varieties and use each in its proper context spontaneously and for the most part effortlessly.”

This is an outdated analysis of the Arabic language situation, making it not as authentic as its advocates argue (see section 2.1). He may be trying to over simplify the language situation to make it more accessible for students, by assigning a variety to a situation as part of the course instead of equipping them with the knowledge to make those decisions themselves.⁸² It could be that the IA provides a solution for learners to obtain purely practical knowledge of the language. What do HEIs want students to learn from their time at university? To be solely able to use the language? Or to understand how it operates both culturally and colloquially. If it is the former, what is differentiating a degree in Arabic to skills which should be acquired through a language centre? (See section 3.1).

⁸² This could be viewed as similar to the way *Al-Kitaab* and the IA over simplify grammar. Younes (2015: 43) touched upon this issue, when arguing in support of the IA, “simpler grammar: in a truly integrated program, students learn to use certain aspects of Arabic grammar actively for conversation, while they learn other aspects found only in Fusha for passive recognition or for use in writing.”

2.3.1.4. *The simultaneous approach*

The simultaneous approach refers to learning to speak in both MSA and an RV at the same time. It is different to the IA as MSA and an RV are introduced to learners as separate varieties. Wahba (2016: 151) supports the simultaneous approach, in proposing a “diglossic communicative approach that aims at developing a diglossic user/ learner of Arabic.” The two varieties are presented separately to learners at beginning levels, texts including a mixture at intermediate levels, then the varieties are integrated at advanced levels. Despite advocating the approach, Wahba does not provide any examples of their successful implementation.

Wahba (2006) states that, to teach Arabic communicatively, which requires an equal emphasis on the four language skills, the learner needs to be taught the two main varieties. However, as Al-Batal (1992) pointed out, there was neither the curriculum nor materials to teach both and address the communicative goal. This appears to be the case at HEIs in England today.

There are setbacks to teaching students to say the same thing in different ways. It could result in interference between similar expressions and, coincidentally, be more difficult to learn. Students could feel little motivation for learning to say the same thing in different ways (Macalister & Nation, 2010). However, it could be more confusing for students to encounter different varieties of Arabic without knowledge of language variation than to experience interference during L2 acquisition. Either way, clarity is needed surrounding what they are learning.

S'hiri & Joukhadar (2018) examined first-year students' language proficiency through analysing classroom interactions. Initially, students spent half the session on speaking, then the second on learning the Arabic script through *Alif Baa*. Once the script was acquired, the RV was allocated for one day a week and MSA four days. Study results found slightly more mixing in RV classes (8.5%)

than MSA (3.5%), but these are still relatively low amounts. This lead S'hiri & Joukhadar (2018: 168f) to conclude:

it is possible to attain Intermediate-level proficiency both in MSA *and* in an Arabic dialect in first-year classes that teach them simultaneously while avoiding random mixing between the two varieties [...] show awareness of and the ability to differentiate between the two varieties in their speech [...] relatively high level of grammatical accuracy in both varieties, their rare use of hybrid constructs, and ability to self-correct indicate a grasp of the lexicon and structures of both varieties and ability to control spoken production in one or the other variety.

Leddy-Cecere (2018) found that keeping the two varieties separate was the first stage that students went through when acquiring both through the IA. Is separating the two varieties in this fashion beneficial to students as it correlates with how they acquire them? Or, is it something they naturally do, so they do not need the HEI to? Separating the two could provide students with a clearer distinction of which variety they are using as opposed to having varieties assigned to each context on their behalf.

The simultaneous approach is, to some extent, visible in the textbook series *Al-Kitāb fī Ta'allum al-'Arabīyah (Al-Kitaab)*, the most widely used textbook on Arabic language courses in English-speaking countries (Attieh, 2006: 432). The first edition of *Al-Kitaab* was published in 1995, but the colloquial element was introduced in the second edition (2004). At the start of each chapter, students are introduced to a story in MSA told by Maha and Abu El-Ila and their family, who are Egyptian. The same story is provided in Egyptian Arabic. The approach to teaching Arabic advocated in *Al-Kitaab*, is as follows (Brustad et al, 2004: xiv):

[O]ur goal is not to teach colloquial as a language system, but rather to expose learners to familiar content in a different language register so that they begin to get accustomed to the rhythms of everyday speech and to recognise the connections and similarities between the two registers.

Al-Kitaab may be incompatible with the simultaneous approach as it is not introducing RVs as language systems, nor is the structure of MSA presented in full. *Al-Kitaab* introduces the varieties together in each section of the textbook. The idea behind the simultaneous approach is to introduce

students to the varieties separately, helping students to understand they are dealing with two different linguistic systems.

The third edition of *Al-Kitaab* (Brustad, Al-Batal & Al-Tonsi, 2011) introduces the Levantine variety alongside the Egyptian, through the introduction of Nisreen and Tariq Al-Nuur's family who originate from Syria. There is an online supplement available which introduces the Moroccan variety. Despite these advancements made in introducing RVs to Arabic-language students, the MSA approach is still in force in most HEIs in England. As this is the most widely used textbook, it is crucial to see how RV sections are dealt with in the classroom as, despite their existence, most students graduate as MSA speakers. Are these sections discarded? Are students allowed to use the lexis from these excerpts to communicate in the classroom?

2.3.1.5. Which approach?

As the MSA approach is not preparing students for authentic communication, it is, in effect, not serving the purpose for which it was introduced. This is not to say MSA is not a useful speaking skill because more than one variety is used for authentic communication in Arabic (see section 2.1). The IA could be more reflective of Arabic used in practice than the MSA approach, but restricting the teaching of MSA to reading and writing contradicts some SLA concepts and is not entirely reflective of the language itself. The simultaneous approach could provide a deeper understanding, with MSA and an RV taught to beginners as two linguistic systems, followed by classes at more advanced levels in which students can mix the varieties. It could be, to serve a long-term communicative goal, an inauthentic solution is required for beginners. However, this solely concerns practical knowledge, which needs to be coupled with a theoretical understanding to fulfil the purpose of a university education (see section 3.1). With the numbers of students opting for Arabic in England still on the rise, it needs to be addressed, a central aim of this study. More research is required into all of the approaches taking into account the specifics of English HE before the most suitable approach for

university level can be determined. Due to the diversity of each HEI, one approach may work well in one setting, but not another.

2.3.2. Students' reasons for learning Arabic

To ensure courses are responding to a genuine need, it is worth considering the reasons why students choose to study Arabic, even if this is not the sole determining factor in the kind of approach taken. As Belnap (1987: 37) stated:

What a student suggests he or she wants in a course is not necessarily the best thing for him in terms of language development. On the other hand, it would be completely irresponsible to disregard the students' desires. It is a fine line that the instructor walks in determining what is best.

It is important to listen to the needs of students but also to use academic research and the tutor's knowledge and experience to help students to achieve these aims. HEIs have to meet the requirements of what is expected from a degree-level course, as opposed to deferring solely to student expectation.

2.3.2.1 Belnap (1987; 2006)

US studies have investigated students' reasons for learning Arabic. In Belnap's first study (1987), 568 students were surveyed in the US and Canada. The top three reasons are presented in table 4.

Table 4: Top three reasons to study Arabic. (Belnap, 1987: 33)

Reason for learning Arabic	Percentage
Language and culture	36.8%
Want to travel/live in the Middle East	36.6%
To talk to Arabs	29.2%

These reasons support the need to learn an RV. Nearly 50% of students stated that it was important or very important to learn one (1987: 39). Of the RVs they wanted to study, Levantine was the most popular (29%), closely followed by Egyptian (28.5%; 1987: 40). This reflects language attitudes in the Arabic-speaking world: Egyptian and Lebanese varieties are the most widely understood varieties (see section 2.1.2). Preparing for a career was ranked low (8.8%). As Arabic has become a more

attractive language skill to learn, would this figure have increased if a similar survey was carried out today? This would have direct implications on the variety(ies) of language students expect to learn.

Belnap (2006: 170) has since conducted a similar study; 641 students participated in the survey between April 2003 and August 2004. Despite the surge in numbers of students opting for Arabic after 9/11, the top reasons to study Arabic were similar to those in his earlier study. 87.4% of participants agreed that they wanted to interact with Arabic speakers and 78.6% agreed they wanted to travel to the Arab world (2006: 173). There was an increased interest in the modern Arabic press with 67% agreeing they want to read it and 67% agreeing they wanted to understand radio and television broadcasts. This could be a direct result of political events since the 1987 study, as an interest in the Arabic press was not voiced in previous findings. Belnap did not report any figures on students opting for Arabic to prepare for a career; this came up in Husseinali's study (2006a), discussed below.

2.3.2.2. Husseinali (2006a)

Husseinali (2006a) surveyed 120 students at a university in the US researching the different types of orientations of Arabic learners. Similar to Belnap's findings (1987; 2006) almost all respondents agreed that they were learning Arabic to converse and use the language when travelling to an Arab country with only five percent, or less, disagreeing with either of these two statements (2006: 401). 76.6% agreed with the statement that they were studying Arabic to better understand Middle Eastern politics; however, only 14.2% agreed that it was as a result of 9/11 (2006: 402).⁸³ 66.5% agreed that learning Arabic would help their career prospects. These results suggest that political events since Belnap's (1987) study have turned Arabic into a language which is more attractive to employers. There could be a link between 9/11 and the increased interest in Arabic study, but students are not making it. They may not see 9/11 as marking the beginning of the Arabic-speaking

⁸³ The date of that study is much closer to 9/11 than mine.

world occupying a more prominent place in western politics and the media. Whilst the event is less likely to have as much sway over student choice today, other events such as the so-called Arab spring and conflict in Syria would contribute to different reasons.

2.3.2.3. Further US studies

Further studies (Palmer, 2008; Al-Mamari, 2011; Hashem-Aramouni, 2011) support the notion that students want RVs to play a larger role in their Arabic language courses. Palmer's (2008: 91) respondents would have preferred to have learnt an RV prior to travelling to the Arabic-speaking world, with only one respondent disagreeing with this statement. Al-Mamari (2011) revealed that students viewed speaking MSA as important, but many were unaware of the diglossic situation before their year abroad.⁸⁴ This study will see if this trend is reflected in England, because this knowledge leads to a deeper understanding of the language. In Hashem-Aramouni's research (2011: 105) into students and tutors' perceptions on Arabic study, they all agreed that MSA is, "the foundation for learning the Arabic language" but it should be followed with dialect study.⁸⁵

More recent studies with a majority of respondents in the US have moved away from the question of why students are learning Arabic and have been looking into whether and when RVs should be introduced on courses. These studies show support from students (Zaki & Palmer, 2018; Al-Batal & Glakas, 2018; Isleem, 2018) and tutors (Najour, 2018; Isleem, 2018; Abdalla & Al-Batal, 2012) for RVs to be integrated into the university syllabus from the beginning of courses. The majority of students and tutors surveyed were already using the IA, so it could be that it is the approach they are most familiar and, consequently, comfortable with.

⁸⁴ Experiencing the sociolinguistic situation in practice may not provide a sufficient understanding of how the language works for university students.

⁸⁵ That study (2011: 118ff) made important recommendations, such as tutors encouraging students to learn a dialect, creating a classroom environment that supports authentic language use and using social network sites for students to connect with native Arabic speakers.

2.3.2.4. English studies into the reasons for learning Arabic

The amount of research into TAFL in England is minimal. There were only two studies found looking specifically into the reasons students opt for Arabic, Khalil (2011) and Soliman (2014). Khalil's study was very small in scale, with only five participants.⁸⁶ The top five reasons for studying Arabic are outlined in table 5.

Table 5: Top five reasons to study Arabic. (Khalil, 2011: 34)

Reason for learning Arabic	Strongly Agree
Speak to other Arabic speakers	96%
Read modern Arabic press	96%
Understand TV/ radio broadcasts	96%
Travel to the Arab world	92%
Understand Arab culture	88%

Two of the top three would involve MSA, understanding TV/radio broadcasts requires MSA listening skills and speaking to other Arabic speakers draws on both varieties depending on the context.⁸⁷

Soliman (2014) conducted a needs analysis at the University of Manchester to investigate the reasons students are learning Arabic, whether they desire to learn an RV and, if so, which one(s).⁸⁸ 54 undergraduate and postgraduate students completed the questionnaire. More comprehensive reasons were given to participants than in Belnap's (1987; 2006) and Khalil's (2011) studies, so she could draw more concrete conclusions on the varieties students would need to acquire to fulfil their reasons for learning the L2.⁸⁹ Her results revealed that speaking and understanding Arabic was the highest priority for students, who also expressed a strong interest in interacting with native speakers and understanding culture and media (see table 6).

⁸⁶ The respondents completed a survey prior to participating in a focus group on their experiences in speaking Arabic in the Arab world; Whilst the small scope of the study questions its validity, it has been included here as it is the only one of two found investigating the situation in England.

⁸⁷ Reading the modern Arabic press is not a communicative skill so it does not concern this study; See section 2.1.

⁸⁸ This was one part of Soliman's (2014) study which acted to validate the second, investigating a learner's ability to cope with language variation (see section 2.3.3).

⁸⁹ For example, instead of a broad statement such as, "I am learning Arabic to get a job", they were more specific, "I am learning Arabic to get a job as a translator." Soliman (2014: 121) clarified that this is because a translator would mainly need to draw on MSA whereas a social worker would require an RV.

Table 6: The top five learning needs with the highest agreement responses (Soliman, 2014: 126).

Rank	Learning needs	Percentages of agreeing responses	Number of agreeing responses
1	To live in or visit the Arab world	96%	52
2	To speak with the Arabs in the UK and outside	96%	52
3	To understand the news on TV and radio	83%	45
4	To understand newspapers and magazines	79%	43
5	To have better understanding of Arabic culture	78%	42

Respondents expressed a preference to learn multiple RVs: Gulf, Levantine, Egyptian and North African. Unlike other studies, Gulf was the most popular (62%) followed by Egyptian (30%) and Levantine (21%; *ibid*: 131f). North African was the least popular (12%). Soliman emphasised that this highlights the importance for students to learn the linguistic aspects of each of the Arabic dialects. She concludes (2014: 138f), “in order for a university Arabic program to provide for these needs and to enable its graduates to function in Arabic in a fashion close to the NS [native speaker], it is crucial to take the NS’s skills into account and train the L2 learners to apply these skills.” Further research can investigate the needs of learners at other HEIs in England to see if the same conclusions can be drawn. The role of the university and expertise of the educator also needs to be considered when determining what should be included on degree-level courses, addressed directly through this research.

2.3.3. TAFL

Trentman (2011) analysed the listening comprehension skills of 58 Arabic learners. Her study (2011: 44f) revealed that groups with exposure to other RVs did well on Egyptian and Levantine variety tests, suggesting that exposure to any RV facilitates comprehension of others. This is supported in subsequent studies: S’hiri (2012a: 576) reports that 84% of respondents agree learning one RV assists in learning others, and, Al-Batal & Glakas (2018: 272) state 75% of respondents indicate that

knowledge of one helped them to acquire another. In Trentman's study (2011), MSA comprehension was also deemed important to understand other RVs due to accommodation strategies used by speakers who perceived their varieties as being less intelligible. Trentman (2011) argues that her study highlights the importance of students learning MSA and an RV, notably Egyptian or Lebanese as they are the most widely understood and speakers of other RVs often accommodate for them (see section 2.1).

Soliman (2012) researched cross-dialectal communication in Arabic to find out which was the most appropriate variety to be taught to students.⁹⁰ Her study revealed that, in contrast to earlier studies (see section 2.1; Blanc, 1960; Abu-Melhim, 2014; Chakrani, 2015; S'hiri, 2013b) speakers made minimal modifications to their speech and largely achieved comprehensibility through their RVs when discussing informal topics.⁹¹ The only exception to this was speakers of North African varieties, who modified their speech more considerably, but to other dialects rather than MSA.⁹² The MSA root system was used as a frame of reference when a word was used that a speaker of another dialect was unfamiliar with in order to guess the correct meaning (ibid: 13). Soliman (2012) states teaching students MSA as it is not only the variety most used for writing and formal conversation, but the root system is shared by all dialects and is an important point of reference in cross-dialectal communication. That study reveals an increase in inter-Arabic intelligibility, so learners could learn to speak in any RV. This is a strong counter-argument to academics who argue against teaching students RVs due to the inability to choose the most appropriate one (i.e. Jaradat & Al-Khawaldeh,

⁹⁰ Soliman gathered her data from 21 Arabic speakers, with speakers covering each region of the Arab world, including Levantine, Gulf, Iraqi, North African, Libyan and Eritrean speakers (2012: 4). The topics for communication were informal, so the use of MSA would be purely for cross-dialectal communication and not the formality of the subject.

⁹¹ Results from 196 minutes of study revealed a per minute rate of 0.097 instances of borrowings from MSA (Soliman, 2012: 12).

⁹² An Algerian speaker was conversing with a Saudi speaker and relied on borrowings from the Syrian dialect and used, for example, the word 'hoon', a Syrian cognate for the Algerian 'bnaya' translating into English as 'here' and the word 'imm', a Syrian cognate for the Algerian 'yimma' translating into English as 'mother' (Soliman, 2012: 8).

2015; Abboud, 1971). Soliman's study represents a step in the right direction to doing justice to Arabic used in practice. This can be complemented through including the learning environment of HE, which this study aims to explore.

Scott-Baumann & Contractor (2012) researched Islamic studies and TAFL in HE through focus groups with students, Arabic tutors and GCHQ translators.⁹³ The study identified the difficulties the diglossic language situation poses for Arabic learners but did not go into detail about how students can be better prepared to communicate in practice. Within their study, Scott-Baumann & Contractor held a two-hour focus group with five Arabic language tutors.⁹⁴ The findings (2012: 33) highlighted that "MSA is a solid core" for learning Arabic, for both religious purposes and communication and is therefore central to all Arabic language courses. This suggests that MSA should not be neglected as it is in the interests of all students to obtain a grounding in it. The concern was voiced that, "students usually study MSA but this is not sufficient to interact with local Arab communities" (2012: 32), but it did not provide adequate suggestions for how dialect study could be included in the curriculum, and, if tutors think it should be. More extensive research needs to be done into tutors' views on TAFL at English HEIs. Abdalla & Al-Batal (2012) revealed that US tutors believe that RVs should be introduced in the first two years of study, rather than at more advanced stages. This study sees if these views are reflected in England. What conclusions can be drawn from their experiences? What suggestions do they have to improve courses? Are their personal views on RVs affecting their usage in the

⁹³ This study (2012: 40ff) aimed to map the types and range of provision, the pedagogic issues and possible ways forward for more coherent provision. The research revealed that the TAFL sector is fragmented, and would benefit from establishing a link between the Muslim education and mainstream HE sector, funded and non-funded sectors and closer collaboration between HEIs..

⁹⁴ Dr Samar Al-Afandi (University of Leeds), Mrs Ruth Ahmedzai Kemp (welovearabic.wordpress.com), Dr Mustapha Lahlali (University of Leeds), Dr Shuruq Naguib (Lancaster University) and Professor Paul Starkey (Durham University). The discussion revolved around the eight following themes: difficulties in finding out who learns Arabic in UK, different teaching and learning models for Arabic, wide range of different versions of Arabic, the year abroad, the uses of Arabic: religion, business, cultural etc., possibilities of collaboration/ skills exchange between HE and Muslim organisations, and future proposals (2012: 31ff).

classroom?⁹⁵ Have their views impacted their students'? Arabic tutors have a breadth of experience which is crucial to explore.

In my presentation at the Arabic Language Teaching & Learning in UK Higher Education Conference at the University of Leeds (Towler, 2017), I highlighted that three of the eight HEIs in England teaching Arabic as a foreign language included in the research offer instruction in an RV at their institution, four support learning an RV during their year abroad and one does not at all. The number of HEIs supporting learning RVs has increased since Dickins & Watson's study (2006) which only found one HEI teaching students to speak in the Levantine dialect. In 2018, the British Academy launched their *Language Mapping Pilot Project: Arabic Language Provision in the UK*.⁹⁶ As part of the research (2018: 33ff), a report was published which includes a section on the varieties of Arabic taught at HEIs, but IWLPs are included in the figures. A clear picture of which varieties are taught specifically on undergraduate-degree courses is not provided. These studies also leave questions unanswered on how RVs have been integrated into some courses, whether an understanding of the Arabic language situation is provided and what it looks like in practice.

2.3.4. Concluding remarks

For Arabic-language acquisition, over the past few years, much research has aimed to address the question of how best to teach the language. In light of the sociolinguistic situation, this is a question not easily answered. More research is required to serve this purpose, particularly because Arabic is not a western language and the response from within the field to CLT does not do justice to the reality of the language itself. No studies have addressed what should be expected from a university

⁹⁵ It must, however, be noted that it can be difficult to investigate this deeply and objectively.

⁹⁶ The project aimed to produce an interactive map, showing teaching provision, capacity and pathways of the language, from secondary school to postdoctoral research on the culture and history of the Arabophone world.

education or how Arabic courses could include theoretical knowledge which better reflects the Arab world itself, directly addressed through this study.

Chapter 3: Directions for Arabic from HE

This study is investigating whether changes to the undergraduate Arabic curriculum are justified and how it could potentially better reflect the reality of the Arabic language as it is used today. Existing literature has not yet considered Arabic within the context of the wider HE sector.⁹⁷ Although this warrants a deeper study in itself, it is important to be considered for the purposes of this study due to its potential implications for curriculum change. This chapter looks at where Arabic currently stands in the curriculum with regards to standards and guidelines such as subject benchmarks, before looking more widely at HE and curriculum development to assess how up-to-date research can be applied to the field of Arabic. A shift in the HE literature has been identified, aiming to make degree-level courses student-centred and to engage with students during curriculum development. Through this thesis, its suitability for degree-level Arabic will be assessed. Studying Arabic grammar in depth was seen as providing an academic understanding of the language. As explored in the previous chapter, after the introduction of CLT, courses shifted their focus to acquiring MSA communicatively, leading to reverse privileging in the classroom and, consequently, making the discipline incompatible with communicative competence and SLA.⁹⁸ This chapter investigates specific issues and directions from the HE sector which can be drawn on to make the Arabic curriculum more competitive.

3.1. QAA subject benchmarks and programme specifications

In the UK, it has been observed that an outcomes-based approach is taken to curriculum development.⁹⁹ This approach has been criticised generically by some, through stating it serves to satisfy external stakeholders, such as governments, business and industry, instead of considering the interests of students, and that such outcomes do not provide a holistic picture of student learning

⁹⁷ According to the desk research carried out to date.

⁹⁸ See Ryding (2006; 2013; section 2.4.4).

⁹⁹ It was initially referred to as an ends-means approach in work by Tyler (1949) and Taba (1962) (see Richards 2001 for further discussion).

experiences.¹⁰⁰ Others view learning outcomes more favourably, as students can be taught to use them as targets for their own success and achievement (see Race, 2015).

The Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) subject benchmarks and programme specifications are the closest we have to an explicit formulation of the purposes of curricula in the UK (Barnett & Coate, 2004: 28). Subject benchmarks have been described as a guide for curriculum designers as opposed to giving details on content. The statements outline the intended outcomes through the aims of degree programmes and general competencies that graduates of each of the 46 subject areas should attain. The programme specifications are an indication of how curriculum can be measured against the benchmarks. TAFL is covered under the benchmark statement for bachelor's degrees with honours in languages, cultures and societies (see QAA, 2015). The benchmark statement lists four aims for the acquisition of proficiency in languages:

- to acquire a medium of understanding, expression and communication. This is described as language acquisition (paragraph 2.5)
- to gain access to other societies and cultures, being able to live and work in other countries and with people from elsewhere. This is described as intercultural awareness, understanding and competence (paragraph 2.6)
- to understand how a particular language functions and changes, as an object of study in its own right. This is described as the explicit knowledge of language (paragraph 2.7)
- to gain access to various bodies of knowledge that are available in the language concerned, and to methodological approaches that have been developed in other countries. This is described as knowledge of the cultures and societies where the language is used (paragraph 2.8).¹⁰¹

The difficulty with such generic course outcomes is that, although they support a knowledge and awareness of how the language works, they do not actually consider that such goals will have

¹⁰⁰ See Blackmore & Kandiko (2012a: 8); Zepke & Leach (2010a: 662); it is not within the scope of this study to analyse the status of HE in England, it is presented here to clarify where Arabic stands in the current environment.

¹⁰¹ From the perspective of SCL (see section x) it can be observed that the statements focus on what the student will be able to do as opposed to subjects to be covered, which supports a shift of emphasis onto the learner (UCD Centre for Teaching & Learning, 2005).

different implications for each language.¹⁰² When applied to becoming competent in Arabic, the first point supports a practical knowledge of the language which would include an RV (see section 2.1). According to previous research into the varieties taught at HEIs in the UK, this is not currently an option at the majority of them (Dickins & Watson, 2006).¹⁰³ Points two to four would require an understanding of the linguistic reality in the Arab world. The third and fourth aims address a deeper knowledge of the language. Subject benchmarks support both the practical knowledge of acquiring the L2 in addition to a theoretical understanding. Clarification is needed on what this means specifically for Arabic, addressed through this thesis.

A deeper knowledge of the L2 suggests that studying a language at university should be supported by a theoretical understanding of the language. This is important when exploring what differentiates the university from other institutions. Collini states:

Undergraduate education involves exposing students for a while to the experience of enquiry into something in particular, but enquiry which has no external goal other than improving the understanding of that subject-matter. (2012: 56)

He goes on to compare this to professional training, which simply transmits information, whereas a university education would call the information into question. This is quite different for Arabic as courses also include learning the L2. For language acquisition, it could be understood as the difference between acquiring an L2 at a language centre vis-à-vis a university, with the former focusing on the practical acquisition of the language, whereas the latter would warrant a deeper awareness and understanding. Collini (2012: 27) recognises that whilst the university serves other needs, “it also simultaneously provides a supportive setting for the human mind’s restless pursuit of fuller understanding.” Therefore, when discussing curriculum development for university courses, it

¹⁰² This gives tutors a relative amount of freedom to develop or adjust what they teach.

¹⁰³ Updated research is needed on the varieties taught in addition to studies into how RVs can successfully be incorporated into the curriculum which is addressed directly through this research.

is important to raise awareness about the subject. Ryding (2018b: 14) states that when communicative approaches were introduced to the Arabic classroom, the focus remained on MSA and, “diglossia was essentially sidelined as unimportant for academic purposes.” An understanding of the language situation, in essence, was absent from courses. For this study, it is important to investigate if this is the case at English HEIs today.

3.1.1. Curriculum aims

This study is directly bringing into question whether the content of Arabic courses is reflective of the reality. If changes are needed, as clarified by Macalister & Nation (2010), it is crucial that these decisions are sensible and well-justified. Fraser & Bosanquet (2006) argue that, to successfully develop the content of the curriculum, both students and their lecturers need to work together to question the subject knowledge through a mutual dialogue and negotiate what is needed (see sections 3.2; 3.3).¹⁰⁶ Derwing & Munro (2005) highlight the importance of taking student needs into consideration, but also grounding curricula in research findings. In his research into curriculum revision, O’Neill (2010) notes that the educational developers emphasised that the reason behind making changes to the curriculum had to be investigated in depth at the beginning of the process. These curricula should be continuously evaluated and revised on the basis of research developments to improve instruction and gain better outcomes. This study draws upon analysis of the language situation in the Arab world (see section 2.1.), approaches to language teaching (see section 2.2.) as well as Arabic-specific research (see section 2.3.) and mixed-methods data collection (see chapter 4) to advise on how the curriculum can do justice to the reality.

In his study, Roberts (2015: 543) explores how, “research sits alongside other influences to inform higher education curriculum and teaching practices.” He notes that most curriculum models

¹⁰⁶ This supports many of the points in the previous section on student engagement.

employed in HE were developed for the school sector, meaning academic research is not included as having an influence. He does state that Trowler (1998) and Fanghanel (2007) refer to teaching-research relationships as a factor informing academics' educational ideologies, but that teaching and research are conflicting priorities of academic work. However, he mentions there is now a growing number of researchers advocating reforming HE through developing links between research and teaching or research-informed teaching' (Brew 2006; Jenkins, Healey, & Zetter 2007; The Boyer Commission 1998), but that HEIs need to support curriculum change by providing more time and resources. Barnett (2000) notes that the main reasons for this are to engage students with research which is central to the functions and mission of HEIs and to help students develop critical inquiry and lifelong-learning skills. It is important to explore what this means for Arabic.

There is a longstanding disagreement on whether knowledge gained at university should be practical or theoretical. As part of the new knowledge economy, Barnett & Coate (2004: 81) identify a transformation within education stating, "universities must generate knowledge that is useful, practical and immediately applicable to the economy and industry." Through this, the economic competitiveness of society can be enhanced through continuously producing graduates with useful knowledge. Collini (2012) warns against tailoring university courses purely to this end as it does not support a crucial component of a university education, which is to study a subject in depth for its own sake.¹⁰⁷

In L2 learning, Kramersch (1998: 27) pointed out that, "academia has always been reluctant to give academic credit for knowledge that could as well be acquired on the street," citing oral fluency in a

¹⁰⁷ This argument is also prominent amongst others who state that students should be viewed as developers of knowledge as opposed to consumers (Emes & Cleveland-Innes, 2003; Race, 2015; McCombs & Whistler, 1997; Greenrod & Jezerskyte, 2015; Parker, 2003). There is still a danger that prioritising students' views could lead to the marketization of education.

foreign language as an example. She (1998: 29) further argues that if oral fluency is within the goals of a course, then this “unschooled knowledge” needs to be taught in the classroom. This can be applied to including RVs in the curriculum, they are viewed as “unschooled knowledge,” as they are not formally taught in the Arab world. Including RVs would not purely entail ‘practical knowledge’ as they have structure behind them and sociolinguistic rules surrounding their usage. This deeper awareness supports the practical knowledge.

There is a never-ending debate in HE on curriculum between practical and theoretical knowledge. Specific to the case with Arabic, as the language is taught at university *ab initio*, practical knowledge needs to be included. This needs to be coupled with a theoretical understanding of the language to be in line with a key aim of a university education: a fuller understanding of the subject matter.

3.2. Student-centred learning

Investigating how student-centred learning (SCL) looks for Arabic warrants a deeper study in itself. It is considered briefly here to assess its suitability for Arabic and the role of students in the process.¹¹³

The changing climate in which HEIs are currently operating has led academics to claim that this role needs to be understood differently (Emes and Cleveland-Innes, 2003: 49; Luxon and Peelo, 2009: 54; Kahu, 2011: 764; Bourn, 2011: 559). They suggest that, with developments in technology and the effects of globalisation, the student needs to be viewed as a developer of knowledge as opposed to a consumer of information. Theories of the empowerment of students, developed from the 1960s, are becoming much more prominent in the twenty-first century, currently reflected in curricular change in the UK (Barnett and Coate, 2004: 36; Emes and Cleveland-Innes, 2003; Race, 2015). The current shift is towards learner-centred curriculum, which, “adds curriculum processes and required outcomes to prepare students to create curriculum with educators” (Emes and Cleveland-Innes,

¹¹³ For a more in-depth discussion on SCL, see Trinidad, 2020; Hoidn, 2017; O’Neill & McMahon, 2005.

2003: 66).¹¹⁴ McCombs and Whistler (1997) define learner-centeredness as having a dual focus, concentrating on both the learner and learning:

The perspective that couples a focus on individual learners (their heredity, experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests, capacities, and needs) with a focus on learning (the best available knowledge about learning and how it occurs and about teaching practices that are most effective in promoting the highest levels of motivation, learning, and achievement for all learners). (Quoted in Emes & Cleveland-Innes, 2003: 53):

Through adapting education, this approach reflects the learning needs of each individual which, its advocates claim, makes individual performance goals more attainable (Greenrod and Jezerskytė, 2015).

SCL has been described as an umbrella term for various ways in which students can be made more actively engaged in learning and, for their tutors to design and facilitate the learning process (Hoidn, 2017). Trinidad (2020) states that active learning, collaborative learning, experimental learning and problem-based learning are all closely related to student-centred learning, which prioritises the centrality of the student's role in terms of practice, curriculum and content.¹¹⁵ O'Neill & McMahon (2005: 28f) note that many definitions have been attributed to SCL and it, therefore, can be viewed differently: some see as student choice; others as students doing more than the lecturer (active vs passive learning); or as both but include a shift in the power relationship between student and

¹¹⁴ Student-centred learning is a term which has been widely used in the teaching and learning literature (O'Neill & McMahon, 2005), through referring to it as flexible learning (Taylor, 2000), experimental learning (Burnard 1999) and self-directed learning. For the purposes of this study, the term is being used as self-directed learning.

¹¹⁵ Trinidad defines the terms:

[A]ctive learning involves students reading, writing, discussing, analyzing, evaluating, and creating to exercise higher-order thinking skills (Ott et al. 2018) [...] collaborative learning involves students working with their peers: students do not only participate in content and knowledge-building but also learn skills in cooperation and communication (Ralston, Tretter, and Kendall-Brown 2017; Zheng et al. 2014). Experiential learning involves students engaging in or reflecting on their personal experiences in order to abstract knowledge and gain skills. (2020: 1013f)

teacher. When discussing SCL, it is important to clarify what is meant and to acknowledge that there are different levels of student involvement.

A student-centred design marks a change in the roles of both the teacher and student. The student participates more fully in arranging their own learning experiences, preparing them also to do so outside of the university setting (Emes & Cleveland-Innes, 2003). The tutor occupies a key role, through the faculty setting boundaries on the sequence in which a course will be delivered including knowledge outcomes and the standards of assessment. Trinidad's (2020) research into tutors and students' perceptions of SCL clarifies that it does not mean taking away the faculty's role as an expert who can and must lecture. Tutors provide detailed information about the course and program including a program syllabus. This outlines the content with goals and objectives, questions to be answered, various learning experiences in the form of readings, exercises, human interactions, and assignments. All this is planned in advance incorporating choices for the student (ibid: 63f).

The European Students' Union with support of the European Commission, surveyed students and HEIs across Europe and found signs of progress in the direction of SCL (Todorovski, Nordal and Isoski, 2015).¹¹⁸ An example of successful application of the approach to curriculum development was found at the Centre for Sustainable Development (CEMUS) at Uppsala University and the Swedish University of Agricultural Science (ibid: 11). At this HEI, students have been designing and commissioning courses in partnership with postgraduate students and academic staff since the early 1990s.¹¹⁹ Further positive effects of SCL have been documented in the literature. For example, Parrique (2015) found that SCL promotes pluralism, making curricula more evolutionary in the long

¹¹⁸ For example, over 96% of respondents noted that students are involved in institutional decision-making structures (ibid: 21) and, with regards to curriculum development, 79% of student representatives stated they are in some way consulted, but 18% of them stated it is only formally (ibid: 23).

¹¹⁹ For further discussion, see Hald, 2011; Stoddard, 2012; Bourn, 2011.

term, for the benefit of students, teachers, and society as a whole. Lea et al. (2003: 331) conducted research into student perceptions of SCL at the University of Plymouth and found that they held a positive view of the approach. Lonka & Ahola's (1995) research at the University of Helsinki found that through SCL, students acquire better study skills and understanding but, at the initial stages, learning is slower. Hall & Saunders (1997) found that SCL had a positive impact on participation, motivation and grades.

Opposition to SCL primarily stems from its focus on the individual learner. Students could potentially be isolated from each other and, if care is not taken to highlight the importance of peers, it could drive sociability out of the learning process (O'Neill & McMahon, 2005: 33). Simon (1999) emphasises the danger in focusing entirely on the individual learner when the wider needs of the class are not considered. Difficulties in implementation of SCL have been cited as a setback, which include the need for resources, tutor and student belief systems and a reported lack of students' familiarity with the term.¹²⁰ Furthermore, most professors prefer lectures due to the scope of content which can be covered, large classes, the ease at which new information can be introduced, and to help students with difficult reading (Mazer & Hess, 2017). Many HEIs have implemented SCL into their teaching and classroom practices, but, some state that it also provides perspective for the teacher-student relationship and direction for examinations, which has not yet been fully realised.¹²¹

There appear to be many benefits to the learner of shaping the curriculum in this fashion. For Arabic, class sizes are generally smaller than other subjects and sessions that focus on language acquisition do not follow a lecture format. This means that L2 classes have the potential to adopt more student-

¹²⁰ For further discussion on these points, see Prosser & Trigwell (2002) and Lea et al. (2003).

¹²¹ It is outside the scope of this study to discuss these areas in depth, for further information see Lee & Hannafin, 2016; Trinidad, 2020; Harden & Crosby, 2000.

centred classroom practices, which might in turn lead to a curriculum more geared around student need and interest. SCL suggests that students should be given more choices and to support an ongoing dialogue between the tutor and student. When discussing any amendments to courses, it appears that the views of both the tutor and student are advantageous. In England, modularisation offers an element of choice in what students study, and options can also be integrated into modules themselves. Choice in the curriculum is not without its difficulties, and SCL rests on the assumption that students are involved, motivated and actually participate in class (Trinidad, 2020: 1019).¹²² O'Neill & McMahon (2005) suggest for SCL to be placed on a continuum, with SCL on one side and TDL on the other. This could be a useful solution for many tutors, so they can select the appropriate place on the continuum for each module and class depending on how effectively it can be used in practice.

It will be useful to see the impact of the shift towards a learner-centred curriculum, if any, on Arabic or how the field can draw on this to benefit the discipline and make it more competitive.

Investigating how SCL looks for Arabic warrants a deeper study in itself, as it impacts the pedagogic approach, examinations and the student-tutor relationship, which there is not space for in this study. What can be taken from it, for curriculum development, is the growing importance of student need and engagement.

3.3. Engaging with students

In the HE literature, many are advocating for a greater degree of student involvement in the decision-making process (see Marsh, 1997; Cook-Sather, 2002; Hughes, 2007; Weller, 2012).

Therefore, in the past decade, a plethora of research, theories, and debates have been published

¹²² Edwards (2001) explores the dangers of individuality in the concept of the social learner and how this could lead to disempowerment.

supporting the critical role of student engagement in learning. Given such a strong advocacy in support of student engagement, Trowler & Trowler (2010: 9) commented “the value of engagement is no longer questioned.” Trowler (2010: 2) notes elsewhere that if student engagement can deliver on its promises, it can meet the wider requirements of HE.¹²³ Providing a complete picture of the Arabic student’s experience warrants a deeper study on its own. For the purposes of this study, student engagement is considered specifically as a process for curriculum development.

Leach (2014: 23) states that one of the main reasons student engagement has become a focus of governments is, “to encourage students’ active involvement in their learning across the disciplines.” We can see evidence of this in the UK, where both the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and the National Union of Students have called for organisations to examine new ways to engage students in learning, to include them in internal quality assurance systems, and in designing and planning courses (Kay, Dunne, & Hutchinson, 2010). For example, in the 2011 UK Higher Education White Paper ‘Students at the Heart of the System’ (BIS, 2011) student engagement is emphasised as a key component in developing learning communities in HE. However, researchers have stated the term ‘student engagement’ is ambiguous as there are so many different understandings attributed to it. Ashwin & McVitty (2015) highlight the vagueness around the term, stating it is used for learning activities, the development of curricula, quality assurance processes, and institutional governance. The wide usage of this term ambiguously has led some to claim it is used uncritically (Zepke, 2014) and even chaotically, exploiting this ambiguity to cover inequalities (Trowler, 2014). Vuori (2014) conducted a study into the term ‘student engagement’ through which

¹²³ As previously mentioned, HEIs are currently experiencing difficult economic conditions, and more than ever, they need to attract students, enhance their development and ensure they graduate to become successful and productive individuals.

she found its usage differs in all three of the HEIs investigated, which highlights the ambiguity behind the term. When using the term student engagement its meaning should be clarified.¹²⁴

In defining student engagement, the UK HEA (2013: 1) identifies the following three dimensions in the Students as Partners programme:

- the individual student experience of engaged learning and research;
- students as change agents in learning and teaching enhancement at institutional and national levels;
- student participation in the HEA's own strategic direction and programmes of work.

In support of this, Carey's (2013) research strengthens the argument that student representation of this kind can enhance engagement. Ashwin & McVitty (2015) divide student engagement in curriculum design into three levels: as consultation, whereby they are consulted about the content of their courses but change is academic-led; as partnership, through which students take an active role and exercise agency in their own learning, and; as leadership, whereby students take the lead in designing their own curriculum. Ashwin & McVitty (2015) state that the increasing importance of engaging with students has demonstrated the benefits of a partnership between students and their tutors. Partnership is in line with claims that the university experience is not merely about acquiring knowledge but about forming identity and transforming (Ashwin et al. 2014; Barnett 2009; Molesworth et al. 2009).

Many other studies support reframing the student-tutor relationship as a partnership to enhance student engagement (Masika & Jones, 2016; Jensen & Bennett, 2015; Carey, 2013; Bourn, 2011). Masika & Jones (2016) reported that developing student engagement requires enhancing processes and structures which aid learning and build a sense of belonging. In Jensen & Bennett's study (2015), the new partnership piloted which goes beyond listening to students in offering them a central role

¹²⁴ For further discussion and definitions of student engagement: see Kuh et al (2008); Thomas (2011), Zepke (2015); Leach (2014); Coates (2006), and Kuh (2008; 2013).

in developing teaching and learning makes the student–teacher relationship more collaborative, and students more engaged. Carey’s (2013) research supports the notion that student representation enhances engagement but only if both sides are committed.

Tutor-student dialogue is important in creating a coherent approach to curriculum: students might not share the instructor's understanding of what the course goals are. Greater communication and transparency, both prior to a course and once it has begun, would mitigate confusion and frustration around outcomes. Students commence a course with their own views of teaching and learning and these may be different to those of their tutors (Richards, 2001: 223). For example, in their study on learners of English as a second language, Alcorso and Kalantzis (1985) found that instructors rated the usefulness of communicative activities highly, whereas students favoured more traditional activities such as grammar exercises, copying written materials, memorising and drill work. In a more recent study, Qin (2012) found that learners had a preference for activities like “reading aloud”, “doing listening exercises” and “reciting tests” over communicative activities which were preferred by teachers.

On an international level, changes are being made within HE to make institutions more competitive, accountable and inclusive. Student engagement is seen by many as an effective way to bring about this change, and to develop and improve students’ experience in HE. In the literature the term has been used extensively and many different understandings have been attributed to it. There is strong support behind engaging with students as partners, which is in line with a student-centred approach. This study therefore might have important knock-on effects for engagement, even if that is not its primary focus. Through the three-dimensionality supported in this study, a clear picture can be provided of the rationale behind courses (from the perspective of the tutor) and how this is perceived and received by students as well as investigating what students themselves see as important components of their degree courses.

3.4. Concluding remarks

This chapter has explored the current place of Arabic in HE through clarifying its status within subject benchmarks. The climate in which HEIs are operating is changing which has led to changes in the way curriculum development is approached, making it more student-centred. This approach is not without criticism, which needs to be considered when proposing any amendments. In the past decade, so many academics have advocated for 'student engagement' that its merits are no longer questioned. For Arabic, because the L2 is acquired *ab initio*, it is unreasonable to expect both that students should directly inform a discipline that is for many unfamiliar, or that staff should allow their own expertise to be guided by students who are new to the subject. However, a student-centred perspective serves to remind the educator that students' interest and engagement should never be taken as negligible in the construction of a curriculum. It affirms the importance of considering student need in the process and supporting an open and ongoing dialogue between students and their educators. Giving students more choices within HE can be advantageous and tutor-student dialogue on the curriculum provides greater transparency surrounding course outcomes. To assess curriculum change in depth, this section has highlighted three perspectives to be taken into account: research, tutors and students. This study approaches the issue for Arabic through this three-dimensionality: the theory is analysed to identify the issues specific to Arabic, which make acquiring the L2 unique and need an explicit focus in the curriculum (see chapter 2), and; the research includes discussions with both tutors, due to their extensive expertise and experience in TAFL, and their students, so their needs can be determined and expectations considered (see chapter 4 for methodology). Therefore, in this study, instead of making students active participants in curriculum development from the start of their courses, their needs and expectations are considered in greater depth.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1. Introduction

Whilst there is some research looking into how to teach Arabic as a diglossic language, the role of the English university has not been considered, which needs to be addressed when proposing changes to the curriculum. Furthermore, there is no research looking into the Arabic curriculum or how it is taught at English HEIs. This research directly addresses this gap through mixed-methods research clarified in this chapter.

4.2. Related studies

Some US studies have drawn on quantitative research to investigate the reasons that students opt for Arabic language study (Belnap, 1987; 2006; Husseinali, 2006a; Palmer, 2008). The use of questionnaires in those studies meant the research could include the largest possible pool of participants. Whilst Husseinali (2006a) only included one institution, the questionnaire was administered in class yielding a 100% response rate (120 participants). Although every student at this institution participated, the study is not reflective of students at other HEIs, so further research is needed to provide a fuller picture including more HEIs. Palmer (2008) sent a questionnaire to US students who had studied Arabic for at least two semesters before spending time in the Arabic-speaking world.¹²⁷ Only 14 former or current Arabic students returned completed questionnaires to the author, making it a very small pool of respondents. Low response rates to questionnaires have been a reported concern in the literature (Fink, 2013a). Belnap's studies (1987; 2006) were much larger in scale: the questionnaire was sent to every US HEI offering degree courses majoring in the Arabic language. His 1987 study had 568 respondents from 24 HEIs and 2006 study 641 respondents from 37 HEIs offering Arabic language instruction.¹²⁸ Although this has meant a larger pool of respondents was included, there are further difficulties with using questionnaires as the sole

¹²⁷ The questionnaire was sent to students using two listservs and the response rate is unclear.

¹²⁸ The total number of students and HEIs is not mentioned in either of the studies so a response rate cannot be calculated.

research tool. For example, the closed questions in a questionnaire can offer minimal scope for discovery or the unexpected, because the answers have already been provided (Gillham, 2000: 30). There is the potential of ambiguous answers when respondents do not elaborate. Other research methods can be used to strengthen findings, as in this study.

Other studies have used qualitative research methods to investigate TAFL (Scott-Baumann & Contractor, 2011; Al-Mamari, 2011). Whilst qualitative research provides a more in-depth analysis of a situation, it does not provide as large a pool of data as in quantitative research.¹²⁹ Scott-Baumann & Contractor (2012) researched Islamic studies and TAFL through qualitative research. The study utilised focus groups to gather data: from students at two UK HEIs (12 participants); from GCHQ translators in Cheltenham (3 participants), and from Arabic language tutors (5 participants), which is an effective way to obtain data from different groups of people (Edley & Litosseliti, 2011: 167). This is one of the only studies to cover the angles of the student, tutor and workforce within their discussion, but the role of the HEI, an essential component in the discussion, is absent. Focus groups share most of the same advantages and disadvantages as qualitative interviews, but have a more interactive, 'natural' and unpredictable feel as respondents react to and expand on each other's views (see section 4.5.4; *ibid*). The moderator can initiate topics through questions and ensuing talk may spiral off in different directions. Focus groups could be compromised through the adverse effects of group dynamics, such as a false consensus and group polarisation.¹³⁰ It could be challenging to get all group members together at once. These limitations can be offset by including a wider variation of research tools. Al-Mamari (2011) utilised qualitative research to investigate the impacts, if any, of Arabic diglossia, on L2 learners of Arabic. That qualitative case study included a larger variety of research tools: a survey, two focus groups and interviews. There were 23

¹²⁹ This is not to say it is 'poorer' data, but a different kind of data which is often richer but harder to measure.

¹³⁰ Some participants with strong personalities may dominate the discussion and others remain silent (Edley & Litosseliti, 2011: 172); Such as a group responding collectively in a more exaggerated way than an individual would (Edley & Litosseliti, 2011: 172).

participants, 20 current students and three former. Whilst it does provide a detailed analysis of the situation in one language centre in Oman, the study is limited, as we cannot determine if the findings would be applicable to other TAFL contexts.

Some studies into TAFL have drawn upon mixed-methods research, offsetting the limitations of quantitative and qualitative methods with the other, which is effective in program development and course evaluation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In her study looking into TAFL in the UK, Khalil (2011) utilised quantitative and qualitative methods: a questionnaire was initially sent to Arabic language students which was followed by a focus group. That study was looking into the IA as a solution to teach Arabic communicatively so, a mixed-methods approach could have been useful to provide a more in-depth analysis of the situation. Although the use of focus groups acted to strengthen her study, it was very small in scale, with only five participants.¹³¹ A larger study is needed. Soliman *et al.* (2017) used mixed-methods research to investigate TAFL in UK schools. The study utilised questionnaires, sent to 180 Arabic language teachers (43 respondents), interviews with Arabic teachers (nine) and Heads of Languages (four), and classroom observations (eleven sessions at nine schools).¹³² Using both quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative methods (interviews) meant data was gathered efficiently and enabled the researchers to obtain a detailed insight into the situation. The observations were employed to offset the limitations of the other research tools as participants are not always aware of what they do in practice. It should be noted that this was the only research found into TAFL which utilised classroom observations as a research tool.¹³³ A similar approach is needed for HEIs, which this study aims to address.

¹³¹ That study, therefore, did not reap the full benefits of quantitative research.

¹³² 260 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, to which thirteen responded favourably, yielding a 5% response rate.

¹³³ That data was gathered between June 2016 and November 2016; I commenced data collection for this study prior to this (February 2016).

4.3. Research questions

The research questions aim to map out a picture of how Arabic is taught and represented to students in English universities, assessing if it does justice to the reality of Arabic and if not, how could this be done?

1. What factors are specific to the Arabic language situation?
2. What are students expecting from their degree course in Arabic?
3. Which varieties of Arabic would they need to learn to reach their goals?
4. Is learning RVs supported by:
 - a. Research?
 - b. Tutors?
 - c. Students?
5. How is Arabic currently treated in the curriculum? Does it do justice to the reality of Arabic? How could the curriculum better reflect this?
6. How is Arabic taught? Does it do justice to the reality of Arabic? How could courses better reflect this?
7. What are the obstacles (if any) to curriculum change? What needs to be considered when making changes?

I first address the question of what factors are specific to the Arabic language situation (RQ1). The curriculum cannot do justice to the reality of the language without defining it, explored through sociolinguistic research (section 2.1.)

RQ2 looks into student expectations from their courses through a student survey and interviews.

RQ3 links their expectations to the research explored in section 2.1. RQ4a specifically addresses whether, drawing on language-specific research and the role of the university, RVs should be included in the curriculum. RQ4b addresses tutor views on the topic to draw on their subject-specific knowledge and experience, and RQ4c investigates the perspective of the student. This three-

dimensionality is important to provide a comprehensive picture of the situation. By gathering data from tutor and student interviews, a clearer picture of the curriculum at HEIs can be provided than solely drawing on the generic subject benchmarks discussed in chapter 3 (RQ5). The incentives behind the curriculum at each HEI can be explored.

RQ6 touches on pedagogy: to answer this question section 2.2. investigates the research on how languages are taught with particular implications for Arabic and 2.3. looks at the approaches advocated for dealing with the different varieties of the language. The focus of the thesis is a curricular issue which has implications for pedagogy. It does not aim to go as far as providing a framework for Arabic language teaching, but considers issues arising from classroom observations in addition to SLA and SLT research.

The thesis aims to provide suggestions as to what should be included in the Arabic degree-level curriculum and pedagogy to do justice to the language itself (RQ5 & RQ6). This is not expected to be without its challenges so RQ7 investigates any potential obstacles to this including considerations needed to ensure a successful implementation.

4.4. Overview of the research design

A mixed-methods approach has been adopted to allow for diversity of views and stronger inferences (Angouri, 2010: 33). A rounded view of the research topic was sought by viewing it from the perspective of students, tutors and the curriculum (RQ5). This three-dimensionality was crucial to achieve as comprehensive a picture of Arabic-language teaching as possible and to find a solution which is both fair to students and manageable for educators (see chapter 3).

A multiphase design was used, as its effectiveness in program development and course evaluation best fits the aims of the research (i.e. Soliman *et al.*, 2017; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011: 100ff).

Several study phases were conducted, consisting of qualitative and quantitative strands with equal emphasis, exploring multiple perspectives of the case and acting to inform the overall program objective. This offsets the limitations of one method by another. A combination of qualitative and quantitative data provides a more complete understanding of the research problem than either approach could by itself. Strands are interactive and implemented over four phases. This design was used to address the research questions that all advance the main research objective of investigating how degree courses can do justice to the reality of the language (see section 4.3.). The utilised research tools included a piloted questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and semi-structured classroom observations.

4.5. Research methods

The research methods utilised are discussed further in the following sections.

4.5.1. Strand 1: Questionnaires

Questionnaires are an effective tool when contacting large numbers of respondents and seeking a better reliability of data (Gomm, 2004: 166). This meant as many participants as possible were included, providing a wide reach of data to strengthen the findings of the study. Further reasons for using questionnaires included them being time effective, low cost, relatively easy to analyse, and less bias than interviews as questions are standardised (Mason, 2002; Gray, 2009: 338f). They were used to facilitate follow-up interviews by asking participants for their contact details and exploring ideas that required further investigation.

There are limitations to questionnaires. The researcher is not present to provide guidance to explain any misunderstandings or answer respondents' questions (Gomm, 2004: 157f). As much information as possible was provided to participants concisely so they had all the relevant information to hand but were not deterred from reading it. Questions were made as clear as possible. The questionnaire was piloted before distributing it to respondents (see section 4.5.2).

The closed questions in a questionnaire can offer minimal scope for discovery or the unexpected, because the answers have already been provided (Gillham, 2000: 30). This was offset by providing space for further elaboration on answers, including open-ended questions, and utilising additional tools through mixed-methods research. Other potential issues with questionnaires include low response rates and ambiguous answers when respondents do not elaborate. In this research, follow-up emails were sent (Fink, 2013a) and other research methods used to strengthen the study.

4.5.2. Piloting the questionnaire

The questionnaire was piloted to enhance quality and validity. Piloting the questionnaire helped eliminate superfluous, duplicate and irrelevant questions and improved their clarity. It revealed whether respondents understood the directions provided and if they could answer the survey questions (Fink, 2013a). The pilot study was sent to a HEI in the UK which offered a degree course in Arabic, but is located outside of England so no potential data was lost for the actual study.¹³⁴ It was sent to former Arabic-language students known personally to the researcher. This meant that I could follow up with some respondents on the clarity of certain questions. Out of the 37 respondents who participated in the study, only 31 completed the questionnaire, four postgraduates and 27 undergraduates. The survey was sent to 60 participants in October 2015, yielding a response rate of 62%. After piloting the questionnaire, the researcher made amendments to a few of the questions as it was clear they had confused the participants (see appendices 1 & 2; questions 4 & 15). Two questions were added for further clarification on answers given by respondents (see appendix 2; 12m & 26). The five-point Likert scale was replaced with a four-point Likert scale to ensure respondents gave a positive or negative answer. This was deemed appropriate for asking respondents their reasons for learning Arabic, as it either impacted their decision to study the L2, or it did not.

¹³⁴ The identity of the HEI is anonymous.

4.5.3. Questionnaire procedures

Previous studies suggest that students opt for Arabic primarily for communication (see section 2.3.2). I gathered evidence to investigate if this is the case for students in English HEIs in the first strand of research through the questionnaire distributed to current Arabic-language students (RQ2). The questionnaire covered the reasons participants decided to learn Arabic and their experiences with speaking the language, both within the academic institution and in practice. It dealt with issues of curriculum development from the students' perspective as transparency is needed surrounding what they are learning. The questionnaire included multiple choice questions to facilitate data collection and analysis. There was also the option to provide further comments and some open-ended questions which comprised an additional qualitative component, giving participants the opportunity to provide more detail (see appendix 2). The survey is based on similar questionnaires (Belnap, 1987; 2006; Husseinali, 2006a; S'hiri, 2013a; Khalil, 2011; Kenny, 1992), and its large scope was intended to complement the little research that has been conducted in England (Khalil, 2011; Soliman, 2014; see appendix 2).

The questionnaire was published online and, in February 2016, the link was distributed to gatekeepers at English HEIs offering undergraduate courses with a major component in Arabic (see table 7). The questionnaire was distributed in February as the January exams would be over and pressures of essays and exam preparation of the second semester would not have commenced. Eight of the nine HEIs contacted responded favourably to this email and the survey link was sent to 513 students. The gatekeepers were asked to send follow-up emails a week after the link was initially sent out as an attempt to increase the number of respondents. The questionnaire was completed by 122 respondents at eight HEIs, yielding a response rate of 23.8%. It was brought to the researcher's attention after distributing the questionnaires that students were being bombarded

with various surveys at the time, including the NSS and other internal university surveys, which could have negatively impacted the response rate.

Table 7: The universities that the survey was sent to.

HEIs	HEIs
University of Cambridge	University of Central Lancashire
University of Durham	University of Exeter
University of Leeds	SOAS, University of London
University of Manchester	University of Oxford
University of Westminster	

4.5.4 Strands 2 and 3: Interviews

Interviews were deemed beneficial to this research. By utilising interviews after the initial phase in which quantitative research was gathered (questionnaires), the interviews enabled the collection of further data to elaborate on certain issues (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). They helped to address the research questions from a different angle to the questionnaire, through interviews with language tutors (Mason, 2002). This explanatory and complementary function acted to provide a fairer, fuller representation of perspectives (Mason, 2002). Interviews, in particular, provide multiple views on the same research topic, explore participants' own experiences and, as a consequence, can generate a sense of empowerment for participants (Edley & Litosseliti, 2010). Exploring different perspectives on learning and teaching RVs and understanding participants' views is vital to meet the goals (RQ1, 3 & 5). By utilising interviews, a more relaxed environment can be created, particularly if used in a semi-structured way.

There are limitations to interviews, such as epistemological implications, as they are heavily dependent on the respondent's ability to verbalise, interact, conceptualise and remember (Mason, 2002: 63f).¹³⁵ The way instructors report their approach to teaching Arabic might differ in practice.

¹³⁵ Concerned with the knowledge of the respondent.

This limitation was offset through classroom observations in the fourth strand. Data could be compromised by subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer (Cohen *et al.* 2011: 411; Edley & Litosseliti, 2011: 170). The researcher attempted to minimise the effects of this through member-checking after preparing the data for analysis.¹³⁶ Any contradictory data has been flagged up within the analysis.¹³⁷

In this research, semi-structured interviews were chosen due to their relatively informal style, fluid and flexible structure and because knowledge is reconstructed as opposed to being straightforwardly excavated (Mason, 2002: 62f).¹³⁸ This is appropriate for the research because knowledge is required on participants' individual experiences in learning or teaching Arabic. Semi-structured interviews were chosen over unstructured because it would not be effective to gather data in a wholly unstructured way in an interview for this project. The decisions and judgements of the researcher give a form of structure to the data collection process (ibid: 69). Despite coming across as a conversation with purpose to the interviewee, I prepared for interviews by establishing the key themes for discussion, identified from the theory, so relevant data could be generated (ibid: 67). Semi-structured interviews largely draw on the ability of the researcher to think on their feet due to the absence of a predesigned set of questions. I brought written notes with me to the interviews to supplement thinking. The preparations for each tutor interview were personalised by looking at the HEI's approach to TAFL and at the instructor's profile and, for each student interview, by analysing the participant's questionnaire.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ This is the process of reverting back to participants upon analysing data, to confirm the correct representation of their views.

¹³⁷ For example, student, Phillip, the Shenton, stated in his questionnaire that he was against RVs being taught before the year abroad but it became apparent during the interview that he was undecided (see section 6.2.1)

¹³⁸ For a semi-structured interview, the researcher has a set of key themes to be discussed as opposed to strictly following a list of specific questions.

¹³⁹ The interviewees did not receive notes or questions in advance.

4.5.5. Strand 2: Student interview procedures

The second strand consisted of personal meetings with Arabic-language students. The initial data gathered in the first strand was preliminarily analysed in preparation for these interviews which were recorded and transcribed.

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to provide contact details if they were interested in a follow-up interview. 44 participants responded favourably to this and provided their contact details. After analysing the results of the survey, students were sent an email to request to be interviewed through Skype. I had intended to speak with two final-year students from each university so the interview, or some of it, could be conducted in Educated Iraqi Arabic to assess students' conversational skills when they encountered an unfamiliar RV.¹⁴⁰ Not enough students fitting this profile were identified from the data. 17.9% (27) of respondents were in their final year of study, and only 22% (6 participants) of them expressed interest in a follow-up study. Respondents from all years of study were interviewed to include their experiences on learning Arabic at university.¹⁴¹

4.5.6. Strand 3: Tutor interview procedures

The third strand consisted of personal meetings with Arabic language instructors. The tutor whose session was observed was interviewed in addition to the course leader if it was someone different. At the HEIs that the researcher did not visit, course leaders or those who expressed an interest in the topic were contacted. These interviews, conducted in English, were recorded and transcribed.¹⁴² This phase of the research was intended to provide an alternative perspective to that of the students. Tutors' views were deemed important because they understand the needs of their students (Jolly &

¹⁴⁰ Most courses include exposure to either Egyptian, Levantine or Moroccan so Iraqi was viewed as a suitable variety for this.

¹⁴¹ This meant an analysis of students' speaking skills could not be included in the research. Final year students would have more experience learning the language, which could have provided richer data.

¹⁴² There was code-switching to Arabic.

Bolitho, 2010 quoted in Sakho, 2012: 30), and have extensive subject knowledge and experience with L2 learners.

When contacting gatekeepers at HEIs to distribute the questionnaire, I provided details on the second phase of the research (tutor interviews and classroom observations). This meant I could interview instructors when visiting a HEI to observe classes. Some more senior tutors and those at HEIs that did not host visits were interviewed through Skype. At least one lecturer from each participating institution was interviewed.

As with the students', tutor interviews were semi-structured: as opposed to selecting a list of pre-determined questions, a list of themes were identified prior to the meetings. This included how spoken Arabic is dealt with at the HEI, the tutor's experiences teaching the varieties and their personal opinions on how language variation can be dealt with.

4.5.7. Transcription

The recorded interviews were transcribed to avoid as many inaccuracies as possible. Fillers were omitted as they do not contribute to my data. Names of people and institutions were changed to remain anonymous. All interviews were transcribed by the researcher personally to ensure consistency.

4.5.8. Strand 4: Classroom observations

Observations enable researchers to collect live data from naturally occurring situations, they can look directly at what is taking place instead of relying on second-hand accounts (Cohen *et al.*, 2013: 2163). There is the potential to yield more valid, authentic data than through utilising mediated or inferential methods, which is where the strength of observations lies (*ibid*). For this study, I could find out what happens in the classroom in practice, as what people say they tend to do, may differ from what they actually do. The facts were observed, events seen as they happened, and different

behaviours and qualities analysed in their natural setting. It is a highly flexible form of data collection, in which interactions could be accessed, complementing the other data (ibid).

Observations can be prone to bias (Cohen *et al.*, 2013: 2175). Evidence often becomes cloudy, as what is observed depends on when, where and for how long the researcher focuses on a certain event (ibid). They largely depend on the observer's attention and opportunity to observe. There are the issues of the 'halo effect' and 'horns effect', where the researcher is selective in their interpretation of events, and sees what they expect to see, whether that means overlooking the positive or negative aspects of participants (ibid: 1067). To minimise this, I utilised member-checking to verify the results of the observations and triangulate the findings with data collected in strands one, two and three.

Observations can disturb the natural setting (ibid: 2240). For example, as a result of the 'Hawthorne effect' participants may attempt to avoid, impress, direct, deny or influence the researcher (ibid: 1067). As my presence in the classroom was as a non-participant observer throughout a whole session, with time, I anticipated that the participants would forget my presence and revert to natural behaviour. It would have provided richer data to observe the same class for a number of subsequent sessions and given a clearer idea of the approaches used. However, it was not feasible for the researcher to travel to the HEIs on numerous occasions due to their geographic locations. Some classes observed were in the morning, some in the afternoon, and, of different levels and sizes. These are further limitations of the data, but, as data was collected from several HEIs, they could not have been avoided.

In this research, ethnographic, semi-structured classroom observations were utilised. As opposed to having a fixed set of issues, I was observing how spoken Arabic is treated in the classroom and, therefore, opted to gather data in a less predetermined manner. I was not looking at a particular

feature that can be coded, but the multiple functions and meanings derived from the way that instructors manage language varieties within the classroom, and the role of the student. Semi-structured observations operate within the agenda of participants and respond to what is found making them more honest to the situation as it unfolds (ibid: 2172). They provide a fairer account of events taking place in the classroom. These observations act to complement the rest of the data gathered. A more detailed analysis can be provided in a follow-up study as there was not sufficient space for it in this study.

4.5.9. Strand 4: Classroom observation procedures

Lessons were observed at six HEIs, a total of 14 lessons yielding 19 hours of data. During the observations I took field notes and recorded the sessions. Recordings can provide completeness of analysis and comprehensiveness of material, reducing the dependence on the researcher's interpretations (Cohen *et al.*, 2013: 2229). Field notes were expanded on as soon as possible after the initial observations when the events were fresh in my mind. Recordings were referred to at a later date when I was more removed from the classroom. It was hoped that this would enable me to pick up on anything that was overlooked during the observation instead of depending solely on my interpretation. Prior to analysing the data, the recordings were transcribed personally by the researcher. Three separate word documents were made for each recording, providing one each for: English and Arabic; English, and; Arabic. This meant the researcher could determine how many words were spoken in each language (see section 7.2.3; table 14).

4.6. Data analysis

Due to utilising mixed-methods research, analytic techniques were applied to both the quantitative and qualitative data as well as mixing the two forms of data to answer the mixed-methods questions. The raw data from questionnaires was initially converted by scoring each response and creating variables. The qualitative sections of the questionnaire were coded, divided into small units, assigned a label and grouped into themes. The themes were grouped into larger dimensions and

related or compared (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011: 208). NVivo is the software package which was used, to make the process more efficient and identify new links.¹⁴³ As the multiphase design utilised combined both sequential and concurrent strands, multiple levels of analysis were involved, meaning data was analysed at multiple points during the project. After analysing the data from the questionnaires, the student interviews were conducted to help explain and increase the validity of the results as is the case in an explanatory design.¹⁴⁴ The data from student and tutor interviews was prepared by transcribing text into word processing files for analysis. This data was then analysed through a hand-coding process, divided into small units, assigned labels and the codes grouped into themes. The field notes from classroom observations were hand-coded and the recordings used as a reference to extract data and provide examples of language variation in the classroom. After these four sets of data were analysed, merged data analysis strategies were utilised to answer the mixed-methods questions. A side-by-side comparison for merged data analysis was used through “presenting the quantitative results and the qualitative findings together in a discussion or in a summary table so they can be easily compared” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011: 223). The discussion is the vehicle for merging the results. A joint display was also included so both the quantitative and qualitative data could be directly compared. I interpreted the extent to which the databases converge, identifying any differences and similarities, and expanding on the conclusions which could be drawn from them. Mixed-methods research was utilised to improve the quality of inferences extracted from the quantitative and qualitative methods (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

¹⁴³ Due to having data in both Arabic and English this was not as effective as hoped, so I drew more heavily on my hand-coded analysis.

¹⁴⁴ As clarified by Creswell & Plano Clark (2011: 221):

The data analysis procedures in an explanatory design involve first collecting quantitative data, analyzing the data, and using the results to inform the follow-up qualitative data collection. The data analysis occurs in three phases: the analysis of the initial quantitative data, an analysis of the follow-up qualitative data, and an analysis of the mixed methods question as to how the qualitative data help to explain the quantitative data.

In mixed-methods research, strategies should be employed during data analysis to minimise validity threats (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011: 248). As outlined by Creswell & Plano Clark (2011: 239), “the very act of combining qualitative and quantitative approaches raises additional potential validity issues that extend well beyond the validity concerns that arise in the separate quantitative or qualitative methods procedures.” In this study, validity threats were minimalised during data analysis by using appropriate merged data strategies, such as the side-by-side comparison abovementioned. Quotes from the qualitative data that match the statistical results were used so comparisons were logical. Data transformation was kept straightforward and procedures used to enhance the validity of transformed scores, such as member-checking, the triangulation of data from several sources and reporting disconfirming evidence.

4.7. Ethical considerations

Each respondent’s right to confidentiality was respected in the research. The questionnaire was carried out through an online tool, ensuring that replies could not be linked to respondents. As tutors and students were asked about their opinions on dialect study and approaches to TAFL, they may not have wanted to openly criticise their institutions. Theirs and the HEI names were changed to remain anonymous. Participants may feel uncomfortable about some of the questions asked in the survey. For example, there were questions on religious affiliation and gender. A ‘prefer not to say’ option was included so participants did not have to divulge this information. Each respondent was asked for consent (see appendices 1, 2, 4 & 5) prior to participating, and provided with an information sheet including my research and contact details (see appendix 3). When conducting observations, informed consent was obtained from each participant and permission from the HEI. Participants were informed they were being observed and that the session was recorded (see appendices 3 & 5).

Data will be kept securely in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the University of Winchester guidelines for ten years to be used for research purposes, teaching, learning and presentations. Personal data is kept in password protected files to protect information.

Chapter 5: Student expectations

This chapter draws on responses from student surveys and interviews to address their reasons and expectations for learning degree-level Arabic (RQ2). Whilst this study does not suggest that HEIs should be offering those varieties, it explores which ones would be required to meet student expectations (RQ3).

5.1. Student incentives to learn Arabic

The results from part II of the questionnaire, which investigated the reasons to learn Arabic, are presented in table 8.¹⁴⁵

Table 8: Responses to why students opted for Arabic language study (in percentages).

Reason for learning Arabic	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Skipped
Enjoy learning languages	64.2	29.3	4.9	1.6	
For the challenge	52	35	11.4	1.6	
Increasing community in England from Arabic-speaking countries	13.8	36.6	45.5	3.2	0.8
To better understand Arab culture	41.5	46.3	10.6	0.8	0.8
To better understand Arab politics	24.4	48.8	24.4	2.4	
To prepare for a career	36.6	45.5	15.4	1.6	0.8
To read historical texts or literature	17.1	37.4	35.8	8.9	0.8
To read modern Arabic literature	13	46.3	33.3	6.5	0.8
To read the modern Arabic press	33.3	46.3	15.4	4.1	0.8
To read the Qur'an or religious texts	16.3	23.6	41.5	17.9	0.8
To speak to family members	8.9	5.7	35.8	48	1.6
To speak to other Arabic speakers	59.3	37.4	3.3		
To travel to or live in the Arabic-speaking world	68.3	25.2	5.7	0.8	
To understand films, videos or music	26.8	47.2	22	4.1	
To understand radio or TV broadcasts	35.8	46.3	14.6	3.3	
To write formal correspondence or documents	21.1	43.1	30.1	5.7	
To write personal correspondence	16.3	35	43.1	5.7	

5.1.1. Speaking

96.7% of respondents agreed that speaking to other Arabic speakers was amongst their reasons to learn the language and learners would need at least a passive knowledge of an RV to follow a

¹⁴⁵ See section 4.5.2. & 4.5.3.; Students were not asked directly in the questionnaire if they were aware of diglossia at the time as I did not want this to impact their answers.

dialogue. In other studies (Isleem, 2018; S’hiri, 2013a; Palmer, 2008), students stated that an active knowledge of one or more RVs improves their integration abroad and social connections with Arabs.¹⁴⁶ Participant 6 added “that is axiomatic,” as the language is learnt at university *ab initio* it appears students are expecting their courses to help them develop the skills to communicate with Arabic speakers. Some participants (two) further elaborated on their answers:

- I learnt the language best through speaking. This is engaging and rewarding for me (Participant 70, L6);
- it is hugely satisfying to speak to arabic [sic] speakers because they are so surprised and grateful [sic] and encouraging that you are learning it (participant 41, L4).

These comments highlight how being able to engage in conversation with Arabic speakers and use the language in practice is rewarding and motivating for students.

The statement for traveling or living in the Arab world had a very high rate of agreement (93.5%) and strong agreement (68.3%). Two respondents (6, L4 & 3, L6) added that this reason was “very important” and “my main reason.” Four respondents elaborated on their answers stating that they wished to live and work in the Middle East. To discuss daily tasks in the Arabic-speaking world, learners would benefit from being able to draw on the RV: this is the variety they will use to buy their groceries, ask for directions, use public transport and other informal situations they would engage in on a daily basis (see section 2.1). Students’ experiences in the Arab world support MSA being an important vehicle for communication in certain situations (see section 6.6).

¹⁴⁶ In Isleem’s study (2018: 273), 96% of students surveyed from 22 HEIs internationally, stated that integrating RVs in courses would help to improve their social connections with Arabs; S’hiri (2013a) found that 81% students need to learn more than one RV to connect with Arabic speakers throughout the Arab world; In Palmer’s (2008) study, because of using an RV, learners felt they were more trusted by the people and could more easily integrate into the culture.

These results show a slight increase in students’ desires to communicate with Arabic speakers (96.7%) and travel to the Arab world (93.5%) since Belnap’s (2006) US study.¹⁴⁷ His findings (2006: 173) revealed 87.4% of students agreed that they wanted to interact with Arabic speakers and 78.6% agreed they wanted to travel to the Arab world. Husseinali (2006a: 401) found that almost all respondents agreed that they were learning Arabic to “meet and converse with more varied people” and to use Arabic “when they travel to an Arab country,” with only five percent, or less, disagreeing with either of these two statements (see section 2.3.2). This suggests that students expect to learn Arabic as a living language; however, only two HEIs were found to support teaching the language as one (see section 6.2). It could be that there is a mismatch between the expectations of students and the majority of courses being offered.

Participants were asked to rank the importance of practising speaking, listening, reading and writing, the results are presented in table 9.

Table 9: Responses to ranking the importance of speaking, listening, reading and writing (in percentages).

Skill	Extremely important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not important at all
Speaking	93.5	6.5		0
Listening	87	12.2	0.8	0
Reading	77.2	22.8		0
Writing	59.3	35.8	4.9	0

Table 9 shows that an overwhelming majority of students view all skills as being important, with only 0.8% stating listening is not very important and 4.9% writing. Speaking and listening have been categorised as being extremely important, 93.5% and 87% respectively. This section suggests that students expect to acquire the required skills to converse in Arabic. However, this is not the sole aim

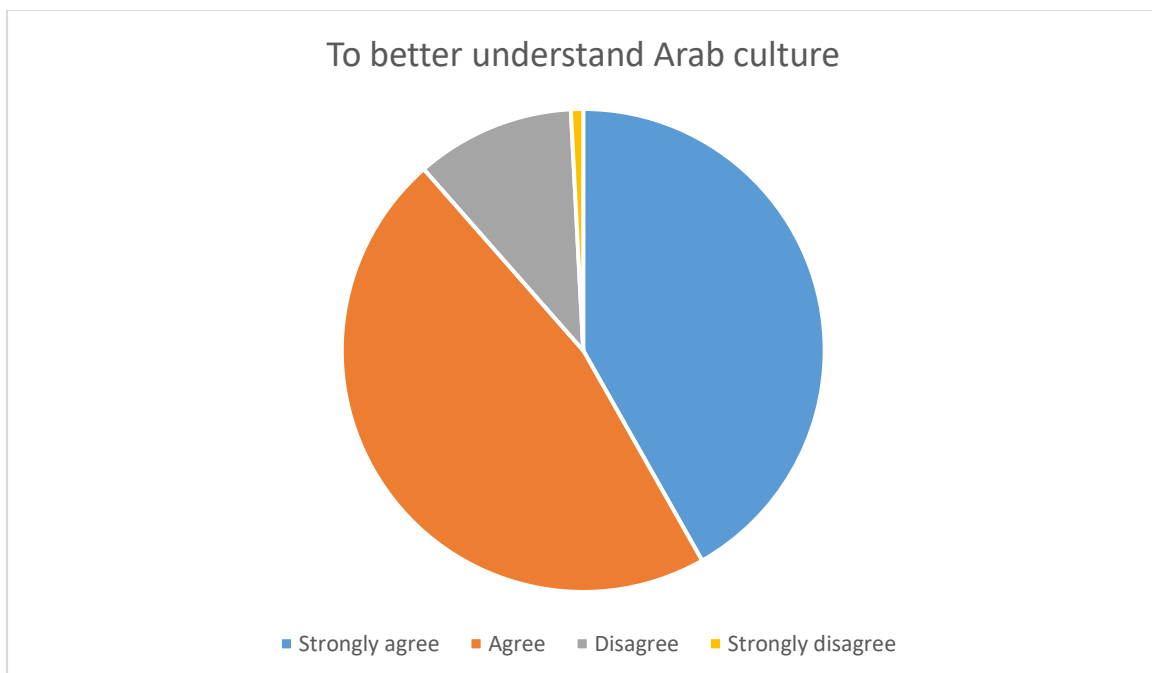
¹⁴⁷ See section 2.3.2.2; This is not however, entirely comparable as his respondents were in the US.

of a HE in any L2 which would include learning about the language in addition to SLA (see sections 3.2; 3.3).

5.1.2. Culture

There has been an increased importance recently placed on learning the culture of L2 regions (see Byram, Gribkova & Starkey 2002; Lustig & Koester, 2003). Subject benchmarks support students obtaining an “intercultural awareness, understanding and competence” (paragraph 2.6; see section 3.3). This study suggests that students expect to develop a cultural awareness from their courses as a total of 87.8% of respondents agreed that they are learning Arabic to better understand the culture (see figure 4).

Figure 4: Responses to, “To better understand Arab culture” as a reason for learning Arabic.



Five student comments elaborating on this reason suggest that they are expecting a deep cultural understanding as opposed to solely accessing information provided by news outlets:

- I grew up knowing of the disastrous invasion of Iraq and furthering so-called divisions between the 'West' and the Islamic world, as well as increasing Islamophobia, so thought studying Arabic would help me in understanding that (Islamic) world better (participant 121, L6);
- Unity evades the Arabs...I want to know why and more importantly how to overcome this (participant 38, L4).

With increased immigration from the Arabic-speaking world, there could be a desire to understand these 'new' communities and not solely from a political perspective. Only a slight majority (50.1%) agreed with that statement. Respondent 117, L4 elaborated on their answer stating, "I disagree with the restriction to England. Arabic being increasingly important worldwide is definitely a motivating factor though."

When asked if their reasons for learning Arabic had changed since the course progressed, which 21.1% respondents claimed they had, 23.1% mentioned that the experience of learning the L2 has changed their perceptions of the Arab world, leading to a deeper interest in cultural understanding.

This suggests that courses are meeting the cultural expectations of students:

- I began to get more interested in Arabic as a tool against Islamophobia (participant 118, L4);
- for a long time [sic] I just wanted to be able to converse. As I learnt more, it became more relevant to what was happening in the world and I found that it gave me a different perspective on events (participant 96, L6).

23.1% stated that they had become more interested in Arab culture as the course progressed:

- I was interested in politics initially and now I'm interested in religion and culture (participant 105, L5);
- I fell in love with culture and literature only after having studied Arabic for a while. A growing love of the language and culture definitely changed my perspective (participant 6, L4).

SLA affecting attitudes and beliefs about other cultures is supported in the wider field of SLA. It suggests that learning a language leads to a more positive attitude toward the L2 and/or its speakers, and helps learners to develop a sense of cultural pluralism (Tochon, 2009: 655; Lipton,

2004). Two respondents emphasised the importance of culture in SLA when elaborating on it as a reason to learn the L2:

- language and culture come and in hand [sic]. Also interesting to explore common misconceptions or how translation can skew meaning. A sort of ‘this makes so much sense in Arabic but little to none on English because of the context that the language used inevitably sets’ scenario (respondent 117, L4);
- very important for career and life in the Arab world (respondent 6, L4).

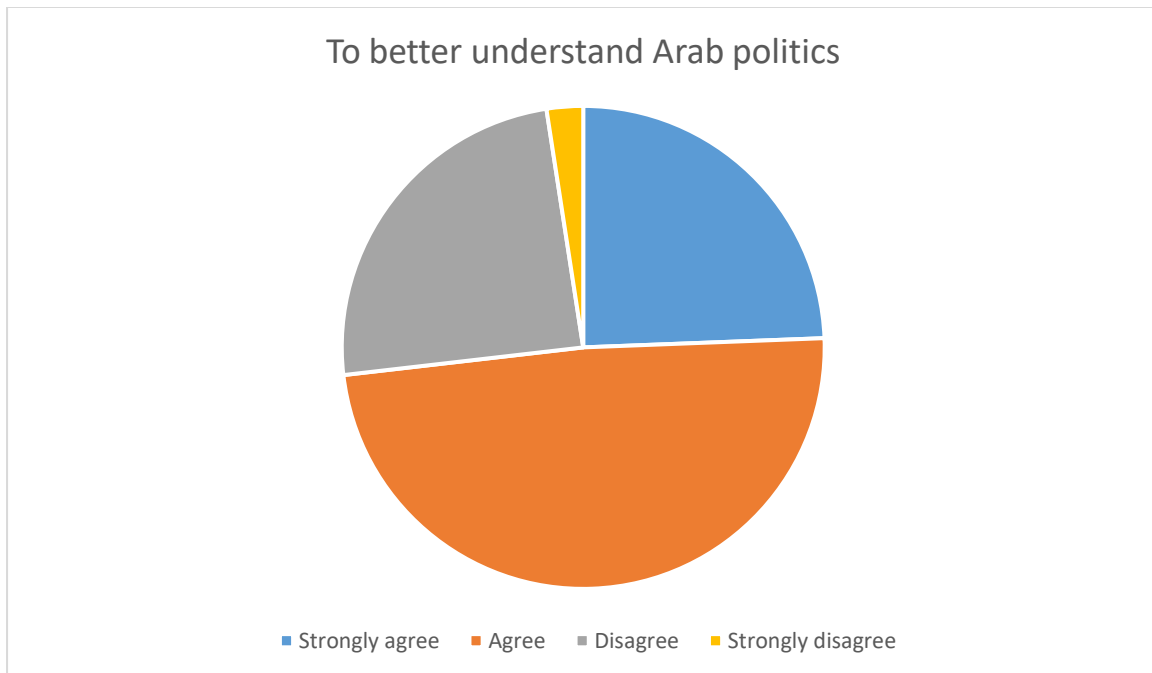
The full benefit of cultural materials may not be attained on a course focusing on one variety. This is relevant for Arabic in light of the language situation (see section 2.1). Al-Batal & Glakas (2018: 273) found that over 95% of their student survey respondents felt that integrating an RV with MSA, “would help them develop a more thorough understanding of Arab culture.” Zaki & Palmer (2018: 294) had similar findings, “some students think that learning MSA was most beneficial for learning about cultural aspects, while others favor the dialects,” suggesting that, students at least, view both MSA and RVs as important in gaining a cultural understanding. In that study, MSA was placed in this category as students appreciate that learning it provides access to Arabic media and the news which is a positive cultural by product of learning MSA (see section 5.1.3). This could be a key central role that MSA still fulfils. Both varieties play an important role in Arab culture: artists produce songs, poetry, films, plays and television shows in both varieties (Al-Wer, 2008: 1923; Hachimi, 2013: 275, Chakrani, 2015; Zaidan & Callison-Burch, 2014: 173), and, an increasing number of writers are also mixing the varieties in novels (see section 2.1; Eid, 2013) and the internet (Khalil, 2019). This suggests that understanding both MSA and RVs assist in developing cultural knowledge and understanding.

5.1.3. Politics and the media

“The Middle East is the focal point of this Century. I want to be there” (participant 6, L4).

When asked if they had any further reasons to study the Arabic language 14.8% of participants who responded cited reasons related to politics and the media, as quoted above. Although it was not among the top five reasons to learn Arabic (see table 8), a better understanding of Arab politics had a high level of agreement from participants (73.2%; 24.4% strongly agreed; see figure 5).

Figure 5: Responses to, "To better understand Arab politics" as a reason for learning Arabic.



This corresponds with findings in Husseinali's study which received a high percentage (76.6%) for this category (2006a; see section 2.3.2). This suggests that politics plays a role in students opting for Arabic as they view mastering the language as important to understand the region's politics. Six participants elaborated on this:

- I was in the Middle East at the time of the Arab Spring and came to appreciate the importance of understanding the language of the region to understand what is happening in the country (participant 23, L5);
- The importance or weight of certain words, the choice of using once [sic] word as opposed to another, similar in meaning is often lost in translation. It is always interesting to note this in speeches made by politicians, the angles news outlets decide to explore and then compare it with what say, the BBC have to say (Participant 117, L4).

These comments highlight the desire to understand events in the media from multiple angles as opposed to coverage by the English language media. Participant 117's comment is particularly interesting as accessing the Arab media in its language offers additional insight. Developments since the so-called Arab Spring have made the region and its language a popular area of study. This suggests increased media coverage of events in the Arabic-speaking world is having a direct impact on Arabic-language study. 19.5% of respondents stated they are on joint-honour degree courses with a political subject, such as Arabic and International Relations, Arabic and Development Studies or Arabic and Politics.

79.6% of respondents agreed with learning Arabic to read the press, and 82.1% to listen to radio or TV broadcasts. One respondent disagreed with the statement but added, "it's useful for learning but not a reason for study" (respondent 6, L4). The media is an easily accessible source of language input and helpful for students for self-study. In news broadcasts, there has been a trend reported in code-switching to RVs, particularly when reporters are outside of the studio (Al-Batal, 2013). This suggests that understanding code-switching would help to develop a deeper understanding of the media in addition to RVs and MSA. The Arab media can now be easily accessed through the internet.

Understanding the language situation would help students to use the internet for self-study and to ease their frustrations through understanding why it can be difficult to understand.

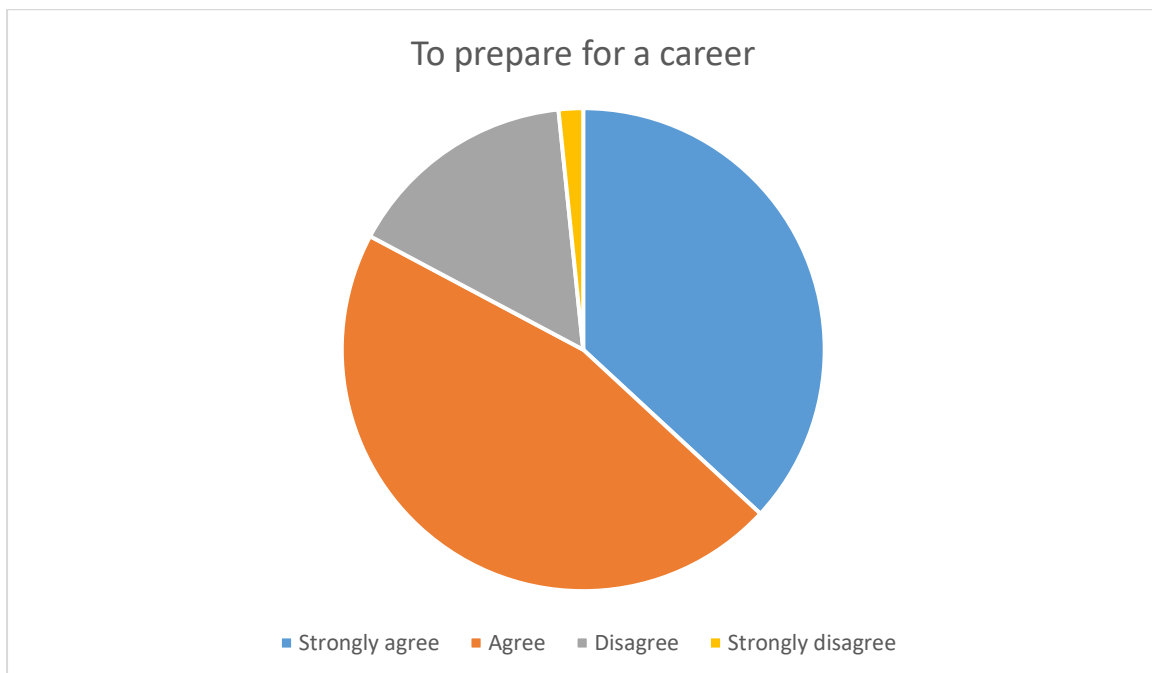
5.1.4. Career

The statement on career prospects was ranked highly, with 82.1% of respondents agreeing (see figure 6), higher than "over half of all respondents" in Al-Batal & Glakas study at the University of Texas (2018: 264), suggesting students in the US and England have different motivations.¹⁴⁸ It marks

¹⁴⁸ 184 students at this HEI participated in a survey primarily investigating their views on the IA and their reasons for learning Arabic. The article did not provide a percentage for this category, but stated that 26% of students opted for Arabic to fulfil the foreign language requirement of their degree program, 22% for personal

an increase since the results from Husseinali (2006a), when 66.5% of respondents agreed that learning Arabic would help their career prospects and, a huge increase since Belnap (1987) when only 8.8% of participants agreed with this statement (see section 2.3.2). My data suggests that, in England, there is a high proportion of students who have been motivated by career prospects in deciding to study Arabic. Research suggests that L2 language skills give graduates a competitive advantage in the work place (Grosse, 2004).¹⁴⁹

Figure 6: Responses to, "To better understand Arab politics" as a reason for learning Arabic.



Two participants referred to the usefulness of having an L2 in general for employment:

- bilingual skills help in the application process and analysis, interpretation and negotiations in the field (participant 70, L6);
- I feel like a degree combining a language and a social science subject is the most "sensible" thing to opt for (given my interests, this is not a universal assertion). I don't think one can convincingly talk about the politics of a region without at least basic knowledge of their language and through that, their culture, etc (participant 117, L4).

fulfilment, and less than 10% citing other reasons not specified in the article. The difference in this category could be that the students in this study are on degree courses with a major component in Arabic, meaning they are at university to broaden their career prospects in another field.

¹⁴⁹ In that study, 82% of respondents stated that their L2 abilities had assisted in their career progression.

Five respondents elaborated on Arabic being an attractive language to employers:

- In the current political climate, Arabic speakers are in demand (participant 6, L4);
- Arabic language opens a lot of doors career-wise (participant 44, L4);
- Lots of opportunities, feel it is very sought after in diverse fields of work (participant 41, L5).

Two participants referred to wanting to move to the Middle East for work and others were more specific in their career plans. Respondent 92, L5, noted, “I'd like to definitely use my experience in Arabic in my career, either through teaching, translating or interpreting” and, respondent 38, L4 stated “I want to be an orator...aimed at Muslims and non-Muslims alike.” A deep understanding of MSA would be crucial for teaching, translation and conference interpreting. Public service interpreting requires a deeper knowledge of RVs. An orator requires an understanding of both varieties. When asked if they had any other reasons for studying Arabic, five respondents elaborated on career-related reasons.

Not all students are studying Arabic for employment prospects, 17.1% of respondents disagreed with the statement, one, L4, of which added, “I'm not sure what I'd like to do in the future so it may or may not come in handy.” When asked if their reasons for studying Arabic had changed since their courses progressed, 7.7% of the students who said they had, commented that the prospect of a career resulting from their Arabic language studies seemed less likely. For example, respondent 123, L6, stated they, “became less likely to look for a job directly using my knowledge of Arabic” and respondent 77, L6, “it also became clear that merely speaking Arabic will help me in no way to get a job.” This largely depends on the field the respondent intends to enter, there are jobs which solely require a command of Arabic. However, depending on the level of Arabic acquired upon graduation

an undergraduate degree in the language would likely not prepare a student for this without further studies.¹⁵⁰

In the student interviews, when asked what drove their initial interest in learning the language, the majority (4/12) cited reasons related to career:

- Before I came to university, I wasn't sure if I wanted to actually carry on studying so I was looking at a career in the RAF and I was looking into intelligence in the RAF and one of the options was to be taught Arabic or Farsi so that is why it appeals to me (transcript 12, Henrietta, L5, the Forder);
- Quite frankly, it changes. I think at the time I wanted to learn another language and Arabic seemed the most practical choice in terms of finding further employment after studying. Given the political climate I thought it was the smartest language to choose and it offers a pretty good range of jobs that you could potentially do, interesting jobs (transcript 11, George, L5, the Elkington).

Two of these respondents cited a career in the political domain. UK government agencies value knowledge of RVs so, solely learning MSA, would not prepare a student for this type of career. There is a majority of students learning Arabic at HEIs motivated by career prospects. Although HEIs provide skills which are attractive to employers, it is not the sole aim of a university education to prepare students for a career, which needs to be considered in curriculum development (see section 3.1).

5.1.5. Family members

Speaking to family members was the least popular reason to learn Arabic (see table 8), with 83.8% of respondents disagreeing with the statement. It could be due to the low number of Arabs learning Arabic: only 2.4% respondents identified themselves as being Arab and 10.6% as of Arab origin. This contrasts the results of Seymour-Jorn's study, which reported that the number of Arab-Americans in

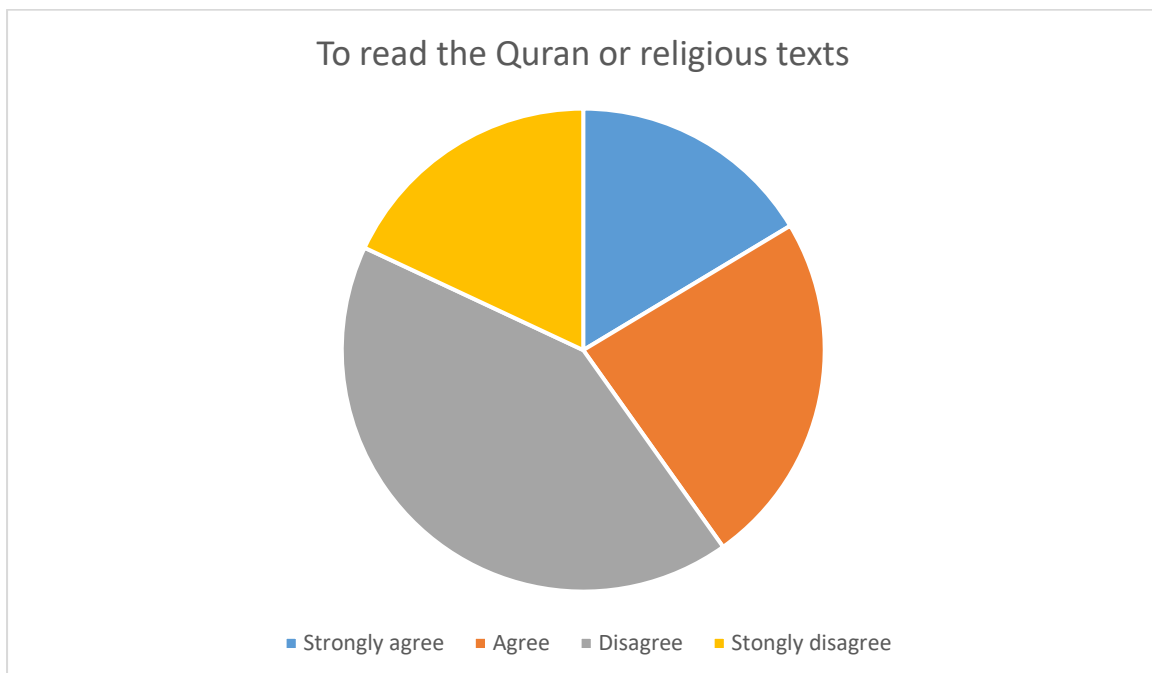
¹⁵⁰ Holes (2003) stated that Arabic graduates do not reach a proficiency high enough to meet the demands of employers. Three tutors interviewed for this study identified this issue, stating that degree-level Arabic needed to be standardised. Five students mentioned that examinations are not advanced enough.

her classroom increased from ranging from 10% to 20% of the class prior to 2002, 40% in 2002 and, in 2003, Arab-Americans were just under 90% of her first-year class (2004: 112). There are students opting for the language with Arabic-speaking family members, as 14.7% agreed with the statement. Respondents 60, L6 and 108, L4, identified themselves as being Arab, but disagreed with this statement noting that they already speak RVs. Respondent 23, L5, identified herself as being of Arab origin, “I have always wanted to be able to communicate with members of my family that only speak Arabic.”

5.1.6. Religious texts

Reading the Quran or religious texts was the second most disagreed with statement (see tables 11 & 12; figure 7): 59.4% disagreed, 17.9% strongly.

Figure 7: Responses to, “To read the Quran or religious texts” as a reason for learning Arabic.



27.6% respondents identified as Muslim. 14.7% of them (4.1% of total respondents) disagreed with the statement. It is easy to speculate that Muslims opt for Arabic for religious reasons but this is not

necessarily their main incentive for learning the language. If it was, they would probably be studying at a religious institution focusing on CLA. Respondent 70, L6 elaborated, “this is by far the best benefit of learning the language,” referring to it as a benefit as opposed to a reason to choose Arabic. Some non-Muslims view reading the Quran and religious texts as important; 18.7% of participants who did not identify themselves as being Muslim agreed with the statement, 17.4% of which (3.3% of all participants) strongly agreed. As Islam has such a large impact on Arab culture, it is beneficial for students when making this link. Three students, who disagreed with the statement, further elaborated on their answers:

- It's not an aim I set out with, if I can "comfortably" read the Qu'ran at the end of my course, so much the better (respondent 117, L4);
- Maybe at some point I will read the Quran and I know it's an extremely important text but frankly I don't have the time or energy to read it yet (respondent 121, L6);
- I do read the Qur'an as part of my studies but it is not why I chose to study Arabic (respondent 122, L6).

Some students view understanding Islam as important for their studies. The religion has substantially affected Arab culture so without it, an education about Arabic would be incomplete. Religious expressions play a large role in day-to-day speech in the Arabic-speaking world, suggesting that an awareness of CLA helps L2 learners communicate and connect with native speakers. When an Arab enters a room or greets someone, they say “سلام عليكم” /sala:m aleikom/ (peace be upon you), how are you is answered with, or accompanied by “الحمد لله” /alhamdolillah/ (praise/ thanks to God) and no future event is discussed or scheduled without adding “إن شاء الله” /Inja allah/ (if God will). These three sayings are the most important for daily communication in the Arabic-speaking world, which is supported in the literature (see Zubay, 2010; Feghali, 1997: 358; Alharbi & Al-Ajmi, 2008: 125; Al-Suwaidi, 2008: 20). Whilst these could easily be learnt as token phrases, a student with a deeper understanding of the language could recognise the variety.

5.2. Concluding remarks

None of the diverse expectations of students on Arabic degree courses embrace the role of HE: the majority of the desired skills could be acquired through a language centre, apprenticeship or an Islamic institution. Maybe as part of a university education, they expect them all to be provided in one place. However, an important aspect which differentiates the university from other institutions is having the opportunity to study a subject in depth.

Chapter 6: HEIs and their curriculum

This chapter analyses data from tutor and student interviews to investigate if they believe RVs should have a place in courses (RQ4b & RQ4c). Data is used to map out a picture of how RVs are treated in the curriculum at their HEIs to investigate if it is doing justice to the Arabic language situation (RQ5).

6.1. Introducing the courses

HEI	Course duration (years)	Classroom hours per week	Year abroad	Destination
The Holdaway	4/3	6	3 rd year (optional)	Morocco/ Jordan
The Stratton	4	6 (L4); 5 (L5); 3 (L6)	3 rd year	Morocco/ Jordan
The Forder	4	6	2 nd year	Morocco
The Harris	4	7 (L4; L5); 5 (L6)	2 nd year	Morocco, Lebanon, Jordan/ Oman
The Sealey	4	6	2 nd year	Jordan
The Elkington	4/3	6	3 rd year (optional)	Students choose
The Furley	4	20 (L4); 6 (L5; L6)	3 rd year	Students choose
The Shenton	4	6	3 rd year	Students choose

Table 10: Arabic courses in England

Table 10 details how Arabic is taught in the eight HEIs teaching Arabic investigated in this research, including the years of study, classroom hours, when students go abroad, and the potential locations. In two HEIs, the year abroad is not compulsory. Both tutors interviewed from those institutions, Mia,

senior lecturer at the Holdaway (Transcript V) and, Camilla, senior lecturer and subject leader at the Elkington (Transcript VI), stated that this is problematic. Students not going to the Arabic-speaking world struggle in their final year and there is a significant difference in proficiency between them and those who went abroad. Taught sessions in Arabic at the HEIs themselves average out at six hours a week, whereas, during the year abroad, students receive 20 hours a week and the opportunity to apply those skills in practice on a day-to-day basis. In the Arab world, students are at a language centre specialising in SLA, whereas the HEI in England is not solely focused on acquiring the language. In the interviews, four students emphasised that the year abroad was when they made the most progress in language acquisition:

- I felt that my Arabic improved loads when I was there. I didn't expect it at first and I did feel like I had been thrown in the deep end because no one in Morocco actually speaks MSA ever so we all struggled a bit at the start. But then I think with the teachers that were there and with the amount of Arabic we spoke and that we were exposed to on a daily basis then my level just shot up really for when I got back by the end of the year (transcript 12, Henrietta, L5, the Forder);
- It was very, very overwhelming initially. They come in and give the opening address in Arabic, and you go, 'Well, I kind of understand Arabic but not if you're speaking too quickly.' You get used to it very quickly, more quickly than you think. It's just the first few weeks is very intimidating. You don't know what's going on the whole time, but you soon pick out the key words and phrases, even if you don't understand most of the sentence or 50% of a sentence, you still guess what they're talking about from the few words that you did pick up and the context of the conversation. I definitely would think I learn more here [in Jordan] than I did in the classes in the UK because of how direct the approach is (transcript 11, George, L5, the Elkington).

Representatives of the HEIs with an optional year abroad stated that they have to be sensitive to the various obligations towards their students, and how some family members are not comfortable with the learner going to the Arabic-speaking world due to security concerns. As the majority of tutors interviewed believe students only need to learn an RV when travelling to the Arab world (see 5.2.2.1), it is interesting to note the different stances of these two HEIs with regard to RVs (see table

11). The Holdaway is the only HEI which does not support learning RVs at any point in the course; whereas the Elkington has a compulsory second year module on the Syrian variety.¹⁵¹

6.2. Language diversity

Table 11 details whether RVs are included as part of the university curriculum or syllabus. Although only three HEIs have integrated RVs into the curriculum, seven teach them at some point in the course, revealing a mismatch between curriculum and pedagogy.

HEI	Part of curriculum?	Teach RV at HEI?	Year abroad?	In classroom?	In examinations?
The Holdaway					
The Stratton			✓	✓	
The Forder			✓		
The Harris			✓	✓	
The Sealey		✓	✓	✓	✓
The Elkington	✓	✓	✓	✓ (RV class only)	✓ (RV exam only)
The Furley	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Shenton	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 11: Place of RVs on Arabic undergraduate courses in England.

6.2.1. Views on including RVs

Studies recently carried out show support from students (Al-Batal & Glakas, 2018; Zaki & Palmer, 2018; Isleem, 2018) and tutors (Isleem, 2018; Abdalla & Al-Batal, 2012) for RVs to be integrated into

¹⁵¹ This variety was selected as it is spoken by the module leader and language tutor and, at the time of designing the course, the destination for the year abroad (see section 6.4).

the university curriculum, teaching them from the beginning of courses.¹⁵² In this study, similar to one by Hashem-Aramouni (2011), tutors and students agreed on the importance of building a strong foundation in MSA before moving onto dialect study.¹⁵³ The majority of participants in the 2018 US research were at HEIs which had adopted the IA and could be more comfortable with the approach.¹⁵⁴ The first-year curriculum at seven of the eight HEIs included in this research only includes MSA, which could make tutors and students more comfortable with an MSA focus.¹⁵⁵ It could suggest that the IA has gained more popularity in the US as there is a significant increase in support for it from 2011 to 2018, when these studies were carried out. From my tutor interviews, four explicitly mentioned that MSA should be prioritised on degree courses:

- The first- and second-year students should just be exposed to the /fuʃħa:/ [SA], pure /fuʃħa:/ [SA] and nothing more. And only the listening, only listening to the news and official programmes (transcript VIII, Sarah, the Stratton);
- For me, if they want to get a degree in Arabic, modern standard is the main, the dialect is just there for communicative purposes, but I want the students to graduate with the ability to read and write in modern standard [...] I would still do it MSA first because to me, if you want a university degree it's not just to communicate at normal street level but at higher levels (Transcript VI, Camilla, the Elkington).¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² In Al-Batal & Glakas' study (2018: 265), 94% of students disagreed (36%) or strongly disagreed (58%) with the statement "the study of Arabic dialects should be postponed until students are studying Arabic abroad in an Arabic-speaking country;" Zaki & Palmer (2018) found that 69% students in the UAE who were taught Arabic through the IA stated that learning both MSA and an RV in the same course was beneficial and were optimistic about studying more than one variety of Arabic; Isleem (2018: 255) found that tutors and students believe the RV should not be part of a separate course with its own curriculum: only 15.3% teachers agreed or strongly agreed that CA should not be incorporated with MSA and 85% of students stated they would like to see RVs incorporated in the MSA curriculum. Although this was an international study, including the views of 141 students from 22 colleges and universities, 132 participants were from US universities, making it more reflective of the situation there; Abdalla & Al-Batal (2012: 16) found that that over 65% of tutors believe that RVs should be introduced in the first two years of study, rather than at more advanced stages and as reflected in the curriculum.

¹⁵³ Research into students and tutors' perceptions revealed that all participants agreed that MSA is "the foundation for learning the Arabic language" but it should be followed with dialect study (2011: 105); Apart from tutors at the Shenton; This was mentioned by six students interviewed.

¹⁵⁴ Only one tutor interviewed for this study, Charlotte, the Shenton, where Arabic is taught through the IA, stated she believes that the IA is the most effective approach (transcript I).

¹⁵⁵ Each of the HEIs treats RVs differently, with only three including them as part of the curriculum and examining students in their proficiency (see table 9). The Elkington and the Furley introduce the RV in the second year; the Sealey informally introduces some phrases in the RV in the final three weeks of the first year, in preparation for the year abroad.

¹⁵⁶ This comment links into the idea of MSA being the 'academic' variety (see section 6.8.)

Camilla views MSA as being important for higher levels of language acquisition, which correlates with SA being the formal variety. This does not necessarily make SA more complex as advanced constructions in the RV do exist. When discussing the IA, Isleem (2018: 256) argues that as a student's proficiency increases the integration of RVs in the classroom decreases, giving rise to two major issues:

- (a) a possible covert teaching ideology that promotes the idea that knowledge of colloquial should not exceed basic and casual conversation since complex discourse and narrative is restricted to MSA; and
- (b) a lack of resources in colloquial materials for advanced Arabic classes that would expand the functionality and integration of colloquial in topics that exceed basic conversational discourse. (see section 2.3.1.3)

Point (a) is particularly relevant because RVs are varieties in their own right so linguistically complex constructions do exist. The idea that MSA is the complex variety and only medium of communication worthy of academic study is widespread in the Arab world and has been imported into the L2 classroom, indicating concerns regarding tutor education (see sections 6.7; 6.8).¹⁵⁷ Availability of resources poses an issue for Arabic in general, but is more problematic for teaching RVs (see section 7.2.5).

Three tutors were undecided on whether there is a single approach which could be implemented across the board for TAFL. Louise, the Forder, stated that more research needs to be carried out on TAFL and the implications of teaching more than one variety simultaneously before suggestions can be made (transcript III). Margarette, the Shenton, said that she was enjoying teaching through the IA, but wanted to see the outcome before deciding if it was more effective (transcript II). Mia, the Holdaway, believes that there is not one suitable approach for every HEI:

¹⁵⁷ RVs are taught at language centres in the Arab world, the local variety of the country, in to prepare students for day-to-day communication, which is not perceived as a proponent of academic study.

I think perhaps the big mistake we're all making is that [...] we're trying to find a model that is the ideal, when it should be localised, even these congresses that meet for teaching Arabic as a foreign language, maybe the mistake is trying to find one solution [...] it depends on the set up of the student, and also what they think they would use it for, also has a big impact on what should be taught and when [...] the final issue is that, maybe one should just accept it's going to be tough and that's it, is that at what stage is it helpful for students to be introduced to colloquial, this is an old debate, but it's still an issue, is it ok in the third year? (Transcript V)

As clarified by Mia, that there are no definite answers on when the RV should be introduced but there is a need for clarity around the language situation. The field requires further research, as mentioned by Louise. Since the 1990s, academics have been arguing when and how to introduce RVs, but, until recently, none of these arguments were based on empirical research. Even studies published in 2018 leave many questions unanswered (see section 2.3). Until more concrete answers on how to approach learning more than one variety of Arabic are provided, the curriculum at many HEIs will continue to prioritise MSA.

The majority of students interviewed (six), all of whom had learnt Arabic through the MSA approach, suggested that it is important first to gain a solid grounding in MSA before moving onto learning an RV. Beatrice, L6, the Holdaway, did not want to acquire an RV until after completing her degree:

I am pro for Arabic /fʊʂħɑ:/ [SA; ...] I want Arabic to be absolutely the main focus because I really think it's important for them honestly and I would like to introduce a dialect as long as they know exactly the difference between them and when exactly you ask someone. For example, in the exam or in the class when they ask you to talk in /fʊʂħɑ:/ [SA], you don't put anything from the dialect you know you have to separate almost two different languages (transcript 1).

The other five, who had also been taught through the MSA approach, suggested having a specific RV module in the second year, similar to that on offer at the Elkington and the Furley:

- At the beginning of year two there should be an optional module for dialects, maybe like 10 credits or 20 credits or something. And then this first introduces for everyone and you tell them that you're gonna go to a module depending on what country you decide to go to. And then you tell them about the different dialects, you let them listen to it so they're introduced

to whatever, then after that you just start from the basics. (Transcript 6, Elizabeth, L5, the Stratton)

- If we started with /fʊʂħa:/ [SA], dialect is easier than /fʊʂħa:/ [SA], but if we start with dialects then move to /fʊʂħa:/ [SA], I think it would be harder to learn grammar. There are more difficulties with /fʊʂħa:/ [SA] than dialects so I'm happy we started with /fʊʂħa:/ [SA]. I think this has given me a good base to work from for the future so I can then pick up any dialect. (Transcript 4, Charles, L5, the Harris)

Charles stated he prefers to learn what he views as the more advanced aspects of the language towards the start of the course. James, L6, the Sealey, views this as a back-to-front way of learning Arabic, which is an argument quoted in favour of learning through the IA: it allows for a more natural acquisition process (transcript 15; see section 2.3.1.3). In the IA classroom, “MSA is rarely maintained for over a sentence at the novice levels. As the proficiency level advances the material discussed moved to the less concrete, resulting in increased usage of MSA with code-switches to Educated Spoken Arabic” (Najour, 2018: 302).¹⁵⁸ This is opposite to the situation at HEIs prioritising MSA in England, where, if RVs are incorporated, it is not until advanced levels. This has been termed ‘reverse privileging’ by Ryding (2006; 2013; see section 2.2.4).

Four students who had received RV instruction from their HEIs were satisfied with the approach:

- If I hadn't done that module in Syrian dialect, I think I would have been a lot more stuck when I got to Jordan than I was (transcript 11, George, L5, the Elkington);
- Amelia, L6, the Furley, was very grateful to have the in-depth knowledge of MSA received from her HEI and was satisfied with the approach, but felt the RV sessions needed to be improved (transcript 7).

George was reasonably happy with the RV classes but felt they were better than those received in MSA. Although students at the Furley were grateful to have had the exposure to RVs during their course, they expressed frustration at the quality of teaching in RV classes (see section 7.2.4). Two

¹⁵⁸ As mentioned previously, Isleem (2018) views this negatively and believes RVs should also have a place at more advanced levels.

students who learnt RVs on their year abroad were disappointed that they lost their progress once returning to the UK (see table 11; see section 7.1.2). Although these students could continue to practice RVs through self-study, they may have other commitments which make this difficult, or they could be having difficulties accessing suitable material for their level.

Phillip, the only student interviewed who learnt through the IA (the Shenton, L6), was the only student completely satisfied with the approach:

"في البداية كان صعب ولكن يعني هذا كان مهم جداً لكي يعني أستطيع ان أتواصل مع الناس وافهم الناس، الناس ما يتكلمون بالفصحى فكان في رأي عندما يمر الطالب بهذا بهذه المرحلة الصعبة في البداية لكي يستطيع يفهم اكثر في المستقبل"

/fɪl bɪdɑːjɑ kɑn ʃɑʃb wɑlɑ:kɪn jɑʃniː heðɑ kɑ:n mɔhɪm dʒɪddɛn li:kɛɪ jɑʃniː ɑstɑʃiːʃ ɑn ɑtɑwɑ:ʃɛl mɑʃ ɑn.nɑs wɑ ɑfɦɑm ɑn.nɑs ɑn.nɑs lɑː jɛtɛkɛl.lɛmuːn bɪl fʊʃɦɑː fɑkɑːn fiː ɟɑʔiː ɪʃndɑmɑː jɛmɔɹ aʃ.ʃɑːlɪb biː heðɑ biː heðɦiː ɪlmɑɦɑlɑ ɑʃʃɑʃbɑ fɪl bɪdɑːjɑ li:kɛɪ jɛstɑʃiːʃ yɛfhɑm ɑkθɹ fɪl mɔstɑqbeɪ/

(In the beginning it was difficult but it was very important to communicate with and understand people. People don't speak MSA so it was, in my opinion. A student passes through this difficult period to understand more in the future).

(Transcript 2)

The IA, perceived by students and tutors as being daunting and confusing, is the only approach to have been received well in practice. This could correspond with data from previous studies (Zaki & Palmer, 2018; Al-Batal & Glakas, 2018), suggesting that students learning Arabic through the IA are satisfied with the approach. A larger pool of participants is needed to reach a more reliable conclusion. If RV classes at the Furley were more structured, those students may have been more content with the MSA approach introducing RVs in the second year of study.

6.2.2. Rationale behind approach

Featherstone (2018: 58) stated, "I have asked UK colleagues why they refuse to teach a dialect alongside or even in addition to MSA, and many claim that it's too complicated, too confusing.

Another argument raised is that the choice of dialect is a dilemma." These ideas were echoed in this

research. Mia, the Holdaway, cited some practical reasons for not being able to include RVs on courses:

resources, student numbers and also the structure of the degree, they've got so many more subjects to do because remember they are not doing an Arabic only degree, they're doing other subjects, there's also the space within the degree (transcript V).

It could just not be realistic for the HEI to include RVs, regardless of what research says. I discussed with tutors the rationale behind the approaches taken to TAFL at their HEIs.¹⁵⁹ Six tutors at HEIs which did not include RVs as part of the curriculum stated that it would be too confusing for students:¹⁶⁰

- I don't think this question will ever be solved but how do you make the learners' experience not too difficult? [...] exposing a student to both varieties can be terribly confusing [...] If they'd been entirely different it would have been more manageable but they are close enough to confuse (transcript V, Mia, the Holdaway);
- I don't think they should study dialect from year one because it could confuse them (transcript X, Timothy, the Forder).

Learning more than one variety of Arabic simultaneously confusing the learner is widely discussed in the literature (see section 2.3.1.3) and addressed in section 6.3.

Another argument cited by tutors in this research, as abovementioned (Featherstone, 2018), was the dilemma of which variety to teach:

- I would not advise on introducing /ʕami:ja/ [RV] as part of the degree [...] you can't assess them only based on just like one year. So if you want it to be part of the curriculum it has to be introduced to have a weighting right back from year one and so on. But then you are in a very tricky situation because which /ʕami:ja/ [RV] are you doing to use? (Transcript VIII, Sarah, the Stratton);
- If they're going to three different countries, well are you going to teach them Egyptian? Are you going to teach them Moroccan as well? (Transcript V, Mia, the Holdaway).

¹⁵⁹ No tutors stated that there is a stated philosophy behind their degree programmes.

¹⁶⁰ This was reflected in previous comments from the tutor interviews (see section 6.3).

They suggested that students only need an RV when they travel abroad and should learn the RV of that country *only* when they go. When I asked Timothy, Lecturer, the Forder, if he thought RVs should have a place on the undergraduate curriculum, he responded, “dialect would have a place if you are going to send the students abroad” (transcript X). Similarly, the incentive behind introducing the RV at the Elkington and the Sealey, is to prepare students for the Arab world (see below). To what extent are courses doing justice to Arabic if students need additional preparation to go abroad? At the Shenton and the Furley, learning the RVs is viewed as being an essential part of understanding Arabic as a living language.

Although the Forder and the Sealey prioritise MSA, there is evidence that these HEIs are open to finding ways to include RVs in their classrooms, whilst supporting the idea that learners first need to develop a strong foundation in MSA. At the time of the interview, the Sealey provided three weeks of RV instruction before sending students abroad, to prepare them for the first few days before they commenced RV classes. This change had only been implemented in the preceding year as a result of the need for students to be able to communicate in the RV when they arrive in the Arab world.

Whilst both tutors interviewed from this HEI believe that RVs should be supported more extensively at the Sealey, they did identify that change is underway. Jessica, Lecturer, the Sealey, stated during our interview that the HEI is:

very much willing to explore new ways, in terms of a bit more experimental. They wouldn't want to start with /ʕami:ja/ [RV] but like introducing /ʕami:ja/ [RV] from as early as possible. So, they are very much open to new suggestions, new materials or writing new things that can be tested in the years to come (transcript XII).

Jessica conducted her own research on how to introduce varieties on undergraduate degree courses. She looked at this through the MSA approach as she believes most HEIs would not support such a radical approach of introducing both varieties side-by-side from day one, so change would

need to be gradual. She added that the recent modifications to courses at the Sealey represent a big improvement in comparison to the situation three years prior to our interview, when the focus was solely on MSA, or MSA and English.¹⁶¹

Change is underway at the Forder, at the hands of a tutor, Louise, who also has a background in TAFL research and sociolinguistics and is passionate about the subject. Although this is not yet reflected in the curriculum, her reference to language variation in the classroom has been received favourably by her first-year students. When asked who or what influenced their opinions on RVs in the questionnaire, a first-year student at the Forder commented that her, “university tutor has a passion for understanding Arabic dialects and allows me to appreciate the linguistic differences in the Arab world.” This suggests that students benefit from tutors raising their awareness and understanding of the language situation.¹⁶²

At the Elkington, although focus is on gaining a strong foundation in MSA, there is a compulsory dialect module in the second year.¹⁶³ Camilla, subject leader for Arabic, who was surprised that not all HEIs offering degree courses in Arabic teach RVs, outlined the reasoning behind including the module:

When they go to the Middle East for their period abroad they need to understand what the people are talking about. Not every Arab can speak Modern Standard Arabic and if they speak in the dialect then if the students had never heard the dialect before they would struggle (transcript VI).

¹⁶¹ The students interviewed from this HEI were in their final year so they could not comment on this change. Although, James did mention that the HEI had listened to some of their suggestions and that change was underway (transcript 15); Jessica’s interview was conducted in October, 2018; Jessica stated this was clear from students’ use of the language within the classroom and exams (transcript XII).

¹⁶² An understanding of language variation is only included on undergraduate courses at the discretion of the tutor (see section 6.2).

¹⁶³ The module has been part of the undergraduate degree course since it was introduced in 2006.

This is the same rationale as other HEIs introducing RVs as discussed above: to prepare students for the year abroad. Camilla emphasised the importance of equipping students with appropriate skills for communication (transcript VI). This is treated separately to MSA as, in MSA classes, tutors and students speak in MSA. There are separate examinations in MSA and students are advised not to mix the varieties.

The Harris has taken a step back from teaching students RVs: they introduced a module on the Egyptian variety, which was discontinued. Staff felt it was not suitable for a credit-bearing course at university level. There were pedagogic issues including teaching and assessment which consisted of a 30-minute oral exam. Catherine, Assistant Professor, the Harris, said this meant it was being seen as an 'easy option' which did not fit in with any of the other modules at the same level (transcript VII).¹⁶⁴ The RV module was offered in Egyptian Arabic in preparation for the year abroad and, as students were no longer studying in Egypt, the module became more obsolete.¹⁶⁵ Catherine highlighted that there were issues with the way the RV was taught (see section 7.2.4). She believes that an RV module should be managed by tutors with a background in TAFL and who:

have an interest in Arabic and understanding of the relationship between the standard language and the dialect and a historical awareness on top of an interest of the structure of the language itself. Because, otherwise, it's too easy to kind of say, oh let's listen to some videos off YouTube then the whole thing just becomes a conversation club where they learn a bit of vocabulary: there's no systematic approach to it. And then there's no discussion of the sociolinguistics which I think, when you start teaching dialect, I very firmly believe that you can't, at university level and this is where it differs from night school or A-Level. At university level what is needed is a more analytical approach to language and language structure along with some teaching of sociolinguistics (transcript VII).

¹⁶⁴ This does may not make an exam easier: the interpretation part of my MA was assessed purely through oral exams which was much more challenging than written translation exams.

¹⁶⁵ Whilst one of the two fourth-year students interviewed, Charles (transcript 4), took the module on Egyptian Arabic for some exposure to an RV, the other, Diana (transcript 3), did not as, she said, she would not be travelling to Egypt.

Catherine emphasised that if RVs are to be introduced on courses, to be worthy of a credit-bearing module at university, they would need to be coupled with a linguistic approach to the language. She added that this can only be offered by an expert in the language as opposed to solely being a native speaker of the RV the HEI would like to offer, which is often the case for teaching MSA as well as RVs (see section 7.2.4).

The discontinuation of the RV module at the Harris was brought up in one of my student questionnaires:

My Arabic teacher is Egyptian, and therefore in second year this was the dialect class on offer. However, this module has now been cancelled because [the Harris] wants to move away from a linguistic approach to a languages degree and more towards literature. [The Harris] only accepts Modern Standard Arabic in the final year oral exam, so any dialect we learn is useful for us but will not benefit us at an academic level (respondent 77, L6).¹⁶⁶

Despite discontinuing the module on Egyptian Arabic, the HEI offers an optional L6 module on Arabic Linguistics and Dialectology led by Catherine (see section 7.1.1). This suggests that, although the HEI has moved away from teaching RVs, their importance in learning about Arabic is, to some extent recognised, along with a linguistic understanding of the language.

The Furley takes a slightly different approach. Despite supporting it being important for students first to gain a strong foundation in MSA, from day one, they are taught to slightly modify their speech (clarified below), introducing the idea of language variation. William, course leader for Arabic, explained this in our interview:

From the very beginning they are aware [of language variation in Arabic]. Although we don't have a course called dialect but we have three hours a week called speaking [...] the way we teach speaking is by showing the students that we have to adjust the level of reading and writing which we call /fʊʂħa:/ [SA]. We have to adjust it to be spoken; we have to sort of

¹⁶⁶ The idea that MSA is the only variety worthy of study at an academic level is discussed in section 6.8.

ease the case endings, ease the word order in the sentence. These other grammatically restrictive rules so it is not /ʕami:ja/ [RV] as such I could call it /ʕami:jat ʔlmʕtaʕal.ʔimi:n/ [the dialect of the educated/ ESA] in the first year. We deliberately chose two teachers for each group, one Levantine and one Egyptian so even when they are practicing this /ʕami:jat ʔlmʕtaʕal.ʔimi:n/ they are hearing it in two dialects. You can choose to answer in any of the dialects, but it is awareness that in Arabic you don't speak the way you read and write. (Transcript IV)

William stated that, when he started at the Furley in 1985 the approach was different and purely focused on MSA. He added that Arabic is a living language, which is constantly changing, and the course recognises the need to reflect this. So, the HEI decided to incorporate RVs, to be true to the nature of the L2. William brought up the issue of 'awareness,' suggesting that the course values developing a student's understanding of the language situation.

The Shenton has the same rationale as the Furley: they are teaching Arabic as a living language and students acquire skills which can be used for speaking in addition to reading and writing. These HEIs differ in approach. The Furley and the Shenton teach students about the clear distinction between speaking and writing, but, whereas the Furley exposes students to different levels and varieties of Arabic, from day one, the Shenton instructs students to speak in Egyptian Arabic and read and write in MSA, but includes more variation at more advanced levels.¹⁶⁷ Students can use the RV for speaking in all of their classes at both of these HEIs and are exposed to authentic texts which mix varieties at more advanced levels. Although the Shenton only teaches Egyptian Arabic to students in years one and two, after they return from the year abroad, they can speak in the variety of their choice, making any relevant changes to aid comprehension. These HEIs differ in approach, but the end result is the same: students are taught to code-switch and select the appropriate variety

¹⁶⁷ The language situation is more complex than speaking in one variety and writing in another (see section 2.1), now recognised by some advocates of the IA (see section 2.3.1.3).

depending on the situation. This is reflective of inter-dialect communication and the language situation in the Arabic-speaking world itself (see section 2.1).

Whilst the Shenton was teaching students to communicate in an RV prior to the tutors interviewed for this study were there, the year before this data was collected, steps had been taken to integrate RVs more into the curriculum.¹⁶⁸ Margarete, lector, the Shenton, clarified that the IA is a new trend in TAFL and, despite many academics being against the approach, it is gaining popularity and was something the department leaders wanted to implement (transcript II). She discussed how much preparation she, as a native-Arabic speaker, had invested in understanding the language system behind her RV:

The thing is that the more you get into the grammar, it's not identical. You know sometimes there are [sic] stuff that you don't use in the ECA, or the spoken. So, this is making me think, before I teach I've been working on that all summer, to get, you know like the grammatical parts, you know like the grammatical concepts, in ECA and MSA. And it took me a while to realise that there is [sic] some things that we don't say them that way, or if we want to say them, we'll say them in /fʊʃħɑ:/ [SA] or we're not going to say them, which I find very interesting (transcript II).¹⁶⁹

Margarete highlighted that to teach RVs you need to understand the language system behind them. RVs have been viewed by native speakers as not having a specific grammar or structure. This causes issues when a tutor does not have a linguistic understanding of the language and that idea is imported into the L2 classroom (see sections 6.5; 7.2.4).

As clarified above, some HEIs are integrating or have integrated RVs into the curriculum to be reflective of Arabic as a living language and to prepare students for communication. HEIs which do

¹⁶⁸ Data was collected from the Shenton in February 2016.

¹⁶⁹ Margarete has also stated that some things are not said in both varieties, which is a further argument in support of the IA.

not support RVs within the curriculum have adopted this stance because they believe introducing RVs to students too early in the course would be a source of confusion; it is only necessary to learn them when travelling abroad, and; only teaching MSA solves the issue of which variety to teach. These two issues are discussed further below.

6.3. Is learning RVs confusing?

Many tutors fear that introducing students to more than one variety would cause too much confusion. This is a widely quoted argument against the IA (see section 2.3.1.3.). In this research, the HEIs that have introduced RVs do not view confusion as being a major issue. Camilla, the Elkingon stated:

At first, they resist because it's like a second language to them, and then, the more they resist and the more they complain that it's like a second language, the more it's easier for us to explain that there is a need for it. Because, imagine you go to Jordan and you're in a foreign country and you feel your Arabic's done nothing for you and it's very demoralising. So, we tell them be patient, bear with us. And so, by the end of semester one they can say sentences and they can see the differences. Because, the first few weeks we do tables so we have the Modern Standard in one column, the Syrian in the other and what we need for them to leave comments and we say look at the difference between. And eventually we don't need to put Modern Standard, they start to pick up and we say now remember how you complained, this is why we're doing it because you've learnt here rather than when you were in Jordan (transcript VI).

Camilla added that eventually her students are glad they have enough dialect to get by in the Arabic-speaking world upon their arrival. Charlotte, tutor, the Shenton, made similar comments on student feedback:

The feedback has been incredibly positive: the students really appreciate the approach. They think it's important to learn both. I think at first, you know at the very beginning of the year, you did get lots of comments about, oh /fʊʂħa:/ [SA] and /ʕami:ja/ [RV] but I think now they're so used to it [...] feedback in the second term is definitely a lot more positive and they are a lot more relaxed about the whole /fʊʂħa:/ [SA] and /ʕami:ja/ [RV] approach than they were in the first term (transcript I).

William at the Furley stated that there are some students who are, initially, against the idea of learning RVs, but it does not pose a long-term problem:

We have a minority of students who complain. These are those who came thinking it would be /fʊʃħɑ:/ [SA] and /fʊʃħɑ:/ [SA] only, but it's easy to convince them. It doesn't take us long to convince them that they have to accept the other levels (transcript IV).

One student interviewed from the Furley expressed her frustration at having to learn so many varieties of the same language:

I felt as though I was learning three languages at the same time and intensely frustrating. Because the rules in MSA are so intricate in particular and there are thousands of exceptions but it is still extremely structured. And then you go to the pains of learning, or in my case very badly, learning all these rules and then you go into an MSA [RV] class and it is suddenly, "well the dual doesn't exist and the plural is a lot simpler." That kind of thing and it is just quite frustrating (transcript 10, Victoria, L5, the Furley).

Variation is received differently from student to student and institution to institution. Victoria found the different structures behind RVs and MSA confusing. In the sessions observed at the Shenton the students were deeply engaged in the collaborative tasks on the RV and referred to the root and verb forms when encountering new vocabulary which suggests they are comfortable with both varieties (transcript A). It could be attributed to the structural approach taken at this HEI, where students are introduced to the different structures of RVs and MSA in parallel, which could diffuse any confusion surrounding them. Most students interviewed who had learnt more than one variety did support the idea that the confusion eventually diminishes and they are glad to have more than one variety at their disposal, as quoted in section 6.2.1.

Phillip, L6 student, the Shenton, who had learnt multiple varieties did not cite diglossia as being a difficult aspect of the language:

اصعب شيء كانت المفردات بصراحة يعني، يعني بالنسبة للغات الأوروبية مثل الفرنسية والإسبانية يعني في تشابه “ بين المفردات يعني تستطيع ان تشوف كلمة ويعني تخمين من المعنى وبالعربية هذا مستحيل فهذا كان بالنسبة لي هذا كان “اصعب شيء. القواعد طبعاً صعبة ولكن اصعب المفردات بالنسبة لي ويعني حفظ المفردات

/aʃaʕb ʃeɪʔ ka:net ɪlmʊʔʤada:t bɪʃaʤa:ħa ʤaʕni: ʤaʕni: bɪn.nɪsba lɪl laʤa:t ɪlaʊu:b.bi:ʤa mɪθɪ
ɪlʤaʤansi:ʤa wal ɪsba:ni:ʤa ʤaʕni: fi: teʃa:boh beɪn ɪlmʊʔʤada:t ʤaʕni: testaʤi:a an teʃəʊʔ kalɪma
wa ʤaʕni texmi:n men ɪlmaʕna wa bɪl aʕʤabi: heðə mʊstaħi:l faheðə ka:n bɪn.nɪsba li: heðə
ka:n aʃaʕb ʃeɪʔ alqawa:..ɪd ʔabʕan ʃaʕba wala:kɪn aʃaʕb almʊʔʤada:t bɪn.nɪsba li: wa ʤaʕni:
ħɪfʊ ɪlmʊʔʤada:t/

(the most difficult thing was the vocabulary to be honest. With regards to the European languages like French and Spanish, there are similarities in vocab so you can see a word and guess the meaning but, with Arabic, this is impossible so this was for more the most difficult thing. Grammar is, of course, difficult but, for me, the vocab is the most difficult thing and memorising it).¹⁷⁰

(Transcript 2)

Beatrice, L6, the Holdaway, the only student interviewed who did not receive any instruction in an RV, stated that learning more than one variety simultaneously would be too confusing. The idea of learning more than one variety could be more daunting than the reality.

From the perspective of the student, despite some tutors shielding them from the potential confusion of learning more than one variety, the majority of participants want to learn them (see sections 6.2.1; 6.5).¹⁷¹ This suggests that, confusion does not deter students from wanting to study more than one variety.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ It is still undecided in SLA research whether similarities between languages help or hinder the acquisition process (Siegel, 2010); The difficulty of learning Arabic vocabulary is discussed in section 7.2.6.4.

¹⁷¹ This corresponds with results from Glakas & Al-Batal's (2018) study and Zaki & Palmer's (2018) study (see section 2.3.1.3).

¹⁷² Further research could address whether learning more than one variety would be a deterrent to prospective students.

6.4. Which variety?

The limited research in the field suggests that exposing students to one RV in addition to MSA aids comprehension of other RVs (see section 2.3.3). This leads Al-Batal & Glakas (2018: 272) to argue that “the choice of dialect is far less important than the decision to integrate any dialect.”¹⁷³ They conclude (2018: 276):

Our results confirm that the field needs to move beyond the question of which dialect to teach because it does not matter; teachers can teach any dialect with which they are comfortable and for which there exist enough materials. All Arabic dialects are important, and all share a symbolic relationship with MSA, and our students will greatly benefit from integrating *any* dialect in their curriculum.

Soliman (2012; 2014) found that native Arabic speakers largely remain in their RVs making slight modifications for comprehension (see section 2.3.3). This suggests that it would be beneficial for students to learn any RV. Najour found (2018: 313) that, “nineteen [out of 20] instructors were willing to integrate MSA with a dialect other than their own and felt comfortable doing so at the beginners’ level.”¹⁷⁴ If a HEI was to focus on a particular RV, at beginners’ levels for example, but its tutors spoke different RVs, it would not necessarily be an issue.

When asking tutors about their reasoning behind using a particular RV, they stated those were the varieties spoken by the Arabic tutor making it the most logical solution. At the Shenton, before Charlotte and Margarete were there, the tutors taught their RV, the Levantine variety. When students return from their year abroad, they can speak in the variety of their choice, providing they make the appropriate modifications to aid comprehension as is the case with intradialect

¹⁷³ Al-Batal & Glakas (2018: 272) found that a “substantial majority (75%) of the 145 students who had studied more than one dialect indicated that knowledge of one dialect helped them when the time came to begin learning another.”

¹⁷⁴ They were interviewed from the University of Texas.

communication.¹⁷⁵ At the Elkington, the tutors are native speakers of the Syrian variety, making it a logical selection. Camilla added:

the Syrian dialect works across the whole Arab world because of the Syrian drama [television series] so even if you go to Oman, they use the dialect, they understand and they're understood. So, I guess it's one of those where we keep saying well if we have more staff we'll do a different dialect, but how many dialects do you do? We now may have students going to Qatar and with nobody to do that Qatari dialect, so therefore we've got to stick with one and this is the one (transcript VI).

The Furley decided to give students the option to be exposed to more than one variety of Arabic and has enough members of staff to cover the Levantine and Egyptian varieties in the second year and Gulf varieties in the fourth. It is not compulsory to learn all these varieties: learners have the choice in the second year to learn either Egyptian or Levantine, or both and, in the fourth year, the module on Gulf varieties is optional. Whilst this offers a wide variety of Arabic varieties, Amelia, L6 student, interpreted this as the department favouring Eastern varieties and literature, and she would have liked the opportunity to understand the Maghreb area in more depth (transcript 7). This could be due to Eastern varieties, such as Levantine and Egyptian being more widely understood in the Arab world (see section 2.1.2).¹⁷⁶ It could also be viewed as being discriminatory against North African varieties, as Moroccan, for example, has been viewed negatively by native Arabic speakers (see section 2.1.4.3). Although it is an inevitable problem, it creates an added complexity for HEIs teaching RVs, in leading to bias towards a particular country or region.

Despite the research supporting the idea that learning any dialect is beneficial to students, the extensive number of Arabic varieties and implications of selecting one does make it difficult to decide which one to teach. Learners may also have preferred varieties to learn and, survey results

¹⁷⁵ This, in effect, is an added skill.

¹⁷⁶ There is now evidence that this is changing.

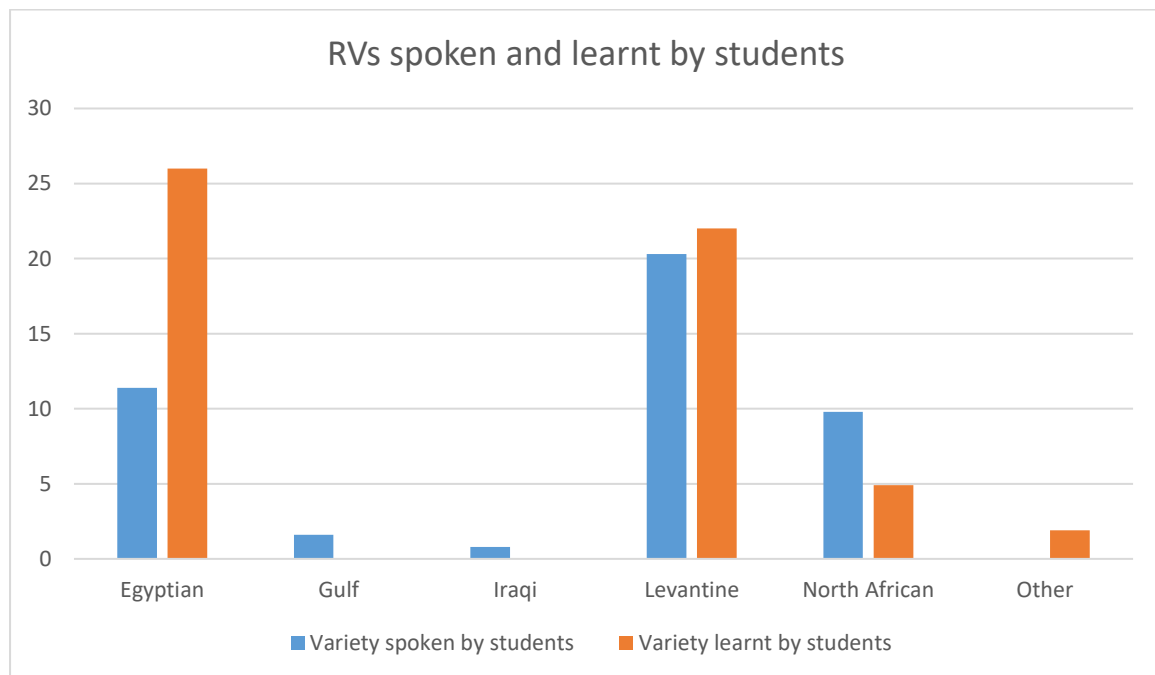
looking into RVs favoured by students suggest that the inaccurate notion of one variety being ‘closer to MSA’ is also being fed through into some L2 classrooms (see section 6.5.1).

6.5. Students’ views on varieties

The survey results suggest that many students (42.3%) are learning RVs as part of their university courses. 61.5% of them learnt Egyptian, 51.9% Levantine and 11.5% North African (see figure 8).

When asked if they could speak an RV, 40.7% of respondents selected yes: 20.3% Egyptian, 11.4% Levantine, 9.8% North African, 1.6% Gulf and, 0.8% Iraqi. Respondent 20, L6, who could not speak an RV, commented on this question, “we are not offered a module on any dialect, an option which would have been extremely useful,” which suggests students view learning RVs as important.

Figure 8: Varieties of Arabic spoken and learnt by participants.



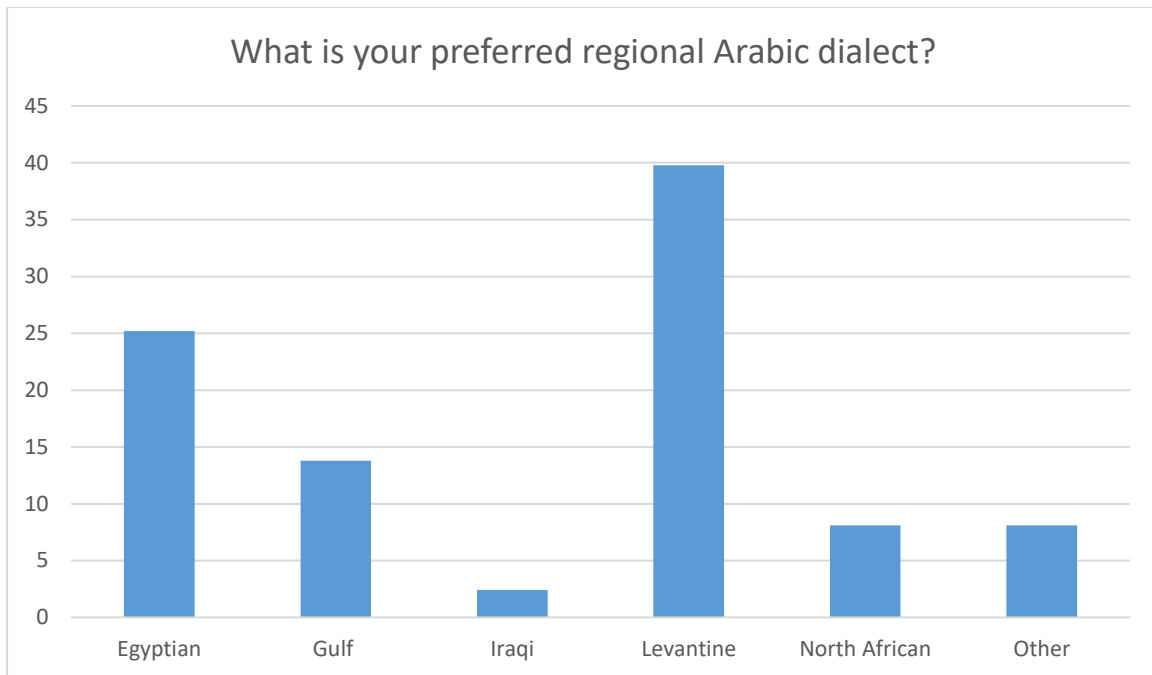
6.5.1. Inter-dialect perceptions

As suggested by Trentman (2011: 31), L2 learners’ inter-dialect perceptions, to some extent, reflect those of native speakers (see figure 9), with the Levantine dialect being the most popular (39.8%) followed by Egyptian (25.2%). The Egyptian variety is slightly less popular than I would have

hypothesised based on perceptions in the Arabic-speaking world and previous studies from the US (see section 2.3.3). Egyptian is the most widely taught variety on courses, with 26% of students learning it and 21.1% Levantine. In Belnap's study (1987: 40), Levantine was the most popular with 29%, closely followed by Egyptian with 28.5%. In this study, Levantine was selected by 18 more participants (14.6%) than Egyptian was. This could be attributed to the Levantine dialect, or more specifically the Damascene, being viewed by native speakers as being closer to MSA than others, the increasing role of the Levantine dialect in film and music and the current political climate in the Levant (see section 2.1). Soliman (2014), revealed a new interest in Gulf varieties, which was not mirrored in this study, as only 13.8% selected that RV.¹⁷⁷ 8.1% of respondents selected 'other'; this is made up of 5.7% who were unsure, one respondent wrote Egyptian *and* Levantine, one Jordanian or Moroccan. Those two respondents wanted to select more than one variety, which was the case for many respondents in Soliman's study (2014; see section 2.3), suggesting a student desire to learn multiple varieties. Another wrote, "it depends on the year abroad," supporting the argument made by tutors that RVs are only needed in preparation for travel (see section 6.2.1).

¹⁷⁷ In Soliman's study (2014: 131) 89% students selected the Gulf variety and 55% of all students indicated it was their first priority over the other RVs (see section 2.3).

Figure 9: Responses to question 19, "What is your preferred regional Arabic dialect?"



Eastern dialects (such as Saudi and Levantine) have historically been viewed more favourably by native Arabic speakers and 'closer to MSA,' in contrast to the lesser-known North African varieties (see section 2.1.2.3). As suggested by Trentman (2011), students' views on RVs could have been influenced by ideas from native-Arabic speakers which are not supported by research. Six students claimed that the Levantine or Egyptian variety was more similar to MSA than other varieties:

- Before I move on to the Egyptian one which is more known, popular and closer to /fʊʂħɑ:/ [SA] or closer than for example, /de.ɪdʒɑ/ [Moroccan] is very different you know (transcript 1, Beatrice, L6, the Holdaway);
- Levantine - I just think it sounds nice. It sounds nicer and also it's quite similar, it's not similar but it's more similar to /fʊʂħɑ:/ [SA] than Egyptian is (transcript 6, Elizabeth, L5, the Stratton).

Wilmsen (2014) suggests that the RVs share origins with each other, as opposed to a variety being closer to MSA. As students are studying towards degree-level Arabic, this theoretical understanding of the language could be more prominent within their comments. Two students had gained this understanding through their own interest in the language:

- /deɪdʒɑ/ [Moroccan] has a stigma of like not being Arabic compared to all the other dialects [...] I don't think that /deɪdʒɑ/ is actually empirically further from /fʊʃħɑ:/ [SA] than say Egyptian or some of the other dialects [...] I think there's probably sort of the Arab supremacy problem as well like the like hierarchies of who is the most Arab and who is the least Arab [...] so I think like the prejudice against Moroccan Arabic, sometimes I think it's a bit racist, like it's not necessarily coming from empirical research (transcript 7, Amelia, L6, the Furley);
- “ لا، لأقول ان الشامية اقرب الى الفصحى هي اكثر مفهوم يعني بالنسبة لنا لان درسنا الشامية من قبل وانا افهم يعني انت افهم الشامية والشعب اللي كان في التونس و الشعب اللي كان في مصر يفهمون الشامية ولكن الناس اللي كانوا في الشام لا يفهمون المغربي او التونسي او المصري [...] لأنني كنت في المغرب وكان عندي الفصل بين اللهجة و الفصحى يعني "أوضح في راسي ولكن هم لا اعرف
/la: la: aqu:l inna: af. ja:mi:ja aqɛb ɪla: ɪlfʊʃħa: hi:ja akθeɪ maf.hu:m jaɟni: bɪn.nɪsba lɪna: li:an.na: deresna: af.ja:mi:ja men qabl wa ana: afhem jaɟni ɪnta afhem af. ja:mi:ja wa af.jaɟb ɪl.li: ka:na fɪl mɪʃɟ jefhemu:na af.ja:mi:ja wala:kɪn an.na:s ɪl.li: ka:nu: fɪf ja:m la: yefhemu:n al maɟɪbi: aɔ at.tu:nɪsi: aɔ al mɪʃɟi: [...] li:anani: kɔntu fɪl maɟɪb wa ka:n ɪɟndi: ɪlfaʃl beɪna al.lehdʒa wal fʊʃħa: jaɟni: aɔdɑħ fi ɟasi: wala:kɪn hɔm la: aɟɪf/
(No, I'm not saying that Levantine is closer to SA, it's more widely understood for us because we studied Levantine previously and I understand Levantine. The people who went to Tunisia, and Egypt also understand Levantine, but those who travelled to the Levant don't understand Moroccan, Tunisian or Egyptian [...] because I was in Morocco, I had a clearer divide between the dialect and SA, that divide is clearer in my mind).
(Transcript 2, Phillip, L6, the Shenton).

Their experiences in learning a less favoured variety of Arabic meant these students more clearly understood Arabic language variation. Amelia touched upon many issues which have led to North African varieties, particularly the Moroccan, being viewed less favourably by native Arabic speakers (transcript 7).¹⁷⁸ For example, the speed at which Moroccans speak, the aspects of the variety which hide the SA, and the hierarchy of the 'Arabness' of varieties which has been suggested through the perceptions of varieties in the Arab world itself.¹⁷⁹ This was prevalent in a tutor interview. Sarah, the Stratton, stated, "I personally encourage them to go more to Jordan because it is the closest to the Modern Standard Arabic" (transcript VIII). This suggests tutors could be influenced by these perceptions from the Arab world as opposed to a having linguistic understanding of the language grounded in research. It means that the former is passed down to students, as a confirmation bias.

¹⁷⁸ See section 2.1.4.3.; Cote, 2009.

¹⁷⁹ This hierarchy of Arabness has been explored in the literature (Chakrani, 2015; S'hiri, 2013b; Hachimi, 2013; see section 2.1.4.3).

There is evidence that more distant varieties are now becoming better known, so this may not pose a long-term challenge (see section 2.1.2.3).

The most frequently cited reasons for choosing a country for the year abroad in the student interviews were security concerns and the variety spoken there. Four students stated that either Levantine is 'closer' to MSA and coincidentally a more useful variety to speak, or that the variety spoken in Morocco is, "so different to Arabic" (transcript 10, Victoria, L5, the Furley; see section 6.5). Elizabeth, L5, the Stratton, stated that she was going to go to Jordan because of the RV, but, because she had heard negative reviews on the language institute, she changed her mind and opted for Morocco. These perceptions of which variety is 'closer' to MSA echo those in the Arabic-speaking world (see sections 2.1.2.3; 6.5.1.) and suggest that many students graduate from university without a linguistic understanding of the language. As previously mentioned, there is, to date, no known research supporting any variety being 'closer' to MSA. Due to security concerns, Morocco has become a popular destination for the year abroad. Turner (2018) argues in favour of teaching the Moroccan variety to first-year students in integrated classrooms.

6.5.2. RVs only needed when travelling abroad

Four tutors believe that RVs are only needed when travelling abroad (see section 6.2). Previous studies suggest that learning an RV before travelling abroad improves a student's experience when there (see section 2.3.3). Most English HEIs do not prepare students for their year abroad by introducing them to RVs. HEIs state that they do not have the resources to teach them all and those that do teach them, are often limited to one variety, which is the tutor's dialect. This is not necessarily an issue, as for language acquisition, any variety is beneficial (see section 2.3.3). Similar to previous studies (see section 5.1.1), two students interviewed for this study stated they benefited from being able to speak an RV which was not their host country's variety:

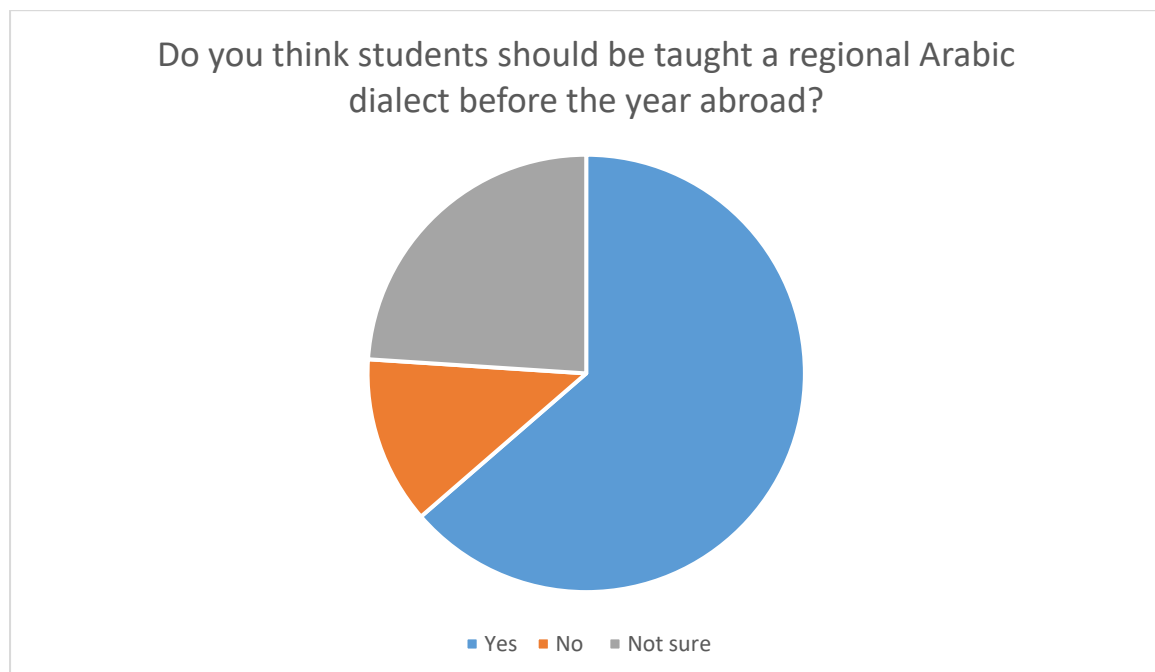
- “ في البداية استخدمت اللهجة الشامية لكي أتواصل مع الناس، يعني قبلما تعلمت الدرجة المغربية يعني اللهجة الشامية ”
 مفهوم مفهوم لحد كبير
 /fɪl bɪdɑːjɑ ɪstaxdemtʊ al.lehdʒɑ aʃ.jɑːmiːjɑ liːkeɪ atawɑːʃel maʕ an.nɑːs jɑʕniː qablmaː
 taʕal.lemtʊ ad.de.ɛdʒɑ almayɪbiːjɑ jɑʕniː al.lehdʒɑ aʃ.jɑːmiːjɑ mafhuːm mafhuːm liːħad
 kabiːj/

(in the beginning I used the Levantine dialect to communicate with people, before I learnt the Moroccan variety. The Levantine variety is very well understood).
 (Transcript 2, Phillip, L6, the Shenton);
- " في الأردن كان من الأسهل ان أتكلم مع الناس لان أظن ان اللهجة المصرية تشبه اللهجة الاردنية اكثر من المغربية"
 /fɪl ɔrdɑn kɑn mən əlɑʃel ən atakel.lem maʕ an.nɑːs liːɑn.nɑ ɑvɔn.no ən.nɑ al.lehdʒɑ
 əlmɪʕiːjɑ toʃbɪh əl.lehdʒɑ əlɔrdeniːjɑ əkθeɪ mən əlmayɪbiːjɑ/

(In Jordan, it was easier to speak with people [in the Egyptian variety] than in Morocco, because I think the Egyptian accent is closer to the Jordanian). (Transcript 4, Charles, L6, the Harris).

Similar to how native Arabic speakers remain in their own RV as a base for intra-Arabic communication (Soliman, 2012; 2014; see section 2.3.3), L2 speakers are also opting for the RV as opposed to MSA. This suggests that speaking in an RV is a valuable skill for the L2 learner. Charles’ experience supports communicating in MSA being just as useful, as he had the option to switch varieties when he deemed it more suitable, in Morocco.

Figure 10: Answers to question 19, “Do you think students should be taught a regional Arabic dialect before the year abroad?”



In the student questionnaire, when asked if respondents would like to be taught RVs before going on their year abroad the majority selected ‘yes’ (62.6%) and only 12.2% ‘no’ (see figure 10).¹⁸⁰ Although this is substantially less than figures quoted in Al-Batal & Glakas (2018: 265), where 94% of students disagreed (36%) or strongly disagreed (58%) with the statement, “the study of Arabic dialects should be postponed until students are studying Arabic abroad in an Arabic-speaking country,” it does indicate support from a majority of students to be taught an RV from the early stages of their studies.¹⁸¹ Al-Batal & Glakas’ study was carried out at the University of Texas, where students are taught through the IA, making it a logical approach to them. More research needs to be carried out on the different approaches to reach a balanced conclusion.¹⁸² However, disagreement to learning an RV before the year abroad in this study, came from students at all HEIs, from different year groups and approaches. It is interesting to note the stances of the students (Phillip and Charles) abovementioned.¹⁸³ Phillip stated in the questionnaire that he did not agree that students needed to learn an RV prior to travelling abroad, but it became clear in the interview that he was undecided.

When asked why he thought students did not need to learn the RV first, he responded:

ندرس اللهجة الشامية يعني من ناحية هذا كان [the Shenton] انا قلت هذا؟ يعني لا اعرف، يعني صعب. يعني في اصعب لي كان علي ان ابدأ من البداية مرة ثانية عندما ذهبت الى المغرب بس بنفس الوقت يعني بفضل هذه التجربة يعني تعرفت على اللهجة الشامية فلا اعرف يعني لا اعرف

/ana qalto heða: jaʕni: la aʕɾf jaʕni: ʂaʕb jaʕni: fi: [the Shenton] nedɾus al.lehdʒa aʕ.ʒa:mi:ja jaʕni: men na:hi:ja heða: kan aʂaʕb li: ka:n aʕleɪ an abdaʔ men albɪda:ja maɾ.ɾa θa:ni:ja ɪʕndama: ðahabto ɪla: almayɾib bes bi:nɪfs alwaqt jaʕni: bifaqɪ heðɪhi at.tedʒɪba jaʕni: taʕaɾ.ɾafto aʕla al.lehdʒa aʕ.ʒa:mi:a fala: aʕɾf jaʕni: la: aʕɾf/

(I said that? Maybe, I don’t know, it’s difficult. At [the Shenton], we study the Levantine dialect so from that aspect it was harder for me because I had to start from the beginning again when I went to Morocco. But, at the same time, thanks to this experience, I got to know the Levantine variety so I don’t know).

(Transcript 2)

¹⁸⁰ This does not account for their awareness of the difficulty involved.

¹⁸¹ This could act as a counterargument against shielding students from RVs in fear of confusion (see sections 2.3.1.3; 6.3).

¹⁸² In Hashem-Aramouni’s study (2011), which investigated the perspectives of students who were not learning Arabic through the IA, results indicated that although students wanted to learn RVs, they viewed gaining an initial grounding in MSA as being important (see section 2.3.3).

¹⁸³ There was no correlation between preferred variety and gender.

This suggests that there is more to learn when the student is taught a different RV to their host country but it pays off in the long run. Phillip said he feels at an advantage in classes at the Shenton where students speak the RVs acquired abroad as long as they adjust their speech for comprehension (transcript 2). He clarified that this is because he understands the other varieties with ease and has a clearer distinction in his mind between MSA and RVs due to having to modify his speech more than those who studied in the Levant. In contrast, Charles was in favour of learning RVs prior to travelling on the year abroad (transcript 4). This was despite him having two different experiences with using RVs in the Arabic-speaking world, whereby he opted to speak in Egyptian in Jordan and MSA in Morocco.

Five students interviewed stated they would have liked more RV instruction before going abroad:

- I think that in second year, not first year [we should learn the RV] because you have the foundations first year, before you start thinking about dialect, and for the majority of people [...] Second year first semester or second year, just for like an hour a week kind of thing, depending on what country you go to, you have like lessons, so when you get to the country you're not like oh (transcript 6, Elizabeth, L5, the Stratton);
- They do teach us a bit of /ʕami:ja/ [RV] and they taught us a tiny bit of the /ja:mi:/ [Levantine] dialect because we were going out to Jordan but like it wasn't very useful. There wasn't like any specific time dedicated to it which I think would have been very beneficial to us because obviously when you first rock up it's already nerve-wracking speaking to people but when you're only... you only know /foʕħa:/ [SA; ...] I think we could have definitely learnt a bit more before we went out there (transcript 9, Eugenie, L6, the Sealey).

Elizabeth suggested that just a limited amount of RV instruction, to introduce them to the key differences and important phrases that were completely different from SA, would have made it easier to pick up the RV. In contrast, Eugenie had been taught a little of the RV before going abroad, but felt it was not enough. This suggests there could be an issue with the approach.

Survey respondents agreed that, when travelling to the Middle East, they needed some background in the RV. For example, from the responses to the question who or what shaped your opinions on learning RVs:

- because we learnt so little before the year abroad, it made communication very difficult. I think it would be helpful to learn a dialect for speaking (and not so much Fusha [SA]) (participant 96, L6);
- Arab friends and the fact that most people do not speak MSA which could possibly make integration when doing a year abroad much more difficult (participant 49, L5).

Respondent 96 was learning Arabic at the Furley where students are taught both Levantine and Egyptian in the second year of their course, so further investigation is needed into why the respondent did not view this as being sufficient (see section 7.2.4). Respondent 49 believes that integration during the year abroad would be much more difficult without any background knowledge of the RV. This is supported elsewhere in the literature (see section 2.2.3): 96% respondents in Glakas & Al-Batal's (2018) study felt RV integration would help improve their social connections with Arabs; S'hiri (2013a) found that 81% of Arabic students stated they need to learn more than one dialect to connect with speakers of Arabic, and; Palmer (2008) highlighted that, because of their use of the RV during their time abroad, students said they were more trusted by the people and could more easily integrate into the culture.¹⁸⁴ It is therefore understandable that respondent 49 has concerns regarding her year abroad.

Three students interviewed were unsure on whether RVs should be taught before going abroad:

- That's a tricky question. I think I would have liked to know a little bit before I had gone, just a couple of hours or just some basics, maybe not the grammar but just some basic phrases because it was really difficult to communicate, yes it was difficult to be understood when we first arrived. But then I do think that learning /de.ɪdʒɑ/ [Moroccan] while we were there was probably the best thing because we were learning in such an intense environment and actually from Moroccans. Whereas I don't think there were any Moroccan lecturers at [the

¹⁸⁴ See section 6.6. for students' experiences on whether knowledge of an RV helped during their year abroad.

Forder] so I think that would be difficult to learn from someone who was not a native speaker (transcript 12, Henrietta, L5, the Forder);

- I don't know. I think I would have found the classes less interesting if it was just like, 'Today we are going to learn how to say all the animals and sheep.' I think when you get to university, they expect a level of, they are going to push you very hard and other stuff you must have the capacity to just learn that on your own. So, I think before going on the year abroad it is going to require a lot of prep and I am happy with that (transcript 8, Sophia, L5, the Harris).

Some of the reasons for being unsure expressed by students support comments made previously by Belnap (1987; see section 2.3.2). Listening to students' experiences with the language is beneficial to course developers. However, it is important for any curriculum change to be grounded primarily in research. For example, Henrietta stated it would be difficult to acquire the RV from a non-native speaker (transcript 12), but there are many benefits of being taught by them (see Llurda, 2005). An authentic approach to teaching the language would not necessarily entail the approach entailed by Sophia of merely introducing simple vocabulary.¹⁸⁵ As stated previously, RVs are varieties in their own right with their own structures and complex constructions. Similar to some tutors, students could be cautious of an approach to TAFL which is different to the way they have been taught. Sophia's comment supports some of the arguments surrounding a university education being different to that of a language centre.

Beatrice, L6, the only student interviewed who had not had the opportunity to learn an RV, believes that learning more than one variety is too confusing. She was against learning an RV before travelling abroad. Not having any experience learning RVs could have influenced her opinion on learning them.¹⁸⁶ Contrary to US students, participants in this study who would like to learn the RV

¹⁸⁵ As argued previously by Isleem (2018), RVs can have a place on advanced levels of courses.

¹⁸⁶ This student was very confident with using MSA, to the extent that she opted to write her dissertation in it (most Arabic dissertations are written in English).

before going abroad, do not think they should be integrated from the beginning.¹⁸⁷ It could be that the cohort of students in the US differs to that in England, or, as stated previously, because US students learnt Arabic through the IA making it a more logical approach to them (see section 2.3.2.3). Perhaps if students in England were more familiar with the IA, they would be more open to the approach.

This section has revealed substantial support from students to be taught an RV prior to travelling abroad, corresponding with results from other studies (see section 2.3.2.3). Is it the responsibility of the university to be teaching these skills? Students are expecting HEIs to prepare them for the year abroad but the majority of them do not. Are these expectations realistic?

6.6. Students' experiences using RVs

Similar to results from Mamari (2011) and S'hiri (2013a), students interviewed in this study expressed that it was on the year abroad that they realised the redundancy of MSA for day-to-day communication. However, the experiences they encountered speaking in the Arab world varied from place to place and from student to student. Learners who travelled to more than one country, noticed differences between how the varieties were received in each location:

- My Arabic in Morocco, or because of my /ʕami:ja/ [RV] I had learnt was Levantine I mean it was pretty much redundant there. Because I mean if someone knew MSA they would speak to me in MSA because they didn't really get the dialect [...] in Egypt maybe a little more MSA [than in Oman and Palestine] or sometimes for my own understanding, I realised that they adjusted how they spoke so it was more MSA. But yes in general I used the [Levantine] /ʕami:ja/ [RV] [...] I remember in first year a lot of people telling us people will laugh at you or mock you obviously in a light-hearted way for using MSA. But I never once in Jordan or anywhere else I travelled, that never once happened to me [only in Egypt]. (Transcript 11, George, L5, the Elkington);
- I just remember like hating speaking to people 'cause I just didn't know what anyone was saying. And, again, you get the odd taxi driver who was just like, speaks /fʊʃħa:/ [SA]

¹⁸⁷ This is contrary to students quoted from Al-Batal & Glakas' (2018) study, who had been taught through the IA: 90% of students at the University of Texas stated that they should learn an RV during the first year of study and 10% during the second year, with none believing they should be delayed until after the second year.

perfectly and they love getting to practice it and that's quite fun; [on holiday in Egypt] I have to admit I didn't speak an awful lot because everyone who approached us spoke English. I was aware that their dialect is very hard to understand so I didn't want to get into a conversation 'cause I don't know any Egyptian dialect at all (transcript 9, Eugenie, L6, the Sealey).

Experiences of how students' Arabic was received in different countries highlights how useful it is to have the choice to draw on more than one variety and select what they view as being the most appropriate language code.¹⁸⁸ It suggests that there is not a single solution for communication in the Arabic-speaking world but an importance of being equipped with appropriate strategies for day-to-day situations. Mia emphasised that the situation differs in each country, making it impossible to prepare students for all of them (transcript V).¹⁸⁹ Should the university be responsible for equipping learners with these skills?

When I asked students which varieties they used during their time abroad, only Beatrice, L6, the Holdaway, drew solely on MSA:

I used a little bit of /fʊʂħa:/ [SA], yeah actually mostly /fʊʂħa:/ [SA]. I tried not to get any /de.ɪdʒɑ/ [Moroccan] 'cause I was afraid I might mix it with /fʊʂħa:/ [SA]. We saw that the others did and it was very difficult to get rid of that and keep the /fʊʂħa:/ [SA] pure [...] no I wasn't interested in dialect. I wanted to know more but I was afraid my /fʊʂħa:/ [SA] at that level. (Transcript 1)

Beatrice clarified that she did not want to pick up any of the RV in Morocco as she did not want to mix it with MSA (transcript 1). Two others stated that they intended to use MSA only for the purposes of their degree, but changed their minds upon arrival, when they experienced the language situation first-hand:

¹⁸⁸ See section 2.1.3.4. for code-switching.

¹⁸⁹ Whilst it could be argued that this is not unique to Arabic, the diglossic nature of the language in addition to how it is the official language of 23 nation states does make it a particular challenge for Arabic (Owens, 2013: 6).

- In the beginning when I arrived I was like I'm only going to speak /fʊʃħɑ:/ [SA] but as I went along I thought I'm going to have to learn /deɪɪdʒɑ/ [Moroccan]. So, I kind of like just picked it up and started just speaking that, because that was the easiest thing to do. I could speak /fʊʃħɑ:/ [SA] to them but they would just laugh, and they don't take you seriously in /fʊʃħɑ:/ [SA; ...] they understood me, but they didn't reply to me in /fʊʃħɑ:/ [SA], they replied to me in /deɪɪdʒɑ/ [Moroccan]. So, I just thought it was easier for me to communicate in terms of ease. At some points, for example we had a really sticky situation, where, in Morocco you can only go for 90 days without a visa. My friend stayed for 92. And when we were in the airport on the way back home to [the Stratton] they took us aside and they were like, 'no no no no no she can't leave' and no one spoke English and we don't know French so I was talking to them in /fʊʃħɑ:/ [SA] because I can say day to day stuff in /deɪɪdʒɑ/ [Moroccan] but not like things like that. So, I just used what /fʊʃħɑ:/ [SA] I knew (transcript 6, Elizabeth, L5, the Stratton);
- At first like when we got there I tried to speak MSA because that's all I knew. But it was quite difficult because, and I'm sure you experienced this when you were there, but although the Moroccans do, all the ones you speak to. The majority do understand MSA obviously because they hear it and read it in the news or whatever, but they don't actually respond in that MSA. They will speak back to you in /deɪɪdʒɑ/ [Moroccan]. So, it was a bit difficult at first [...] a majority of the time like day-to-day life I tried to speak /deɪɪdʒɑ/ [Moroccan] with the locals and any Moroccans that I came across. But when you actually got to having a conversation with anyone it was a bit more difficult so it would go back to me speaking MSA and them responding in /deɪɪdʒɑ/ [Moroccan] whilst trying to speak in MSA as well (transcript 12, Henrietta, L5, the Forder).

These students resorted to a mixture of the two, which they seemed a bit ashamed of, despite Arabic speakers communicating that way themselves.¹⁹⁰ This could have been influenced by previous comments by tutors and was the reason Beatrice cited for not wanting to learn the RV: she was afraid of mixing (transcript 1). Three other students interviewed stated that they used a mixture of the RV and MSA.

Two students highlighted the benefits of being able to draw on a strong foundation in MSA:

- At university, I had several Saudi language partners and I found having the good base of MSA that I do, when I am speaking to people with different dialects it is actually handy. And kind of, what I said earlier, that some words you know in Jordan were strictly MSA words but like in the Saudi dialect or the Iraqi dialect as I have some Iraqi friends those words were /ʕami:ja/ [RV] to them and vice versa. So, in my opinion definitely having that good base of MSA is definitely a kind of substitute of not having years and years of growing up in a

¹⁹⁰ These students also highlighted the issue that locals often respond in the RV, which is addressed towards the end of this section.

country and learning a whole variety of words for things (transcript 15, James, L6, the Sealey);

- The knowledge of the grammar definitely did help just to get the idea of what people were saying (transcript 11, George, L5, the Elkington).

This suggests that students see both varieties as being useful in communication. Alexandra, L5, the Furley, expressed difficulties in speaking the RV when she arrived:

It [communicating with locals] was really tricky especially when you arrive [...] we were trying to speak in /fa:mi:/ [Levantine], people were just not understanding us, obviously probably we didn't have very good accents either. (Transcript 14)

Alexandra's comment touches upon the difficulties of pronouncing Arabic. This could be due to the number of additional phonemes and consonant clusters which do not exist in the English language (see section 7.2.6).

Four of the abovementioned respondents included comments on how people laughed at their Arabic. Three additional students mentioned this in the interviews:

- I think they thought it was a bit funny [speaking Arabic when volunteering]. I mean they appreciated it and yes, I think so many of them were so desperate to learn English because they were trying to get to the UK and they were like, 'Why would you want to learn Arabic?' (Transcript 8, Sophia, L5, the Harris);
- Certainly, to begin with people would laugh at us and be just like why are you speaking in /fʊʂħa:/ [SA] you sound weird or even just, no I don't understand you. I don't know – they clearly could but they were just pretending that they couldn't. I think some of the older men would just be like really proud and like, oh no it's okay I'll interpret for you and it would be like okay good. Over time people were just mainly very excited that we could speak at all really. [...] I think, a lot of the younger people as well because we had, you know I lived in a host family and we were coupled with some quite young university students, maybe they were like 17, they really weren't, they wouldn't want to engage on the level of /fʊʂħa:/ [SA], they just genuinely weren't able to. So, they would want to speak in dialect. I mean probably if they were speaking to a native speaker and then they were doing /fʊʂħa:/ [SA] they would probably have coped better but certainly for us they really wanted dialect only, I think (transcript 14, Alexandra, L5, the Furley).

Similar to the generational issue raised by Alexandra, two additional students discussed how the varieties spoken were received differently by each person:

- Mixed bag, like I said you get one really nice taxi driver and then you get people who just laugh at you. It's really not what you need 'cause they're probably not actually laughing at how crap you are they're laughing at the fact that you're speaking /fʊʃħɑ:/ [SA] but you don't know the difference (transcript 9, Eugenie, L6, the Sealey);
- At first it depended on the person who you were speaking to but I think the majority of time they were shocked and they would often translate what I said into /de.ɪdʒɑ/ [Moroccan; ...] But sometimes people did respond with really good grammar and really speaking well in MSA but the majority of the time I would say that yes, they tried to understand the best they could and then spoke back in /de.ɪdʒɑ/ [Moroccan] (transcript 12, Henrietta, L5, the Forder).

Native Arabic speakers laughing when a L2 learner speaks in MSA is widely cited in the literature (Younes, 2015; see section 2.3.) and discussed amongst non-native speakers themselves. Other learners are often judged when conversing in an L2 with L1 speakers, and their non-native accents have been cited as a setback, for example, academically, for L2 English speakers (Halic, Greenberg & Paulus, 2009; Ridley, 2004; Cadman, 2000). The experiences of L2 Arabic learners suggest that they are laughed at for speaking MSA and, when speaking in the RV, this does not happen (Younes, 2015). Actually being laughed at, could further knock their confidence in the L2 and feed their fear of being judged.¹⁹¹ The abovementioned experiences support statements made by Jaradat & Al-Khawaldeh (2015) that, once the initial shock of hearing an L2 Arabic speaker has passed, their efforts are often admired (see section 2.3.1.1). Beatrice, L6, the Holdaway, did not feel completely disadvantaged for speaking solely in MSA:

they were astonished, they were asking if I was from Egypt or from Libya or from Lebanon [...; I did not really feel] disadvantaged, I knew it was because people, there are not many very well-educated people there and they, there is a high level of illiteracy and I knew this is a reason they don't know /fʊʃħɑ:/ [SA]. I felt sometimes disadvantaged because sometimes they didn't know at all and they were speaking /de.ɪdʒɑ/ [Moroccan] for example just going shopping in popular places just like that people don't really know. So, this way I can say that I'm disadvantaged but again if you go to sort out some official things from establishments, say the police you will find of course people that know /fʊʃħɑ:/ [SA] in a hospital. I don't think you're completely disadvantaged, if that's your question. (Transcript 1)

¹⁹¹ Halic, Greenberg & Paulus (2009: 86) found that L2 English speakers had more confidence speaking English with other L2 learners as they feared the L1 speakers would judge them.

Although Beatrice did not herself feel disadvantaged, other students may find it problematic not to be able to use the language when shopping. Her comment also highlights many misconceptions of the Arabic language and a misunderstanding of the language situation.

Three students elaborated on comprehension difficulties during their year abroad:

- I did struggle to understand certain things, like the more complex things so they would often try and say them for me in MSA or more like standard Arabic than in /de.ɪdʒɑ/ [Moroccan]. But sometimes as well a lot of people, if you looked a bit confused and didn't understand they would say things in French. So, I think that is a Moroccan thing as well because of North Africa (transcript 12, Henrietta, L5, the Forder);
- They understood what I said. That's always the problem, they understand what you're saying and then 'ba ba ba ba' back at me and you go, 'What? No, I'm sorry I didn't get that.' That's the problem just to make yourself understood. To understand is something completely different (transcript 11, George, L5, the Elkington).

This is an important issue highlighted previously, that, even when native speakers understood their MSA, they would often respond in the RV. It suggests that exposing students to listening purely to MSA would not help them to understand Arabic used in practice.

6.6.1. Does knowledge of RVs help?

Research suggests that knowledge of one RV helps learners to acquire another (Trentman, 2010; see section 2.3.3). I asked students with knowledge of other RVs if they felt it aided communication. As previously mentioned, Charles, L6, the Harris, emphasised that it differed from location to location:

الى حد ما في المغرب عندما أنا تكلمت اللهجة المصرية قال كل الناس لي هذا مصري هذا مصري هذا مصري فأنا لا أظن انه يوجد احترام كثير نحو اللهجة المصرية في المغرب مثلا ولكن في الأردن كان من الأسهل ان أتكلم مع الناس لكن أظن بسبب ال [...;بالاردن] ، صح اسهل [...] لان أظن ان اللهجة المصرية تشبه اللهجة الاردنية اكثر من المغربية يعني اللهجة الاردنية تشبه الى حد كبير اللهجة المصرية وبسبب ذلك انا تعلمت بعض الكلمات في اللهجة الاردنية و في نهاية رحلتي في الأردن كان، كنت أستطيع ان ادخل في حوار صغير مع شخص او مع سائق تاكسي لكن في المغرب هذا ما كان من الممكن.

/ɪla ɦad.dɪn ma: fɪl maɣɪb ɪɦndama: ana: tekɛl.lemtɔ al.leɦdʒa almɪʃi:j.ja qa:l kɔl an.na:s li: heða mɪʃi:i: heða mɪʃi:i: heða mɪʃi:i: fa an.na: la: avon.nɔ an.naho ju:dʒed ɪɦtɔa:m keθi:ɔ

naħwɪl lehdʒa almiʃi:j.ja fɪl maɣɪb miθl.len wala:kɪn fɪl ɔɖdan kana men ɪlɪʃel an atakel.lem maɖ an.na:s li:.an.na avon.nɔ an.na al.lehdʒa almiʃi:j.ja tɛfɪbɪh al.lehdʒa al ɔɖdani:.ja akθeɪ men ɪl maɣɪbi:.ja [...] ʃaħ aʃel [bɪl ɔɖdan...] wala:kɪn avon.nɔ bɪseb.beb al jaɖni: al.lehdʒa aloɖdani:.ja tofɪbɪh ɪla ħad kebi:ɟ al.lehdʒa almiʃi:j.ja wa bɪseb.beb ða:ɪk an.na: taɖalemtɔ baɖ alkelɪma:t fɪl lehdʒa aloɖdani:.ja wa fi: nɪha:jat ɟɪħleti: fɪl ɔɖdan ka:n kontɔ asteti:ɖ an adxol fi: ħɪwa:ɟ ʃaɣi:ɟ maɖ ʃaxɟ o maɖ sa:ʔɪq taksi: la:kɪn fɪl maɣɪb heða: ma: kan men almɔmkɪn/

(to some extent, when I spoke Egyptian in Morocco they said this is Egyptian, this is Egyptian, this is Egyptian, so I don't think there is a lot of respect for the Egyptian dialect in Morocco. But in Jordan it was easier to speak with people than in Morocco because I think the Egyptian accent is closer to the Jordanian than the Moroccan. [...] [In Jordan] yes it was easier [...] but I think that's because the Jordanian accent is similar to the Egyptian. I could get into conversations with people, like taxi drivers but in Morocco that wasn't possible. (Transcript 4)

For Charles, MSA was the most useful variety in Morocco but the RV was more useful in Jordan.

Amelia, L6, the Furley, clarified that she felt, in Morocco at least, before she could speak their RV, it was more effective to draw upon MSA:

I think also like I knew that um, I mean Moroccans do understand, they definitely understand Egyptian and they understand bits of /ʃa:mi:/ [Levantine], but it's quite easy to like, for people to misunderstand you, just because of how some things mean different things. Like the same word would mean different things in different places [...] I didn't know much Egyptian at all and I knew Moroccans knew more Egyptian than they knew /ʃa:mi:/ [Levantine], bits of particles and stuff um so I sort of used /fɔʃħa:/ [SA] 'cause then I knew that they knew I was speaking /fɔʃħa:/ [SA] and like they would know to put my words in the category of /fɔʃħa:/ [SA]. Whereas there were times when I said, every now and then in the early days, I would slip into some parts of /ʃa:mi:/ [Levantine] and a couple of times I had things where people really misunderstood me. So, I felt like it was safer just to use the /fɔʃħa:/ [SA] words, to stick to a very /fɔʃħa:/ [SA] way of speaking, instead of using /ʃa:mi:/ [Levantine] because I felt it was easier for them to misunderstand me. (Transcript 7)

Amelia felt that MSA was an easier variety to use as she wanted people to understand what she was saying. Phillip, the Shenton, however, stated that he used the Levantine variety in Morocco:

“مفهوم مفهوم لحد كبير في البداية استخدمت اللهجة الشامية لكي أتواصل مع الناس، يعني قبلما تعلمت الدرجة المغربية يعني اللهجة الشامية

/fɪl bɪda:ja ɪstaxdemtɔ al.lehdʒa aʃ.ʃa:mi:ja li:keɪ atawa:ʃel maɖ an.na:s jaɖni: qablma: taɖal.lemtɔ ad.de.ɛedʒa almaɣɪbi:ja jaɖni: al.lehdʒa aʃ.ʃa:mi:ja mafhu:m mafhu:m li:ħad kabi:ɟ/

(in the beginning I used the Levantine dialect to communicate with people, before I learnt the Moroccan variety. The Levantine variety is very well understood).
(Transcript 2, Phillip, L6, the Shenton)

This shows that experiences differ from student to student. Phillip had received two-years of instruction in the Levantine variety before travelling abroad whereas Amelia only had a year and stated that the dialect instruction was not very effective. This suggests that, due to the difficult pronunciation of Arabic and its varieties, students need to be able to speak a variety well in order to be understood. It indicates that some instruction in RVs could help for comprehension but, to speak them, learners need to master an RV.¹⁹²

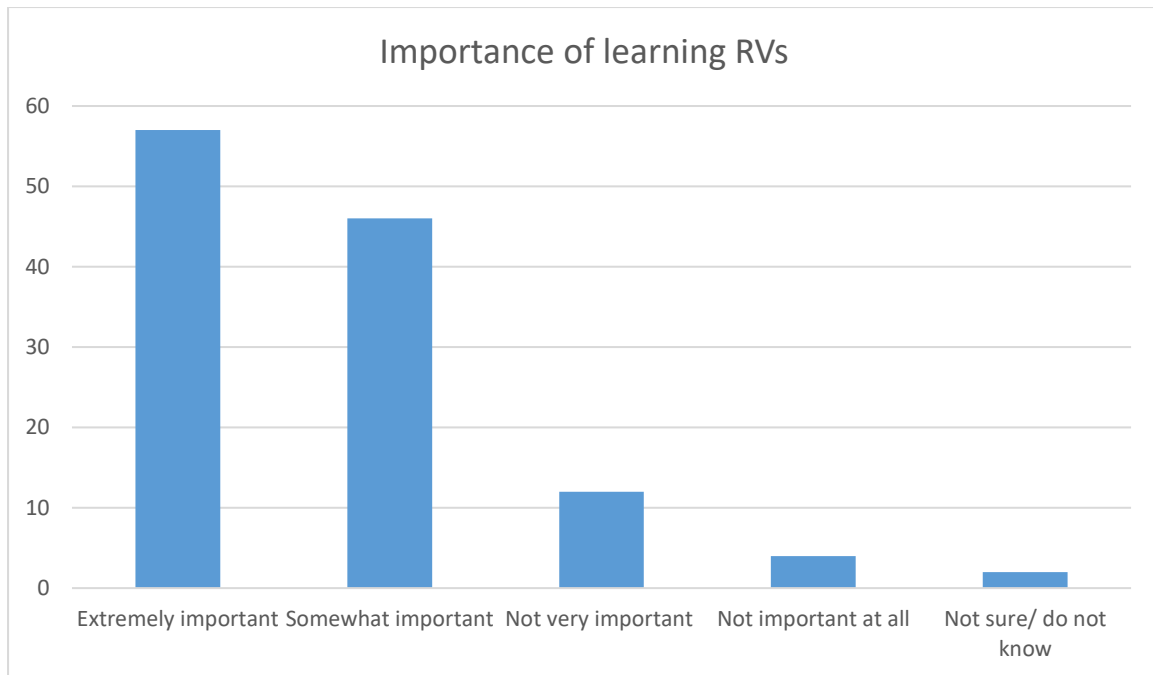
6.6.2. Importance of learning RVs

In the survey, students were asked how important it is to learn an RV. 83.7% viewed it as being important; 46.3% as extremely important and 37.4% somewhat important (see figure 11). This highlights how highly students value acquiring RVs. Although his study was carried out in the US, the popularity of learning RVs has increased since Belnap's study (1987: 39), when nearly 50% of students stated that it was important or very important to learn an RV. It is comparable to a more recent study which found 85% of students wanted RVs incorporated into the curriculum (Isleem, 2018: 255).¹⁹³ This suggests RVs are becoming a more popular area of study to learn, which could be due to the easy access to authentic language through the internet.

¹⁹² Further research is needed into what variation is versus errors which can be integrated into pedagogy and teacher education.

¹⁹³ Isleem (2018) developed two attitude questionnaires, one for tutors and the other for students which was sent to 22 HEIs in the US and Europe. 141 students participated, 132 of which were studying in the US.

Figure 11: Responses to question 18, "How important is it to you to learn a regional Arabic dialect?"



Of those who saw RVs as an unimportant part of their university education, 3.3% had travelled to the Arabic-speaking world and stated in their surveys that they can speak RVs, so it could be that it is something they do not need to be explicitly taught. The other 9.8% had not travelled to the Arabic-speaking world and were at institutions taking the MSA approach.¹⁹⁴ This suggests that they do not understand the reality of the language situation until travelling there. S’hiri (2013a: 582) found that, “the majority of participants only recognized the importance of dialects once they were engaged in the experience abroad, at that point realizing that dialect was the ‘practical’ and ‘natural’ means of communication.” Each of my respondents who did not view learning RVs as important agreed with one or both of the statements that they opted for Arabic language study to travel to the Arab world or to speak with its speakers, which could mean they are unaware of diglossia. Alternatively, they could have been fed the common misconception in the Arab world that RVs are ‘unstructured’ and consequently easy to acquire without explicit instruction. This is not to say that all students would

¹⁹⁴ This is apart from respondent 7 at the Shenton.

need to learn RVs to fulfil their reasons for learning the language; some will already speak them, and others may just want to learn Arabic for religious purposes or translation (see section 5.1). They may not view it as being the responsibility of the university to teach RVs.

In the interviews, students elaborated on their thoughts on learning RVs:

- I was examined like that and we don't do dialect in London so I knew it's only for me anyway. When I'm done with Arabic, when I know that I have a nice high level anyway I want to know at least one dialect. I find it important, I just want to know a bit more (transcript 1, Beatrice, L6, the Holdaway);
- Yes, definitely. I think the very little limited experience I have had trying to speak to Arab speakers is that you know /fʊʃħɑ:/ [SA] is quite limiting. I think knowing a dialect is, to be able to work and function in that environment you need to know the dialect (transcript 8, Sophia, L5, the Harris).

Both the above participants highlighted the importance of learning RVs. Beatrice wanted to learn one after her degree. Sophia stated that solely learning SA is limiting, which has also been highlighted by students in US studies.¹⁹⁵ Anne, the Forder, was taught Moroccan during the first month but she felt it was a waste of time because she would not use it (transcript 5). Despite this student already speaking the Egyptian variety, some knowledge of the Moroccan would have helped her to understand the RV during her year abroad and expand her knowledge on language diversity.

6.7. Classical/ colloquial battle

Whether to include RVs on undergraduate degree courses and, if so, which ones, is directly affected by the 'classical/ colloquial battle' raging throughout the Middle East (see section 2.1.2.1). Five tutors interviewed linked the issue to the situation in the Arab world.¹⁹⁶ Charlotte, the Shenton,

¹⁹⁵ A similar comment was also mentioned previously, by Elizabeth, the Stratton (transcript 6), as a reason she decided to go against her initial plan of just speaking MSA, and to also acquire the RV, to better integrate with locals; As mentioned in section 6.6, research carried out on learners' experiences using RVs in the Arabic-speaking world suggests that they increase a students' ability to interact and integrate during their year abroad (Huntley, 2018; Glakas & Al-Batal's, 2018; S'hiri, 2013a; Palmer, 2008).

¹⁹⁶ The tutors were Mark, Louise, William, Charlotte and Margarete.

clearly stated this was a reason for English HEIs to use the MSA approach, “we’re seeing more and more native-Arabic speakers teaching the language and native-Arabic speakers do have a bias towards /fuʃħa:/ [SA], they see the /ʕami:ja/ [RV] as being slang” (transcript I). Four additional tutors, hinted towards the MSA approach adopted in L2 classrooms being a result of the perceptions of native speakers:

- William, the Furley, linked the issue being related to some people wanting Arabic to be limited to its’ religious functions, in stating, “هناك الناس يريدونها هكذا، يريدون اللغة العربية ان تكون ،للمسجد و المسجد فقط يمكن، /hona:ka an.na:s joi:du:naha: ha:keða joi:du:na al.layat ɪʕaʕabi:ja an.teku:n ɪlmesdʒɪd wa ɪlmesdʒɪd faqat/ (there are people who want it like that, they want the Arabic language to be for the mosque and for the mosque only). (Transcript IV);
- When identifying the approach taken at his HEI was different to others, Mark, the Elkington, stated, “you can’t see this in other universities because this is the native speakers [...] this is the media language and translation and literature,” implying that it is reflective of how native Arabic speakers, themselves, view the language (Transcript IX);
- A lot of debate and a lot of people are anti this approach as well [...] no, we shouldn't do that, it's لغة القرآن /layat ɪlqora:n/ (the language of the Quran), all my due respect to holy Quran you know like, this is nothing to do with the dialect [...] it's how people speak, come on, you people. I've attended a conference where people were really attacking [...] Mahmoud al Batal [...] guy that wrote *Al-Kitaab*, my God, they really attacked him in the conference, how come this is the approach, how come, because the new *Al-Kitaab* is in three dialects (transcript II, Margarete, the Shenton).

Louise, the Forder discussed how she has been scolded at conferences for teaching cross-dialectal strategies:

I get really disappointed when I go to conferences and meet teachers who have been teaching Arabic for ages and once they hear the word dialect, oh, not again this issue, I hate this issue the dialect. What is it exactly you hate, this is what you speak, man? (Transcript III)

Louise explained how the issue is rooted in the Arab society itself (transcript III; see section 2.1.2) and that Arabic tutors should be educated on the language situation so this knowledge can be passed onto students. She added that it is a sensitive issue as Arabic is the language of the Quran and native Arabic speakers do not want to be distanced from the language but, that this is a debate for the Arab world itself, not L2 Arabic language classrooms. Teaching L2 learners solely MSA will not

make the RVs ‘disappear,’ they are varieties of the language in their own right and the mother tongues of native Arabic speakers.¹⁹⁷

6.8. MSA as the ‘academic’ variety

In the Arab world, SA is taught through formal education and RVs are picked up from birth, as mother tongues (see section 2.1.1). Consequently, the idea that RVs should not be taught through formal education, especially university level, is prevalent in HEIs in England. In response to the question who or what shaped their opinions on RVs, respondent 6, L4, stated:

Each dialect is a spoken language and can be easily picked up, unlike Fus-ha [SA] which as a mainly written language requires labourous study to fully master. I can learn Gulf Arabic by living in Qatar but I could not learn Fus-ha [SA] anywhere except in a university. My opinions were shaped purely by my understanding of the regional diglossia and by the advice of my tutor.

Although you cannot master SA through conversing with people on the street and could pick up conversational skills in a RV this way, there are language systems behind RVs operating in a complex language situation (see section 2.1). When I asked a student about his opinion on the IA, he responded:

انا لا أعيد فكرة دراسة الفصحى واللهجات في نفس الوقت [...] في المستقبل اذا هؤلاء الطلاب سيستخدمون اللغة العربية في اي مجال رسمي لن يكن من الممكن انهم يتكلمون باللهجة [...] يعتمد على كيف نريد نستخدم اللغة العربية [...] اذا هذا يعني هم يريدون ان يأخذوا الطريق الأكاديمي [HEI] او [HEI] اي شخص درس اللغة العربية في مثلا

/ana: la: oʃaj.jed fɪkrat dɪɑ:sat alfuʃħɑ: wa al.lehdʒɑ:t fi: nɪfs alwaqt [...] fɪl muʃtaqbel iðɑ:
hau:laʔ aʦ.ʦal.lɑ:b sejestaxdemu:n al.layɑt alʃarabi:j.jɑ fi: aɪ medʒɑ:l ɪsmi: len jeku:n men
almuʃmkɪn bɪl lehdʒɑ [...] jaʃtemɪd ʃalɑ: keɪfa nʊɪ:d nestaxdɪm al.layɑt alʃarabi:j.jɑ [...] iðɑ:
aɪ ʃaxʃ deɪɑsa al.layɑt alʃarabi:j.jɑ fi: mɪθel.len [HEI] əθ [HEI] heðɑ: jʃani: hom ʒuɪ:du:n an
jeʔxoðu: aʦ.ʦɑɪ:q alaka:di:mi:/

(I’m against the approach of speaking one variety and writing the other. In the future if those students wish to use their language in an official capacity they would need to use SA as that is the official variety. It really depends on how we wish to use the language, but if someone is learning the language at a university such as [HEI] or [HEI] this points to them wanting to take an academic route).

¹⁹⁷ See section 2.1.1, as natives do not learn MSA until they are six years of age when they start school, their mother tongue is their RV (Versteegh, 2014: 242).

(Transcript 4, Charles, L5, the Harris)

This suggests that Charles does not completely understand the language situation, higher registers of the RV can be used in official capacities (see section 2.1). The comment also implies that Charles believes that SA is the ‘academic variety’, in stating that students wishing to speak in MSA are favouring an academic route. In other interviews, it was noted that, when learning Arabic at university, students are taught a more advanced level of the language as opposed to what would be expected on a beginners’ course:¹⁹⁸

In first year, you essentially learn how to say things like, ‘my dad works for the United Nations,’ or silly things like that. And day to day things like asking for things or asking for basic things they haven’t actually taught you in first year. And a few of us, I queried it actually in first year of what about when we get there? And their response was, ‘this is a university course and we are here to teach you high level Arabic and you will have to learn these other things once you are there.’ And that didn’t really satisfy me and I thought it was quite a backward way of teaching a language really. Like they are trying to teach you a really high-level language before they have even taught you how to have basic dialogue and how to look after yourself on a day-to-day level. For me, it is more logical to teach that way but that was their feeling. But they were more keen and eager to teach you like all and every aspect of grammar and make sure you understand it rather than how do I go into a shop and ask for some bread or some milk or something in their dialogue? That was missing. I had a conversation with the head of Islamic and Arabic studies and to be honest I was a bit of a thorn in their side I think and I basically said that as a class and as a year we wanted more opportunities to speak. And he expressly said, ‘well this is a university and it is an academic course and that is not a priority.’ (Transcript 15, James, L6, the Sealey)

The HEI itself indicated that MSA is the academic variety. Many tutors interviewed saw MSA as the variety being worthy of degree-level Arabic for this reason:

- I would not advise on introducing /ʕami:ja/ as part of the degree. [...] there should always be a distinction, a clear distinction between teaching Arabic for a degree in Arabic and teaching Arabic for a Language for All programme (transcript VIII, Sarah, the Stratton);
- For me, if they want to get a degree in Arabic, modern standard is the main (transcript VI, Camilla, the Elkington).

¹⁹⁸ This is referred to by Ryding as reverse privileging (2006; 2013; see section 2.2.4).

If we compare this with a degree in English literature, dialect varieties are generally not included, e.g. poems in Yorkshire dialect or plays in Scottish. However, as part of an English language degree, students are expected to understand British Standard English (StE) as a standard with the existence of other varieties which are by no means inferior (see section 2.1.2.2).¹⁹⁹ When commenting on the approach taken at the Elkington, Mark, Lecturer, indicated that other HEIs do not teach the RV due to the usage of SA in the Arab world (see section 6.7). This was also raised in my interview with Charlotte, Lector, the Shenton, when we were discussing the reasons HEIs in England focus on SA, which she directly linked to Arab perceptions of RVs:

I had a student who said to me she saw somebody at the supermarket, she didn't know, and they were Arab, and she said /ɪz.zɛɪjək/ (how are you) and he said oh that's slang. She was really shocked and she said, what way is it slang I'm not saying what's up I'm saying hello. So, I think native Arabic speakers have that prejudice again. They don't realise that /ʕami:jɑ/ [RV] is the spoken language it's not slang, it can be slang, but it can also be used in academic settings, it's used in presidential speeches. There are levels of /ʕami:jɑ:t/ [RVs], and I think there's a stigma against /ʕami:jɑ/ [RV] and also it's not taught in the Arab world. An Arabic teacher, in Egypt, Saudi or Morocco teaches /fʊʃħɑ:/ [SA], nobody teaches /ʕami:jɑ/ [RV]. The concept is unheard of, unless they're teaching Arabic as a foreign language possibly. So, the concept is perhaps alien. Arabic teachers teach /fʊʃħɑ:/ [SA], that's what they do and the stigma around it. (Transcript I)

Catherine, the Harris, touched upon this in our interview:

They [Arabic tutors] basically make the assumption that the dialect has come from MSA and is, therefore, an inferior variety of Arabic [...] And when the laypersons assumption in Arabic is that in the dialect there's no grammar [...] then that really drives the approach to teaching the dialect and very often it's not actually taught. (Transcript VII)

This suggests that including a linguistic understanding of Arabic would weaken these perceptions in the L2 classroom. However, the view of SA as being the academic variety is prevalent in TAFL and preventing students from gaining a deep understanding of the language. The argument that learning

¹⁹⁹ This would include established national varieties and varieties of World Englishes.

an RV is not academic is void linguistically; RVs have language systems, if they did not, they would not be able to function as varieties.

6.9. Concluding remarks

This chapter has revealed that HEIs have taken steps to introduce RVs on courses, although, at some HEIs, this does not have a formal place on the curriculum. Whilst the majority see it as being important to prepare students for their year abroad, two HEIs have been identified as aiming to teach Arabic as a living language. A majority of students want to learn an RV prior to going abroad but support first gaining a solid foundation in MSA. This is supported by many lecturers who claim RVs are only needed as and when students go abroad, which is in line with the curriculum at their HEIs. Some tutors believe learning RVs would be too confusing and are still questioning which variety could be taught. However, there are HEIs which have introduced RVs as part of the curriculum and their students seem to be satisfied with the approach. Research states that learning one RV helps to understand and acquire others, which is supported in this data referring to students' experiences, along with MSA as being an important variety for communication. The data suggests that some misconceptions surrounding the language situation have been imported into the L2 classroom which are preventing students from gaining an academic understanding of the language: the classical/colloquial battle and MSA as the academic variety. There is acknowledgment by some tutors that an understanding of the language situation is needed so this can be passed down to students.

Chapter 7: Pedagogy

This chapter draws on the questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations to paint a picture of how Arabic is taught at English HEIs to inform RQ6. Pedagogic issues appear to be obstructing curriculum change, so some sections also address RQ7. Chapter 6 suggested that, although RVs do not have a place on the curriculum in many HEIs, they have been incorporated into the classroom, which warrants a deeper analysis of pedagogic issues.²⁰⁰ This section draws on some of the main themes which surfaced on pedagogy, but there is scope for further elaboration and more in-depth analysis in further research. Table 12 includes the details of the observations analysed for this part of the research.

²⁰⁰ There is overlap between chapters 6 & 7 which further supports the difficulty of separating the two for the purpose of this study; the classroom observations act to complement the data in this study, further analysis can be drawn from them in a follow-up study due to the shortage of space in this study.

Table 12: Classroom observations.

HEI	Level	Length of session (hours)	Number of students	Name of tutor	Transcript
The Holdaway	5	2	5	Claire	Claire
	6	2	8	Mia	Mia
The Stratton	6	1	14	Sarah	Sarah
The Forder	6	2	7	Timothy	Timothy
The Harris	No classes observed				
The Sealey	No classes observed				
The Elkington	5	2	6	Mark	Mark
The Furley	6	1	8	William	William
The Shenton	4	1	8	Charlotte	Charlotte

7.1. Sociolinguistics

Some tutors decided to informally introduce some aspects of Arabic sociolinguistics to their courses.²⁰¹ Louise explained that, at the start of the semester, she dedicated a lecture to introducing what Arabic is and the place of language variation (transcript III). Throughout the course, she makes reference to the varieties through tasks exploring phrases used in various RVs. For example, one week they looked at, “how are you” and, another, at the different interrogative words. She said this is not an official part of the curriculum, and is not done every week, but she hopes, “students

²⁰¹ The tutors are Catherine, the Harris and Louise, the Forder.

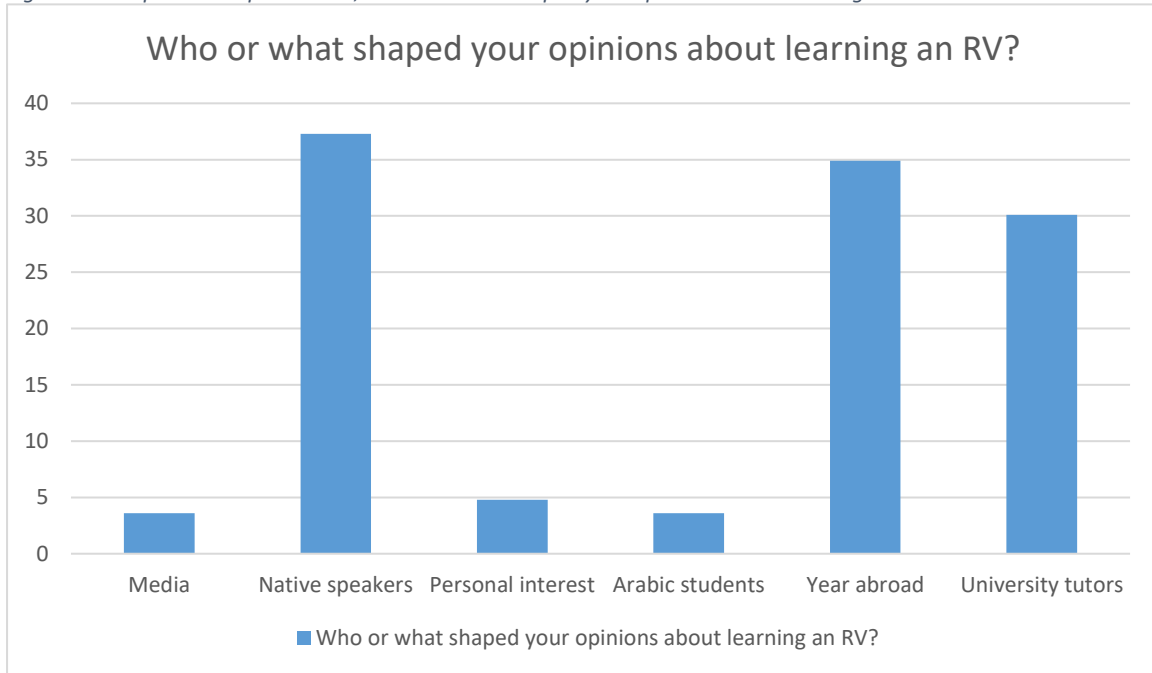
graduate with the knowledge that there are dialects and some of the differences are this and this and this. That's it, they won't know how to use it yet" (transcript III). Although Louise stated she has received the full support of her HEI for this, she mentioned that she has been scolded at conferences for teaching cross-dialectal strategies.²⁰² However, as this is not a part of the curriculum, those who are not taught by tutors with a knowledge or personal interest in Arabic linguistics would not benefit. Diglossia does not have a compulsory place on any of the undergraduate courses included in this research. Students are most likely to understand it at the Shenton or the Furley, as they are taught to modify their speech from day one. This is still not providing a deep understanding of the language situation, but is more than most HEIs where students are, in theory, being taught a variety they do not understand how to use.

Instruction on the language situation being at the discretion of the tutor could be counterproductive as some do not understand Arabic sociolinguistics or the language system behind RVs (see section 7.2.4). Being told "MSA is 'formal' and the language used for day-to-day speech is 'colloquial,'" does not provide adequate knowledge to the learner. This explanation could make them associate MSA with StE and Received Pronunciation (RP) and the colloquial with a variety such as Multicultural London English (MLE), which is an inaccurate analysis of both the Arabic and English language situations.²⁰³

²⁰² See section 6.5. for a discussion on how attitudes from the Arabic-speaking world are affecting the place of RVs in the L2 classroom.

²⁰³ Despite this being a very inaccurate analysis of both language systems, it is drawn upon even within the literature (Ibrahim, 1986: 121; Younes, 2015: 37).

Figure 12: Responses to question 21, "Who or what shaped your opinions about learning an RV?"



67.5% of survey respondents answered the question on who or what shaped their opinions about learning RVs (see figure 12). Of those, only 30.1% stated it was their tutors, 79.5% the reality of travelling to the Arabic-speaking world or conversing with native Arabic speakers and 8.4% from Arabic exposure through the media or their own personal interest.²⁰⁴ This supports findings from Al-Mamari's (2011) and S'hiri's (2013a) studies which revealed students were unaware of the diglossic situation until travelling to Arabic-speaking countries:

- university professors did not consider it important, however, going to Palestine showed me that I could not speak Fusha [SA] to people on the street, and I needed to start my learning basically from scratch (respondent 109, L5, the Furley);
- comments from Arabic [sic] speakers along the lines of: "You won't hear anyone speaking like this if you go to arabic speaking countries" and witnessing this first hand" (respondent 119, L4, the Stratton);
- Arab friends and the redundancy of Fushah [SA] in everyday life in the region (respondent 90, L5, the Harris);
- upon commencing my degree, I was under the impression that all Arabs speak and understand fush'a [SA], and during first year when I discovered that this was not the case, it was very frustrating to be restricted to only learning fusha (respondent 20, L6, the Forder).

²⁰⁴ As the average native Arabic speaker does not understand the language situation linguistically, this suggests students are not gaining a deep understanding of Arabic.

Although advocates of the MSA approach argue it is confusing for students to learn more than one variety (see section 2.3), being unaware of Arabic language variation and for it to be absent from courses could be more puzzling. These students have demonstrated their awareness of diglossia to some extent, through identifying that there are RVs spoken in everyday communication, but this is just a small piece of the language situation.

I asked students interviewed when they became aware of diglossia. Respondents said it was due to speaking to other students (three), contact with native Arabic speakers or travel to the Arab world (four), from their tutors (six), and before commencing their course (one). Ten stated the HEI did not formally cover it, only two remembered it being openly discussed in their classrooms but no students recalled a specific place on their courses to understand the language situation. From students' comments, it became clear that the majority (seven) had translated this question as meaning the extent of the differences between RVs and SA and only two referred to SA as being the formal variety and RVs informal:

- The institution explained it as obviously our teachers are Arabic [sic] so they have their own dialects. My main teacher who I see for most classes in the week is from Egypt so she has told us about Egyptian /ʕami:ja/ [RV] and I kind of was aware of it even before I started studying Arabic though. Because at school, at my international school there were lots of Arabic students and they would sometimes say, 'oh I can't even understand what someone from Morocco is saying. We all speak Arabic but it is just all so different.' So, they couldn't really understand each other (transcript 8, Sophia, L5, the Harris);
- I think that didn't dawn on me when I first started the course. It dawned on me at some point during the second year where you're like, God, even when I learned all Arabic, I'll be able to converse with Levantine people, but I might have more trouble with people from the Gulf nations. I have no chance with anyone from Morocco, Tunisia, just have no chance whatsoever. It's quite scary when you think about it because most languages you can learn it a year, two years whereas Arabic, if you really want to really know Arabic and all the branches of it, it's going to take you a very long time. It did dawn on me how big of a task it really is to learn the language because it's more of a group of languages than anything else [the realisation came as a result of the RV class because] I started looking into it a bit more then and then a bit curious, so I listened to some Moroccan music and what are they saying? I don't understand, watching Egyptian television, etc., very challenging (transcript 11, George, L5, the Elkington);

- Quite early on they said that there's the formal which most of the Arab world will understand but no one speaks and it's used on very formal settings like the news and all that kind of stuff and then on a day-to-day level most people would speak a dialect. And I think they knew from my first year that we were going to go to Jordan so if there was any talk of dialect it was about /ja:mi:/ but we didn't really learn it as such (transcript 9, Eugenie, L6, the Sealey).

Students themselves may not understand how Arabic is used until experiencing it first-hand.

However, the language situation is more complicated, so a deep understanding cannot be obtained without specific sessions and related reading allocated to it.

7.1.1. Arabic linguistics module

Although not composing a compulsory part of any of the undergraduate Arabic courses in England, at two HEIs, there is an optional L6 module on Arabic linguistics.²⁰⁵ Catherine, Assistant Professor, the Harris, had lobbied for and introduced this module at the Harris and the Furley, but had only taught it at the Harris. In our interview, Catherine clarified that the overriding theme of the module is to answer the question 'what is Arabic' (transcript VII), which seems to be an effective way to provide students with a deeper understanding of the language.²⁰⁶ Catherine finds it problematic that the module is not available until the final year and would prefer to have some sociolinguistics included in L4, on understanding what Arabic is, as she believes students need that knowledge from

²⁰⁵ Although this, in theory, concerns curriculum, it has been included here to integrate it with the previous section.

²⁰⁶ The first half of the module is devoted to sociolinguistics, through which students look at Arabic as a Semitic language, including what Semitic languages are, how Arabic has developed, the spread of Arabic, the development of CLA into MSA, the relationship between that and the dialects, the separate development of the dialects, the relationship of so-called middle Arabic, mixed Arabic, code-switching and sociolinguistic contexts. Then the second half of the module has a more structural approach through looking at the phonetics and phonology of Arabic, morphology, syntax, lexis and loan words, borrowing, and then moving onto grammaticalisation. They look at the structure of different dialects and do a bit of comparative work and some ear training with various RVs.

the beginning of courses. Then, she would introduce her Arabic linguistics module in L5, with the more advanced topics in L6.²⁰⁷

7.1.2. RVs in the UK

Two students mentioned that they were disappointed that they had lost their progress in speaking

RVs after returning from the year abroad:

- Upon reflection of my third and fourth year at university, the first year it would have been a lot more useful in my opinion to have a lot more instruction in /ʕami:ja/ [RV] (transcript 15, James, L6, the Sealey);
- Henrietta, L5, the Forder, highlights what she views as two competing issues being at stake, “I would have definitely liked to have kept it [RV] up to be able to stay at the same standard but I think it was a good thing that, well I’m not sure if I can say it was a good thing if the opportunity wasn’t there because it forced us to go back into MSA” (transcript 12).

Henrietta has concerns that she would not be able to keep the two varieties separate if she had the option to use them for further studies. Some tutors and students seem to be determined to keep the two varieties separate, which, in practice, operate together.

I asked students about the variety spoken in the classroom after the year abroad. Despite some stating that they were disappointed at losing progress in the RV upon returning to the UK, the majority of students (five) were allowed to draw on the RV in classrooms:

- In the actual classes I feel it’s a bit more blended which the teacher doesn’t seem to mind too much apart from when we come out with a really slangy phrase and obviously you can try and use those things. But she doesn’t see the funny side so she’s always like, no, you wouldn’t say that in that context, I’m like, yeah, we know we’re just trying to practice things that we know (transcript 9, Eugenie, L6, the Sealey);
- أغلبية الطلاب يعني درسوا في الأردن فأغليبتهم يتكلمون الشامي ولكن فيه شعب واحد كان في تونس يعني يتكلم باللهجة التونسية وكان فيه طالب كان في مصر ويتكلم المصري ولكن يعني وهذا لأسباب يعني كان أسهل لكي يذهبوا الى الأردن ولكن الفكرة كانت يعني الصف يكون مثل العالم العربي يعني كل واحد يتكلم بلهجته ويعني عليه ان يعدل طريقة كلامه

²⁰⁷ Catherine also teaches a compulsory L6 module, Arabic-English translation and, whilst the focus is on texts and translating those texts, she has moved away from journalistic texts as the leader of this module to try and expand their knowledge on other varieties of Arabic (transcript VII). This further supports the idea that the amount of exposure to Arabic language variation is at the discretion of the tutor.

قليلًا ولكن يعني كلنا نستطيع ان نتواصل يعني ما بينكما. علي ان أغير طريقة كلامي اكثر من الطلاب الآخرين. يعني هم يتكلمون باللهجة الشامية يعني صافي وعلى ان أتكلم شيء اقرب الى الفصحى

/aʎlebi:ʃat aʃ.ʃola:b jaʃni: da:masu: fɪl oʃdan fa aʎlebi:ʃathom jetekel.lemu:n aʃ.ʃa:mi: wala:kɪn fi:hi: jaʃb wa:ħid ka:n fi: tu:nɪs jaʃni: jetekel.lem bɪl lehdʒa at.tu:nɪsi:j.ʃa wa ka:n fi:hi: ʃa:lɪb ka:n fi: mɪʃɤ waka:n jetekel.lem ɪlmɪʃɤi: wala:kɪn jaʃni: wa heða liasba:b jaʃni: ka:n ashel liker jeðhabu: ɪla: oʃdan wala:kɪn alfɪkɤa kanet jaʃni: aʃ.ʃaf jeku:n mɪθl alaʃlem alʃaʃabi: jaʃni: kɔl wa:ħid jetekel.lem bilehdʒa.tihi wa jaʃni: aʃleɪhi an ʃɔʃad.del ʃa:ɪ:qat kela:mihi qali:l.len wala:kɪn jaʃni: kɔl.lɔna: nestɑʃi:ʃ an netewa:ʃel jaʃni: ma beɪnakoma: ʃaleɪʃi: an ɔɤaj.jeɤ ʃa:ɪ:qat kela:mi: akθeɤ men aʃ.ʃola:b ala:xa:ɪ:n jaʃni: hɔm jetekel.lemu:n bɪl lehdʒa aʃ.ʃa:mi:ʃa jaʃni: ʃa:fi: wa ʃaleɪʃi: an atekel.lem ʃeɪʔ aqɤeb ɪla: fɔʃħa:/

(Most of the students studied in Jordan, so most of them spoke in Levantine, but there was one student who studied in Tunisia and spoke Tunisian, one student who was in Egypt, but this was because it was easier to go to Jordan. But the idea was for the classroom to be like one in the Arab world, so everyone speaks in their dialect, and they are responsible for changing their speech a little to accommodate other speakers but we could all understand each other. I had to change my speech more than other students, they could speak in the Levantine dialect without making changes but I had to make my speech closer to SA). (Transcript 2, Phillip, L6, the Shenton)

Only one student stated they were allowed to use MSA and MSA only:

In our lessons, yes, we just speak MSA. Sometimes people say things in /de.ɪdʒɑ/ [Moroccan] from Morocco because that is where we all went but, yes, it is kind of criticised so we try to speak in MSA the whole time. And the teaching is in it. (Transcript 12, Henrietta, L5, the Forder)

It is only the Forder and the Holdaway which do not allow students to use the RV in the classroom upon their return to the UK, as MSA is the variety students are examined in (see table 11). This suggests that, in the majority of classrooms in England, language variation is supported to some extent. The emergence of classrooms that promote the coexistence of several dialects, “mirrors interdialectal conversations taking place whenever native speakers of different dialects converse,” and makes learning more authentic (Najour, 2018: 313). For the purposes of this research, it reveals a mismatch between curriculum and pedagogy.

7.1.2.1. Use of RVs in the Classroom

Classroom observations supported the data gathered from tutors (table 11). At the Holdaway and the Forder, the tutors spoke in pure MSA. Case endings were frequently dropped for verbs and

definite nouns but this is a typical feature of formal speech in Arabic. At the Forder, in the L6 classes, there were minimal instances when a student spoke in the Egyptian accent, pronouncing the ج /dʒ/ phoneme as /g/ and dropping some function words, which is typically found in ESA (transcript E; see section 2.1.2). The student said, “ممکن تتزوج من امرأة سعودية” /momkɪn tatazawag man ɪmɪɑ? sɑʕɑʊdi:ɑ/ (you could marry a Saudi Arabian woman; transcript E), instead of the MSA equivalent, “من الممكن أن تتزوج من امرأة سعودية” /man ɪl momkɪn an tatazawadʒɑ man ɪmɪɑ?tɪn sɑʕɑʊdi:ɑtɪn/. The Egyptian features used did not deviate too far from MSA and are more widely accepted as ESA or formal communication. In the L6 session at the Holdaway, there were instances when a student spoke in the RV (transcript E). This student used the RV connector بس /bes/ (but) twice in the place of the SA equivalent ولكن /wala:kɪn/, omitted some function words and used the RV equivalent /ɑɪɑwɑ/ instead of نعم /naʕm/ (yes). From this example, “ممکن الانسان يكون بس وسيلة التعبير عن النفس “مدمن به في نفس الوقت” /momkɪn alɪnsɑ:n yeku:n modmɪn bes wasi:let at.taʕbi:ɟ ʕɑn ɪn.nɪsf/ (it is possible but as a means to express oneself), it can be seen that the function word أن /an/ has been omitted from the first clause and the subject from the second, which are features of the RV. The tutor does not draw attention to it, which could be because the message has been clearly understood and the majority of the vocabulary and overriding structure is MSA. This is in line with comments made by Mia, as she said the most important thing is for students to be understood (transcript V).

At the Stratton and the Furley, RVs were used during the classroom observations by both tutors and students. At the Stratton, the tutor draws on the RV to create a comfortable learning environment: it is one of three varieties drawn upon within the classroom, to make it more ‘dynamic.’²⁰⁸ The session feels authentic, as it is reflective of the situation in the Arab world where RVs are used for

²⁰⁸ As stated by Sarah in our interview (transcript VIII).

communication in the classroom setting.²⁰⁹ It could not necessarily be an issue that it is not reflected in the curriculum, as it is also the case in the Arab world.²¹⁰ However, oral skills are assessed in English HEIs and inconsistencies between the examination and classroom could be confusing for students.

The speaking sessions at the Furley were allocated to exam preparation (transcripts C & J). Learners were given a text to prepare to read aloud and to answer questions on the content. After preparing the text, the tutor selected one student to participate in the mock exam. In transcript C, the learner read the text in MSA including case endings, then, in the following discussion, he switched to Iraqi. After the text had been read aloud, the tutor overtly drew his attention to some errors. This meant that the flow of reading was not interrupted but all students could learn from the case endings.²¹¹ This exercise supports William saying that it is important that students learn to read authentically, as, in Arabic, short vowels are only added to texts in preparation for reading (transcript IV). Students demonstrated their knowledge of vocabulary, as if they did not know a word, they could not pronounce its short vowels, and also of syntax as Arabic nouns, verbs, adverbials and adjectives were given the appropriate case ending. There was an instant difference in formality from reading the text to the following discussion, as the tutor began to overtly draw the student's attention to the case endings to be revised. For example, in "نذهبُ إلى السطر الرابع" /neðhab ɪla: as.saṭr a.r.r.a:bɪʕ/ (let's go to the fourth line; transcript C), case endings were dropped as is the case in formal speech. William mainly stayed in MSA structure, lexis and intonation during this section. He spoke slightly less formally when discussing the text content, for example, "لماذا، هذا صحيح بس لماذا؟" /li:maða: heða: ʂaħi:ħ bes li:maða:/ (Why? That is correct, but why?; transcript C). But, even more during the

²⁰⁹ As quoted previously from Najour (2018: 213).

²¹⁰ It is common for discussion to be in the RV in the classroom setting but SA is the variety taught and assessed.

²¹¹ As is the case with FonF instruction (see section 2.2.5).

open conversation, “شو بتعمل لتحقق الحدث؟” /ʃu: btaʕmel li: taħaq.qaq alħedeθ/ (What will you do to reach that goal?; Transcript C). In the first example, the sentence is in MSA but the RV connector بس /bes/ (but) has been used. In the second example, the tutor adopts the RV structure. This is an example of how the Furley exposes students to the different ‘levels’ of Arabic, as opposed to solely MSA and RVs. The same distinction can be observed from the student, who reads the text with full case endings, then switches to the Iraqi variety in the following discussion, “يعني، مرات چان عندي، ” صعوبات في التواصل بس بالنسبة للاستيعاب أوقات يعني چان اكو يعني مواقف غريبة و جنت يعني خرجت شويه أوقات /jaʕni: ma.ʒa:t tʃa:n iʕndi: ʃaʕu:ba:t fɪt tawa:sel bes bɪn.nɪsba lɪlɪsti:ʕa:b aʊqa:t jaʕni: tʃa:n aku: jaʕni: mawa:qɪf ɣari:ba wa tʃɪnto jaʕni: ħoredʒto ʃwi:h awqa:t/ (sometimes I found it hard to communicate but at other times people had strange views which was a little embarrassing at times; transcript C). This is clear from the pronunciation of some phonemes, such as the ‘ك’ /k/ as ‘چ’ /tʃ/, the use of Iraqi words such as ‘اكو’ /aku:/ (there are) and the connector ‘بس’ /bes/ (but). This is also an example of how different RVs can be incorporated into the same classroom for discussing informal topics: the student has chosen Iraqi but the tutor speaks in Levantine.

William commented on exams in our interview:

in the final oral exam in the fourth and final year is to test their ability and their awareness, because they will start the exam by reading the text, and they will read it of course in /fʊʃħa:/ [SA] and they will move into discussing it and the /fʊʃħa:/ [SA] will be starting to come down to spoken عامية المتعلمين / ʕa:mi:at ɪlmoteʕal.lemi:n/ [ESA] and then when we finish discussing the text they read and go into the discussion of other issues outside that text. (Transcript IV, William, the Furley)

This supports how the mock exam was carried out in the sessions observed, as there is a clear distinction between the language used for each situation. At the Furley, it is important for students to learn how Arabic works in practice.

At the Elkington (transcript D) and the Shenton (transcripts A; B; K), the classes observed differed as students were being taught to communicate in the RV. Although the majority of the 90-minute session at the Elkington was spent introducing new vocabulary, the SA equivalents were only referred to seven times (transcript D). As students had been learning MSA for a year before they were introduced the RV, I would have expected this knowledge to have been engaged with to a greater extent.²¹² This was also contrary to comments made by Camilla in our interview, who stated:

we do tables so we have the modern standard in one column, the Syrian in the other and what we need for them to leave comments and we say look at the difference between. And eventually we don't need to put Modern Standard, they start to pick up and we say now remember how you complained, this is why we're doing it because you've learnt here rather than when you were in Jordan. (Transcript VI)

It could have just been this one lesson which did not refer to the SA, further observations would be needed to provide more concrete conclusions. The Shenton provides an example of how both varieties can be drawn on side-by-side: every new piece of vocabulary was introduced in both varieties and colour-coded on the board to draw students' attention to the similarities or differences (transcript A). For example, "cold صح /ṣaḥ/ (correct) It's ناول تلاجة بس ناول تلاجة طيب /θela:dʒa bes neʔu:l tela:ga ʔaɪb/ (fridge [SA], but we say fridge [Egyptian] ok) ف /fa/ (so) here we have ث /θe/ as a ت /te/ and ج /dʒe/ as a /ga/ ماشي تلاجة تلاجة طيب قويس /ma:ʃi: θela:dʒa tela:ga ʔaɪb kweɪs/ (not fridge [SA], but fridge [Egyptian], ok, good). Charlotte highlighted the difference in pronunciation between the two. When introducing the new vocabulary, she also referred to the root. Al-Batal (2006: 338) states that the root and pattern system is a powerful tool in learning Arabic lexis and that, "teachers should point out similarities that exist among words of the same root and encourage students to guess the relationship in meaning for words that share the same root."²¹³ For example, the tutor explained, "برنامج برنامج وثائقي وثائقي ووثق الجذر ووثق" /be.ɲna:medʒ be.ɲna:medʒ waθa:ʔi:qi: waθa:ʔi:qi:

²¹² I would have expected them, for example, to refer to the SA equivalents instead of English, as mentioned by Camilla in our interview (transcript VI).

²¹³ Section 7.2.6, discusses how the root and pattern system can aid vocabulary retention and the importance of using strategies to learn lexis for languages which entail its students learning a different alphabet.

wa θa qa aldʒaðɤ wa θa qa/ (documentary, documentary /w/,/θ/,/q/, the root /w/,/θ/,/q/) the root يعنى /jaʕni:/ (it means) to trust, to authenticate, to approve, all those types of verbs are derived from the same root. وثق ماشي الثقة. /wa θa qa ma:ʃi: θiɤ.qa ma:ʃi:/ (/w/,/θ/,/q/, ok, trust, ok) ماشي /ma:ʃi:/ (ok) so anything that's sort of real or proved has this type of meaning trustworthy." Students appeared to have internalised the importance of the Arabic root system:

Tutor: Nurse ممرضة /momaɤ.ɤɤɤa/ (nurse) ممرضة /momaɤ.ɤɤɤa/ (nurse)

Student: from مريض /ma:ɤi:d/ (ill)

Tutor: yes, ممرضة /momaɤ.ɤɤɤa/ (nurse)

Student: make it worse

Tutor: ممرضة ممرضة ونفس الكلمة عامية وفصحى ممرضة طيب /momaɤ.ɤɤɤa momaɤ.ɤɤɤa wa nafs

ɤlkelɤma ʕa:mi:j.ja wa fuʕʃa: momaɤ.ɤɤɤa ʕaɤɤ/ (nurse, nurse and it's the same word in the RV and SA, nurse, good)

The student made the link between the words مريض /ma:ɤi:d/ (ill) and ممرضة /momaɤ.ɤɤɤa/ (nurse) through recognising the root م /m/, ر /r/, ض /d/ and verb form two.²¹⁴ As learning vocabulary is a major difficulty in learning Arabic (Al- Batal, 2006: 339; see section 7.2.6.4), it is helpful for students that the tutor is assisting them in identifying strategies that will aid vocabulary retention.²¹⁵

In the session at the Holdaway, the tutor also drew upon the Arabic root system when explaining new lexis:

²¹⁴ In Arabic, there are ten most commonly used verb forms which follow patterns and can indicate aspects of meaning.

²¹⁵ Research suggests that helping learners, especially beginners, with strategies to learn vocabulary aids retention (Al-Shalchi, 2018).

Student: على التقرير /ʕala: at.taqi:ɟ/ (on the report)

Tutor: على التقرير؟ /ʕala: at.taqi:ɟ/ (on the report)

Student: Yeah

Tutor: You're right, the مصدر /mʊʂdaɟ/ (origin) of قرر /qaɟ.ɟaɟ/ (to decide) is تقرير /taqi:ɟ/, but unfortunately تقرير /taqi:ɟ/ (report) has a specific meaning, which is report so تقرير /taqi:ɟ/ (report) now just means a report, it doesn't mean deciding. What's the word for decision? قرار /qɪa:ɟ/ (decision)

(Transcript H)

The tutor could more overtly highlight the link between تقرير /taqi:ɟ/ (report) and قرار /qɪa:ɟ/ (decision). Participant 33, L4, the Holdaway, requested for more focus on the root system from the beginning of the course, suggesting that it could feature more prominently in L4 or L5 classes, “teach the roots and state from the beginning that you can form words based on you [sic] grammatical knowledge.” This came up in my interview with Beatrice, L6, who stated, “they didn't spend a lot on the root system. I can't say they taught us the root system, I don't even remember exactly, but I remember mostly the alphabet and three or four letters per session then the vocabulary for those letters that we studied, but not very much grammar in the beginning” (transcript 1). This could be a limitation of depending on a student's ability to remember course components, as the observation suggests that the root system is supported in the L5 class.

7.1.2.2. Examinations

I asked tutors at HEIs which do not allow RVs in examinations, what would happen if students used them. Only one stated that learners would be penalised, “not in exams, they are not allowed to use it in the exams. They would be penalised [...] We are not very harsh but they know that they have to use the /fʊʂħa:/ [SA] words” (transcript VIII, Sarah, the Stratton). Mia, the Holdaway, emphasised that students would not necessarily be penalised as it is more important to communicate their message, but they take into account the individual learner:

We don't want a mixture where it's clear that they haven't quite got a grip on either colloquial or, but if they use, and things like phrases like لازم نعتمد على الجامعة في هذا المجال /la:ɟim la:ɟim naʕtemɪd ʕala: aldʒa:mɪʕa fi: heða: almɪdʒa:l mɪθelen/ (it's necessary, it's necessary to rely on the university in this field, for example) they don't have to say من اللازم

ان /men al.la:zim an/ (it is necessary to) in a formal exam, they can use that kind of colloquialism. The rest is expected to be /fʊʂħa:/ [SA] but they would not be penalised because we look at communicative ability. Have they communicated? Have they got the message across? Have they pronounced it clearly? Do we understand what they are saying? [...] other times it's been problematic is if it's a native speaker of a colloquial, who carries on using colloquial when they're here to learn /fʊʂħa:/, that would be marked down, but it doesn't happen a lot.
(Transcript V)

Timothy, the Forder, also prioritised communication but, stated that using RVs would be reflected in a student's marks:

We do tell the students that's it better to say something though, it may be colloquial, than to say nothing. But we say don't use that as an escape route for you to speak colloquial all the time but if you are stuck in a situation or stuck on a sentence or stuck on a word and you can't at the time of the exam remember what it is in Modern Standard Arabic and use the colloquial Arabic you can use it but of course it will drop the mark by a percentage, yes.
(Transcript X)

It is interesting to compare this to how RVs are treated at other HEIs. Although, at the Holdaway, RVs are not supported at any point in the course, in examinations, the HEI prioritises communication, taking the background of the learner into account. The Forder, which does not support the use of RVs in the classroom, also values communicating the message and so not as strict as the Stratton, which allows the use of RVs in the classroom. Although students are aware that they can only use MSA in examinations, it could still be seen as sending a mixed message to learners who may become comfortable using the RV in the classroom, to be penalised in exams.

I asked Charlotte, the Shenton about the use of MSA in oral examinations:

I don't think we would mark somebody down necessarily, it depends what the goal or the aim is. If they've communicated effectively and they've managed to use suitable language, if that would be /ʕami:ja/ [RV] but they slip in a /fʊʂħa/ [SA] word, then fine, I think that would just go on the accuracy scale. So, they said /al.leði:/[which, masculine] and instead of /ɪl.li:/ [which, RV], ok fine, but the message came across and everything else was fine. But, if it's somebody who consistently uses /ʕami:ja/ [RV] in their writing or /fʊʂħa/ [SA] in their speaking, you know they're unable to make that distinction, that's where I think we'd identify a problem. But so far, it's been ok, the little slips here and there are fine, because overall, I think they get the point. (Transcript I)

Similar to the stance at the Holdaway, the Shenton assesses whether the student has communicated their message effectively and authentically, as opposed to strictly enforcing the use of the RV for speaking.

7.2. SLA & SLT

Table 13: Approaches taken to L2 teaching in classroom observations.

HEI	Level	Transcript	Type	L2 Approach
The Holdaway	5	H	Speaking	Genre-based; holistic
	6	L	Text-based/ communicative	Genre-based; holistic
The Stratton	6	G	Speaking	GTM
The Forder	6	F; E	Speaking	CLT
The Harris	No classes observed			
The Sealey	No classes observed			
The Elkington	5	D	Dialect	Genre-based; holistic; GTM approach
The Furley	6	C	Speaking	Exam practice
The Shenton	4	A; B	Communicative	CLT

Table 13 details the approaches taken to L2 learning observed in the classrooms, discussed in the following sections. In section 2.2, analysis of the literature suggested that the approach to TAFL needs to be different to other L2s, taking into account the specifics of the language itself. This section highlights some of the main themes drawn from the surveys and interviews which were

supported through the observations. There are many other aspects which can be extracted from classroom observations, but there is not space in this study so it is hoped that this can be analysed in more depth in further research.

7.2.1. Holistic approach

The holistic approach to learning taken in classes at the Holdaway (transcripts H & L) and the Elkington (transcript D; see table 13) is supported within L2 research (see section 2.2.). Although many sessions observed did not adopt a holistic approach in the classroom, as some of them focused on one of the four skills (such as the speaking classes at the Forder: transcript E; and the Furley: transcripts C & J), this does not mean that all four skills are not practiced. HEIs adopting this approach had other classes dedicated to reading, writing and grammar/ translation.²¹⁶

At the Holdaway both tutors took a holistic approach to L2 learning. In the L5 class, aspects from the GTM, CLT, and FonF were adopted as advocated in SLA research (see section 2.2). The L2 session started with a CLT task, with FonF employed through error correction, as advocated by Doughty (1998) and Williams (2005). For example:

Student: والدي هو طبيب و والدي هي ممارسة /wa:lɪdi: howa ʔabi:b wa wa:lɪdati: hi:ja mɔma:ɟasa/
(my dad is a doctor and my mum is a practiser)

Tutor: ممرضة؟ /moma:ɟɪɟa/ (nurse)

Student: ممرضة /moma:ɟɪɟa/ (nurse)

Tutor: ممرضة، في مستشفى؟ /moma:ɟɪɟa fi: mɔsteffa:/ (a nurse in a hospital)

(Transcript H)

²¹⁶ At the Shenton, the hour in class was spent on language input (speaking) and the written exercises were to be done as homework (transcript A). This approach appeared to be effective at the Shenton, but could have been due to their student cohort. As stated by Charlotte in our interview, “we’re very lucky at [the Shenton] that we have very bright, capable students, very dedicated” (transcript I). This may not be as effective at other HEIs where students are not as motivated or have other commitments which take up their time.

This implicit FonF encouraged students to speak, which was effective due to the high amount of Arabic spoken in the first half of the session (93.1%). When correcting the word ممارسة /mʊma:ʔasa/ (someone who practices) with ممرضة /moma:ʔiʔa/ (nurse), the tutor remained in Arabic, leading to a high percentage of language input. In the second half, as a GTM task, there was a larger focus on accuracy for the translation exercise which suggests the tutor favours accuracy in writing but encourages communication for speaking. In the L6 lesson, as in the L5, the first half was genre-based and communicative and the second focused on translation. The tutor first recapped the main points from the previous week, then introduced two authentic texts on ‘selfies.’ The students read the texts individually and as a group and engaged in discussion on them throughout the session. The second half was spent on political translation and writing exercises. The approach supports students acquiring MSA through enforcing all of the skills.²¹⁷ It could result in a lack of awareness of the sociolinguistic aspects of Arabic as spoken exercises would, authentically, also draw on RVs, meaning the approach is not in line with CLT. However, it may be that an inauthentic solution is more appropriate for beginners’ Arabic (see section 2.2).

7.2.2. The GTM

The GTM can be used advantageously in the Arabic classroom, as learners benefit from explicit instruction in a language which has many unfamiliar structures to L1 English speakers (see section 2.2.1). However, research collected focused on speaking classes, some of which were based on the GTM. As noted in table 13, the session observed at the Elkington (transcript D) had a ‘holistic structure’ behind the course, which was clear from the module booklet. However, the exercises were approached in a way more reminiscent of the GTM.²¹⁸ The booklet contained a vocabulary list,

²¹⁷ This is supported by Shanahan (2006) and Eisele (2006; see section 2.3.1.1).

²¹⁸ In the classroom, the first forty-five minutes were spent discussing and translating new vocabulary, followed by ten minutes reading a topic-specific text from the booklet (on ‘the restaurant’). The tutor then used 15 minutes to translate the text into English before the students spent ten minutes reading the text and listening to the recording of the conversation. The session concluded with 15 minutes of translating another vocabulary list.

a listening text with subsequent questions, a conversation task, grammar drills, reading and writing exercises. The listening text was fully translated prior to students answering the questions. A lot of classroom time was spent on vocabulary lists. Four survey respondents from this HEI recommended making sessions more engaging and interactive, indicating a desire to collaboratively work through the exercises themselves. Even if the resources exist to introduce language variation, students cannot benefit from them to the full extent if they are not used appropriately. There was, however, ample student involvement in the session: the tutor ensured that every student practiced the new vocabulary reinforcing learning.

At the Stratton, although students were learning through discussion, the exercise used was more reminiscent of the GTM (transcript G). The class focused on translating phrases into English, which does not support communicating in Arabic. There was a low percentage of Arabic spoken for an L6 speaking class (54.3%; see table 14). When asked what they least enjoyed about their courses, 2/7 survey participants from this HEI mentioned the “lack of speaking” opportunities and when asked what improvements they would make to courses 3/7 suggested more speaking practice.

7.2.3. Communicative language teaching

Observations at the Forder and the Shenton utilised CLT (transcripts E & A). In the first half of the session at the Forder, students prepared presentations which were then opened to the class for questions and answers (transcript E). In the second half, the tutor provided topics for open discussion. The focus of both of these exercises was to engage students on a communicative level. Students were not interrupted during the presentations or the discussion which followed, but the tutor drew their attention to any incorrect grammar and pronunciation when discussing feedback.²¹⁹ In the second half, there was a communicative focus, which created a freer flow of discussion. The

²¹⁹ As is the case with FonF (see section 2.2.5).

presentations meant that all students prepared themselves for the session and had opportunities to participate in the class. The focus of the lesson at the Shenton was also on communication, and the tutor utilised modern teaching techniques to facilitate this (transcript A).²²⁰ In classes which adopted a holistic approach CLT was effectively integrated into the sessions (see section 7.2.1.). This is supported by SLA research, that, traditional methods should not be replaced by CLT, but some of the effective methods of the GTM can be accommodated within a CLT background, which is more flexible and adaptable (see section 2.2.4). In teaching students the RV communicatively, the Shenton is authentically presenting the language to students, which is in line with communicative competence.

When elaborating on suggestions to improve their courses, a large amount of survey respondents (41.5%) requested more classroom time devoted to input and output practice.²²¹ 56.9% of these respondents requested more speaking practice; 12% more listening; 8% more grammar, and 4% more hours allocated to the language as a whole. Speaking in Arabic is a challenging skill for native English speakers, especially with regard to pronouncing the nine additional phonemes the Arabic language have which have no equivalents in English (/t/, /d/, /v/, /s/, /x/, /y/, /q/, /h/, and /ʕ/).²²² It is understandable that many respondents are requesting more opportunities to converse. Survey respondents requested to make lessons more engaging and communicative by moving away from the L1 in the classroom and having more opportunities to practice their language skills.²²³

²²⁰ Such as collaborative learning.

²²¹ This can be interpreted as a large number of respondents as it was an open-ended question.

²²² It is also challenging for speakers of other European languages; although all languages will require a learner to alter their pronunciation, with regard to Arabic and English, there are major differences between the two. This is not the same extent as a language like Chinese, but incomparable to other European languages. Standard German, for example, has two consonants /x/ and /ç/ which are not used in Standard English. However, /x/ is used in some British varieties and, in English, there are other phonemes with the same place and manner of articulation as /ç/. Some Arabic phonemes, for example, articulated with the tip of the tongue curling backwards (retroflex) are not used at all in English, meaning adult learners would arguably benefit from being explained this difference as it is not something which would be clear to the majority by simply listening to recordings of the phoneme.

²²³ Discussed in more detail in 6.3.1.2.2. 'English in the L2 classroom'.

- Do not use English at all. They teach you the language in such an unnatural way. Less focus on grammar and more focus on the skills of speaking and listening. Course conveners to consider what it is you need to learn in order to interact in the Arab world (respondent 122, L6);
- Increase teaching Arabic in Arabic as opposed to in English. Allow for students to use the language by writing and holding presentations etc. in Arabic. Initially it feels like learning Latin or a dead language because there's little active engagement with Arabic, rather a passive absorption (respondent 103, L5);
- More speaking practice, more 'immersion'-style teaching from the beginning. Arabic does not have to be so intimidating to learn, it can be treated as any other language. I think the idea that most people have of Arabic being a very difficult language to learn - even on the part of the Arabic teachers - inhibits the learning process. For example, teachers taking classes in English/Arabic when sometimes they could use Arabic alone (respondent 100, L5).

As Arabic is taught at HEIs *ab initio*, it can be challenging for HEIs to strike a balance between language acquisition and academic knowledge. This study suggests that some classrooms are not providing adequate opportunities to converse in Arabic, even in sessions that have been specifically designated to develop speaking skills. As stated by respondent 121, L6, “many of these requests point to students seeing the importance of exposure to Arabic to improve their development in the language and needing more support from their HEIs to do so.” Students are coming to university with the expectation that, if they wish to master Arabic, they need as many opportunities to use the language as possible.

The need for more speaking, or students expressing a lack of opportunities to converse, was prevalent in the student interviews (four):

- [Need more contact hours] speaking, and grammar I really think so. In Arabic you really can't get rid of it it's just grammar everywhere as soon as you like even change the place if a verb of an adverb it already changes the other conjugations [...] more speaking 'cause time flies and you don't even realise (transcript 1, Beatrice, L6, the Holdaway);
- There's a lot of emphasis on grammar. It [speaking] does have its place, but I think it's not the most important thing. When you come out here, you don't want to know how to correctly structure your sentences in written word, you want to know how to talk with people (transcript 11, George, L5, the Elkington).

Diverse views emerged within students' responses. Beatrice wants more grammar, whereas George believes there is too much.

The dominant view in SLA research is that the L1 should not be used at all in the L2 classroom (Cummins, 2007) or minimised as much as possible (Turnbull, 2001). As abovementioned, students expect Arabic to be taught *in Arabic*.²²⁴ This came up in further student survey comments:

- a teacher who teaches in Arabic!!!! not English (respondent 43, L4);
- talking in Arabic in class instead of English unless it is not understood (respondent 19, L4).

The issue was raised in four student interviews:

- In third and fourth year I'll be honest and if they had just spoken to us in Arabic, any Arabic I would have been happy (transcript 15, James, L6, the Sealey);
- They didn't teach us in Arabic they always taught us in English, which I think they didn't have to (transcript 7, Amelia, L6, the Furley);
- One of my biggest complaints I would have had would have been that they taught the classes ... it's too much English (transcript 11, George, L5, the Elkington).

Each of these respondents expressed how frustrating it was to return to the UK from the year abroad, where all language classes were taught in Arabic, to go back to being taught in English. This suggests that students expect more opportunities to practice their language skills. When speaking with Jessica, lecturer, the Sealey, she stated that this is an issue that they have addressed at the HEI (transcript XII). She added that, tutors were drawing heavily on English which led to the decision that they would only speak Arabic during language sessions. At the time of the interview, Jessica claimed that no English was spoken at all which she thinks was an essential step as, because students only

²²⁴ It is worth noting that students are discussing language classes, which should be predominantly taught in the L2. This is different to a literature class for example, which may involve discussing an L2 book in the L1.

receive eight contact hours a week, those hours have to be spent with as much Arabic exposure as possible.²²⁵

Table 14: English spoken in observed Arabic language classrooms in percentages.

HEI	Level of Class	Transcript	Type of Class	English spoken (%)
The Holdaway	5	H	Speaking	6.7
The Holdaway	6	L	Text-based/ communicative	14.0
The Stratton	6	G	Speaking	45.7
The Forder	6	F	Speaking	32.0
The Harris	No classes observed			
The Sealey	No classes observed			
The Elkington		D	Dialect	67.4
The Furley	6	C	Speaking	6.1
The Shenton	4	A	Communicative	36.6

Some classes observed drew on English quite extensively (see table 14). The percentages at the Stratton (45.7%), the Forder (32%) and the Elkington (67.4%) are all significantly higher than research into classrooms of a comparable level, L2 French at secondary school (7%; Macaro, 2001), L2 German at university (7%; Duff & Polio, 1990; 11.3%; De la Campa & Nassaji, 2009) and L2 French

²²⁵ No classrooms were observed at this HEI and the two students interviewed were in their final year so they would not have been able to comment on this change.

at university (9%; Rolin-Ianziti & Brownlie, 2002). Only the sessions at the Furley and the Holdaway used a similar amount of the L1 as other L2 classrooms of a comparable level.²²⁶

The percentages recorded in the table are not completely comparable due to the different levels of classes and approaches taken. For example, at the Holdaway, the sessions included were the communicative sessions, in the grammar and translation sessions which followed, English was drawn on more extensively. However, in the L6 class, English was only used to explain linguistic form and the tutor used Arabic when possible, which shows a clear progression from the L5 class where more English is used in the translation task.²²⁷ This means students have a large amount of exposure to Arabic at the Holdaway within the communicative sessions. In the L6 class, after reading the text which became the topic of discussion in the seminar, students asked questions about vocabulary. The tutor explained the new words in Arabic encouraging students to find the meaning which kept the lesson communicative with a high exposure to the L2.²²⁸

Tutor: هل قرأت النص؟ هل تحتاجون الى مساعدة في بعض الكلمات الصعبة؟ ما هي الكلمات الصعبة؟ [student's name] هل قرأت النص؟ هل تحتاجون الى مساعدة في بعض الكلمات الصعبة؟ ما هي الكلمات الصعبة؟
hel qara?tom an.na? hel tehta:dzu:na ila: mōsa:ʕida fi: baʕd
ilkelīma:t i? ʕaʕba ma: hi:ja alkelīma:t a? ʕaʕba alkelīma:t a? ʕaʕba ʕaija maʕnu:fa/ (have you read the text? Do you need help with some of the difficult words? What are the difficult words? The difficult unknown words?)

Student: تتمدد /tetemed.ded / (it spreads)

Tutor: كلمة مغالفة لنتنشر على السطر الثالث تنتشر يعني تتمدد الى. هل تفهمون تنتشر؟ ما تتمدد؟ تتمدد يعني تنتشر؟
kelīma mōʕa:līfa litenteʕu ʕala: as.saʕu aθ.θa:līθ tenteʕu jaʕni: tetemed.ded ila:
hel tefhamu:na tenteʕu ma: maʕna: tetemed.ded tetemed.ded jaʕni: tenteʕu tenteʕu/ (it's a synonym of to extend, on the third line, to spread means to extend. Do you understand to spread? What does to spread mean? To spread means to extend, to extend).

Student: to spread

²²⁶ Authors of some introductory books on teaching EFL, such as Haycraft (1978), Hubbard et al. (1983), and Harmer (1997), do not address the issue of the use of the L1 in the L2 classroom. This implies that either the L1 does not play an important role in EFL teaching or simply does not exist in these classrooms. It could be because most of them are native English speakers working with groups of students with different L1s. This is, however, also a contested issue in EFL, with some (Auerbuch, 1993) arguing that a very limited amount of L1 use in the L2 classroom aids learning. Results from this study show more than a minimal amount of the L1 being utilised in the classroom which could hinder the language acquisition process.

²²⁷ The use of the L1 in such circumstances has been argued as aiding SLA (Auerbuch, 1993).

²²⁸ More exposure to Arabic was a request highlighted through the survey (see 5.3.2.3.2).

Tutor: to spread, yes, it's a synonym /tetemed.ded
jaʃni: tentefɪɲ ʃɔkɪan aɪ kelɪma oxɪa ʃaʃba/ (to spread means to extend which other words
are difficult?)

Student: ناقد /na:qɪd/ (critic)

Tutor: ناقد الذي ينقد ناقد مثلاً هناك ناقد ادبي ناقد سينمائي الذي ينقد
/na:qɪd al.leði: jenqɪd na:qɪd mɪθlen
hɔna:ka na:qɪd adebi: na:qɪd si:ni:ma:ʔi: al.leði: jenqɪd/ (critic, someone who criticises, for
example there are literary critics, cinema critics who criticise)

Student: critic?

Tutor: critic, it means critic, نعم /naʃm / (yes)

English is only used after explaining the vocabulary in Arabic resulting in a higher exposure to the L2.

The four L6 classes observed were mainly speaking sessions, apart from the class at the Holdaway,
which was communicative, but discussions focused on texts distributed by the tutor, as
abovementioned. At the Stratton, the most English was spoken, which can be attributed to the class
exercise translating Arabic phrases into English:

Tutor: number eight, ما فيه المثال في /ma: fi:h ɪlmɪθa:l fi:/ (what is the saying) number eight
/fi:h aʃkeɪna: ʃnu: hɔwa/ (in it, number eight, what is the saying, number
eight, tell me what it is)

Student: knowledge is a dangerous thing

Tutor: ok, وما معنى المثل، اقرأ المثل بالعربي /wa ma: maʃna almiθa:l ɪqɪ? ɪlmɪθa:l bɪl ʃarabi:/ (and
what does the saying mean? Read the saying in Arabic)

Student: نصف العلم اخطر من الجهل /naʃf alʃɪlm axtɔɪ men aldʒehl/ (half the knowledge is more
dangerous than ignorance)

Tutor: ما هو العلم؟ /ma: hu:wa alʃɪlm/ (what is knowledge)

Student: like knowledge

Tutor: وما هو نصف؟ /wa ma: hu:wa naʃf/ (and what is half)

Student: is it saying like to have half of the knowledge is more dangerous than to be
ignorant, but in English we would say a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.

(Transcript G)

The benefits of learning through a dialogue are discussed extensively within the literature.²²⁹

However, the task of translating phrases resulted in too much English being used for a L6 speaking class.

At the Forder, there was a high percentage of English used:

“فنريد ان نناقش هذا الموضوع باللغة العربية، كيف يمكننا how to get rich الله اختارت موضوع كيف نغتنى”
“How can we get rich quick”²³⁰ /ɪxta:ɪtɔ maʊdʊ:ʃ keɪfə neɪttenɪ: haʊ tu
get rɪtʃ fənʊ:ɪ:d an nɔna:qɪʃ heðə almaʊdʊ:ʃ bɪl laɪət ɪlʃɑ:abi:ja keɪfə ʃɔmkɪnɔna: alhɑʃu:l
ʃala θaʊwa saɪ:ʃɑ/ (I have chosen the topic, ‘how to get rich’, how to get rich. So, we want
to discuss this topic in Arabic, how can we get rich quickly, how can we get rich quick).

(Transcript E)

As above, the tutor provided the translation into English immediately after the Arabic. Many

instances of the use of English may have been unnecessary. For example, Timothy (the tutor) said:

“that’s a very good idea فكرة جيدة جدا انت تعرفين /fikɪɑ dʒeɪd dʒɪɪden ɪntɪ taʃɪfi:n/ (a very good
idea you know) you come in my group هذا التفسير /heðə at.tefsi:ɪ/ (this is the interpretation)
robbing a bank.”

(Transcript E)

“That’s a very good idea,” is simple vocabulary, which L6 students would understand without the translation.

The L6 speaking class at the Furley had the least English spoken (6.1%; transcript C). However, it was exam practice between just one student and the tutor and, the other classes, such as reading and grammar, drew extensively on English. Amelia, L6, said in our interview that she felt the tutors used

²²⁹ See Aulls (2004); Prosser & Trigwell (1999: 162); Kahn & Walsh (2006); Kuh et al. (2005).

²³⁰ The tutor is speaking a very formal level of MSA, through including function words which are normally dropped in spoken MSA. At the Holdaway, for example, where tutors also teach though pure MSA many function words are dropped during connected speech.

English when they did not have to, which does suggest that students expect tutors to use Arabic more in the classes designated to grammar, reading and writing (transcript 7).

The most English was spoken in the RV class at the Elkington (transcript D). Similar to the case at the Stratton, the session drew heavily on the GTM (see section 7.2.2.) explaining the high percentage of the L1:

There is the food menu, so he gave him the food menu طيب ، جون طيب /dʒon ʔaɪb ʔaɪb/ (John, ok, ok) it means here ok. بعدين /baʕdeɪn/ (after) after that أكل على بالي /dʒa:ja ʕala: ba:li: a:ʔkʊl/ (I would like to eat) I would like to eat. رز ملوخية ورز /malu:xi:ja wa ɾɔz/ (vine leaves with rice) ok ملوخية /malu:xi:ja/ with rice, رز /ɾɔz/ is rice وجلي كمان /wa dʒɪbli: kema:n/ (and bring me) also bring me صحن شاورما صغير صحن شاورما صغير /ʕaħn ʃawarɪma ʕayɪ:d/ (one small Shawarma) a small plate of شاورما بس بسرعة /ʃawarɪma bes bisrʕa/ (Shawarma but quickly) please be quick اذاً بتريد /ɪða: btɾi:d/ (if you want) if you please be quick, انا مخور من الجوع /ana: mʊxaw.wɪɪ men ɪldʒaʊʕ/ (I'm hungry) what does it mean مخور من الجوع /mʊxaw.wɪɪ men ɪldʒaʊʕ/ (hungry)?

(Transcript D)

As in the extract, the tutor read through the listening text transcript and translated it, phrase-by-phrase. Similar to the session at the Forder, simple English vocabulary and phrases is used, such as asking for a word's meaning which could be communicated in Arabic to increase students' exposure:

Tutor: Who knows what is صحة؟ /ʕaħ.ħa/ (health)?

Student: health

Tutor: it's health صحة على قلبك، /ʕaħ.ħa ʕala: ʔɪbk/ (with health) what is ألبك؟ /ʔɪbk/ (your heart)

ألبك؟ /ʔɪbk/ (your heart) for masculine and for feminine what is قلبك؟ /ʔɪbk/ (your heart) what does it mean?

What is the meaning of قلبك؟ /ʔɪbk/ (your heart) anyone?

Student: Heart

Tutor: قلبك، /ʔɪbk/ (your heart) very good

(Transcript D)

As an L5 class, this is not entirely comparable to the L6 sessions, but it is almost twice as much English spoken in the L4 class at the Shenton.²³¹ At the Shenton, students were playing a game to practice new vocabulary (transcript A). Each student was given a card with a word they described in Arabic to the other students. Despite eventually providing translations of these words, the discussion vastly increased the amount of Arabic spoken, drawing heavily on their language skills:

Student: *أي الشخص اللي بيشتغل بالمستشفى* /aɪ faɪʃ ɪ.li: bjɛfɪɛl bɪl mʊstɛffa:/ (who occupies a hospital?)

Tutor: *بيشتغل بالمستشفى؟ بيشتغل أو بيستعمل؟* /bjɛfɪɛl bɪl mʊstɛffa: bjɛfɪɛl aʊ bjɛstaɪmel/ occupies a hospital, works or uses?

Student: *بيشتغل* /bjɛfɪɛl/ (works)

Tutor: *دكتور؟ الشخص اللي بيشتغل بالمستشفى* /aɪfaɪʃ ɪ.li: bjɛfɪɛl bɪl mʊstɛffa: doktu:ɹ/ (the person who works at the hospital, a doctor?)

Student: *لا* /la:/ (no)

Tutor: *اللي بيشتغل مع الدكتور؟* /ɪ.li: bjɛfɪɛl maɪ addoktu:ɹ/ (who works with the doctor?)

Student: *اه* /a:/ (yes)

(Transcript A)

At the Elkington, students were learning new vocabulary, but the text, intended to practice listening skills, was translated into English (as in the extract above; transcript D), and entailed a high amount of the L1 being used. It meant students were introduced to new vocabulary but it could have been utilised to engage a wider skill set.

This section suggests that English is being used extensively in some L2 Arabic classes.²³² Tutors may have been taught through the GTM, which is criticised for overusing the L1, making it more natural

²³¹ In practice, there was more Arabic spoken than this in the classroom at the Shenton because the first exercise was a collaborative learning task, in which students had conversations in Arabic in pairs. It was not possible to transcribe this section due to too many students talking at the same time so it had to be omitted from the calculation.

²³² It must be noted that this is drawing on a very limited number of observations, further research is needed to draw more concrete solutions.

to them to draw heavily on it.²³³ Featherstone (2018: 59) noted that, “Arabic teachers mimic the way they were taught MSA at school.” This is problematic as research suggests that L2 degree-level Arabic requires a different approach to L1 school-level. Teaching is addressed in the next section.

7.2.4. Teaching

The general quality of teaching was criticised by some students and tutors, which has also been raised in the literature. Featherstone (2018: 56) stated that, “most Arabic language teaching is carried out by native speakers, some who have PhDs from the Arab world, often specialising in fields other than Arabic teaching pedagogy, unqualified in teaching languages, let alone Arabic.” Four tutors supported this comment, in recommending further tutor development because often instructors are appointed solely on the basis that they are Arab as opposed to having a background in TAFL or the Arabic language itself:

- Teacher training as well. I notice that many, many universities take on staff perhaps just because they are Arabs [...] We have PhD students from Saudi Arabia for example who are doing an economy degree and they were given some classes in Arabic for university language programme just because they didn't want to pay somebody to be a member of staff, they expect that student to do it as part time or sometimes free of charge. They also get PhD students to do it so they can put it on their CV as experience and they do it free of charge. That brings with it a whole set of issues that needs to be discussed separately in terms of quality assurance and things like that (transcript X, Timothy, the Forder);
- They're [Arabic tutors] not a specialist in the language and they're only doing it because they happen to be native speakers of a different variety of Arabic from what they're likely to be teaching, and because of that they're seen as good teachers. My view is that's the equivalent of me going into a biology class and saying, 'Hey, I'm going to teach biology because I have a body and I use it all the time so therefore I'm the best teacher of it.' Because it's quite unusual that you would actually have teachers of Arabic who are actually specialists in Arabic that's relatively unusual (transcript VII, Catherine, the Harris).

²³³ Research suggests that teachers are largely influenced by the way they were taught (Spada & Lightbrown, 2013).

These comments were made by distinguished specialists in the field which is evidence of how it is benefiting from a new wave of professionalism, also identified within the literature. Whilst their observations mainly focus on the situation in the US, Wahba, England & Taha (2018: 4) note:

Professional Arabic teachers join colleagues in other languages to deliver instruction on the basis of skills, knowledge and habits that have been recognized by their students, colleagues and superiors. A cursory look at job postings shows increasing demands for highly qualified teachers of Arabic.

Tutors teaching a subject which is not their own specialty is an issue facing all subject matters at HEIs (Blackmore & Kandiko, 2012a).²³⁴ In the student questionnaires, 5.7% complemented the teaching but 9.8% claimed it was of low quality.²³⁵ The importance of receiving good instruction at HEIs cannot be underestimated, as it has such a positive impact on student engagement, dedication and leads to deep learning (see Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Kahn & Walsh, 2006; Kuh et al., 2005). Survey comments included:

- the teacher's unfocused badly planned lessons (respondent 33, L5);
- not always great teaching methods (participant 37, L6);
- some of the questionable teaching (respondent 96, L6).

At least one student interviewed at every HEI, bar one, commented on negative teaching experiences. 9.7% of survey participants made suggestions to improve the approach to TAFL and teaching techniques:

- modernise teaching techniques (participant 105, L5);
- Promote group and class discussion (participant 70, L6);
- make sessions more interactive (participant 68, L6).

²³⁴ This is an issue with other L2s as a result of native speaker bias, whereby untrained native English teachers have been favoured, who do not have a sufficient understanding of grammar and vocabulary or how to structure lessons (Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Wong, 2009).

²³⁵ Although this is a low percentage, it was an open-ended question asking students what the least enjoyable part of their course was, and, in effect, is a trend which was picked up on during the analysis.

This suggests that many students believe there is a need for tutor development in TAFL on university degree courses. There is always a tendency for a minimal number of students to criticise teaching on module evaluation forms, so, to reach a more balanced conclusion, further classroom observations are needed.

5.7% survey respondents quoted positive teaching experiences. The following students noted that the most enjoyable part of their course was:

- the lecturers- knowledgeable and passionate about what they're teaching (respondent 117, L4);
- excellent teaching with engaging activities (respondent 70, L6);
- I enjoy the way that grammar is taught - They make it easy to understand (respondent 67, L4).

These comments provide evidence of a high degree of professionalism in TAFL. This is further supported by how the negative teaching comments were made by students nearing the end of their studies, as the L4 students will be benefiting from improvements made to courses. It could be that, to some extent, first-year Arabic students may not know the most effective way to learn an L2. However, 79.2% of students who participated in the survey had learnt L2(s) before learning Arabic, which suggests that the majority have experience in learning foreign languages. The positive comments were made by students taught by tutors with a specific background in TAFL and/or Arabic linguistics.

Although the structure of RV sessions was criticised in some HEIs, in the student interviews, three complemented the framework behind speaking sessions. These respondents specifically referred to the variation of exercises in classes, the preparation put into sessions by tutors' and students alike and the useful materials provided:

- Well, every week it is different, it is so varied. We often have, we have listenings to do at home so the teacher will set the listening exercises and we will listen to them before the class and we have the vocabulary which is in Arabic. Then we go through the vocabulary in lesson to make sure the English is correct and then we do listening comprehension questions. And other times, we have had a debate this year so we have roles for and against a controversial topic and then we argue that in class. We had, what else have we done? And we have given presentations as well. So last semester we gave a presentation about an Arab country and then this week we gave a presentation because we are doing like healthy lifestyles and fitness and diet and nutrition so we all did a presentation on like a healthy food or a healthy diet or something healthy. So that was like a five minute and then a three-minute presentation to the class. So that is it for conversation, mainly in the oral classes, mainly those exercises and presentations (transcript 12, Henrietta, L5, the Forder);
- Yes, she does put quite a lot of time into organising them [...] it's something that we have to prepare either like a five-minute presentation or a debate or [tutor's names] did a conference which was quite interesting so she's quite good at doing varieties of things but it's just an hour a week... isn't enough. We have reading and writing, well it's really reading we don't do writing in the class and that's two hours a week and most of it is literally just spent going through an article and reading it out loud. Bit of a discussion afterwards so we do get to practice speaking then too but if you actually think about how much an individual is speaking a week, it's maybe like five minutes if you break it down (transcript 9, Eugenie, L6, the Sealey).²³⁶

These quotes show how much of a difference it makes to students when their speaking sessions are well-structured. Eugenie highlighted the limited amount of contact hours available specifically for speaking practice, even in classes that are planned in advance. At the Stratton, this is less, as there is only an hour allocated for speaking fortnightly.²³⁷ There appears to be a mismatch between students' expectations of how much speaking practice should be provided and the focus of university courses.

7.2.4.1 Teaching RVs

Featherstone (2018) states that Arabic tutors need specific training in order to teach RVs effectively.

The results from this study suggest that, when RVs are taught, tutors are often not adequately prepared to do so. This was raised in some tutor interviews, student surveys and questionnaires.

²³⁶ Classes were not observed at the Sealey or the Harris but these quotes indicate that tutors are drawing on modern teaching techniques such as collaborative learning.

²³⁷ The amount of language input is addressed in section 7.2.3.

Although her observation made was regarding Arabic taught during the year abroad, it is interesting to note comments from the interview with Jessica, lecturer, the Sealey (transcript XII). She stated that, although students have an hour of instruction a day in Jordanian Arabic when abroad, and have the opportunity to use the RV outside of the classroom, the majority are not returning with a strong enough command of the RV. She is therefore concerned that it is not being taught effectively, which she believes, needs to be addressed. Jessica clarified during the interview:

what I think that is the two exceptional students managed to build the links between /ʕami:ja/ [RV] and /ʕʕħa:/ [SA] and understand how the /ʕami:ja/ [RV] works by themselves and the others were just given words and sentences and without any structure and I'm finding it very challenging because even in the Arab world they don't get taught /ʕami:ja/ [RV] with its structure (transcript XII).

James, L6 student interviewed made a similar comment. He stated that they predominantly learnt MSA whilst abroad and, although they did have classes in the RV, he felt that the tutors were trained to teach MSA and the RV classes, "weren't that often and they weren't that great to be honest with you" (transcript 15). It does not sound like James was receiving an hour a day of Jordanian:

I personally think that for instance, in Jordan, the teachers we had, they were great at teaching MSA and they kind of didn't see learning /ʕami:ja/ [RV] in the classroom as relevant or important. It was just like, 'you'll learn that when you are out and about.' So, I just felt they didn't really invest any time into preparing for the lessons. (Transcript 15)

This could be because native speakers themselves acquired their RV in this fashion. University students are adult learners who do not acquire language in the same way as children (see section 2.2.). James stated, when discussing the place of RVs at the Sealey:

I wouldn't really constitute it a class but basically for /ʕami:ja/ [RV] we just chatted for, we literally just had conversations the whole time and it wasn't particularly instructive. Occasionally we did things like they had like pre-recorded phone conversations between two native speakers using /ʕami:ja/ [RV] or perhaps we would listen to clips from a radio show or something. But in general again like the attitude I felt like the teachers didn't really know how to teach it or they didn't really feel it was that important. They didn't really give it that much focus. (Transcript 15)

These comments were voiced during my interview with Jessica (transcript XII), who felt that, although improvements have been made, speaking sessions could be more structured. She said that more can be done to support teaching RVs as language systems at the Sealey, as opposed to just allowing students to speak in them. Although students can use RVs, they are not taught the grammar or pronunciation. Jessica would prefer to introduce RVs as language systems earlier on in the course, and is investigating ways this can be done in accordance with the current approach at the HEI.

At the Furley, where students are taught RVs alongside MSA in the second year of study before going on their year abroad, three participants commented on the quality of teaching specifically in dialect classes:

- “bad speaking lessons” (respondent 110, L4);
- “some of the tutorials did not seem very beneficial as some teachers did not seem competent enough” (respondent 107, L6);
- “badly structured courses, especially when teaching dialects” (respondent 103, L5).

This was supported in interviews with students from this HEI. Amelia mentioned that she had learnt the North African variety on her year abroad in a structured way: taking the grammar into account and introducing the RV as a language system (transcript 7). Prior to that, she did not know there was structure behind RVs despite being taught both Egyptian and Levantine at the Furley. During our interview, when discussing RV classes, she mentioned:

the teaching, I don't know if it's got any better now but it was really bad. They just sort of did a half-hearted attempt at getting us to learn dialects, but they didn't really [...] they didn't give us any textbooks, it just felt like they hadn't really planned the lessons. (Transcript 7)

Amelia elaborated on her experience at the Furley, in comparison to that in Morocco:

I think it's a bit of an interesting one with teaching dialect, sort of teaching a spoken language is I think, especially for native speakers. They're like, “Oh, it's just practice, you just

need to practice it,” which is true but there is a grammar to it that you need to teach. And like the way we learnt /de.ɪdʒɑ/ [in Morocco] was like really structured, despite the fact that if you ask most Moroccans what they think about /de.ɪdʒɑ/ [Moroccan] they'll be like, “Ah, there's no structure to it,” like grammarless but obviously it does have rules [...] I feel like maybe our teachers, they weren't trained to teach dialect, they were trained to teach /foʃħɑ:/ [SA; ...] [they] just selected an Egyptian to teach the Egyptian dialect and a Syrian to teach the Syrian dialect but they didn't train them to be able to teach their own language.

Amelia's quote suggests that she believes her tutors in the UK were selected to teach an RV because it is their native language but were not qualified to do so. This is also an issue in ESL teaching as there is a preference to employ untrained native English speakers (Maum, 2002b; Wong, 2009).²³⁸ However, many argue that a tutor needs the appropriate training to teach an L2, which solely being a native speaker does not qualify them to do (Maum, 2002; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2002). Studies into the ESL classroom revealed similar issues to those voiced in this research, that unqualified native English speakers do not structure lessons effectively, have difficulties explaining grammar and vocabulary, and are unable to interact effectively with learners (Wong, 2009; Reves & Medgyes, 1994).²³⁹ Other students interviewed from the Furley raised issues with the way RVs were taught:

- You have two hours of speaking. One is Egyptian and the other is Levantine and you don't have a choice, you have to do both. And they are both structured along the lines, no sorry structured is a big word because they are not very structured at all [...] then in second year you get to choose which you prefer and just stick with that, either Egyptian or Levantine for one hour each [...] it is a complete and utter mess (transcript 10, Victoria, L5, the Furley);
- Levantine was the one that we were doing. The classes, I don't think that they're given much value. We have to do the speaking exam at the end of the year but they don't have any structure the classes at all [...] I think they say like basically when you go on your year abroad then you'll learn to speak and that's not their role, that certainly seems to be [the Furley] is just like we're not going to teach you to speak, you'll just teach yourself to speak and it's surprising how much that does happen, but then also maybe – I think if the classes had more structure then we would have been able to do slightly better (transcript 14, Alexandra, L5, the Furley).

²³⁸ Maum (2002b), found that native English speakers without ESL training are hired more frequently than well-trained non-native English speakers.

²³⁹ In Wong's (2009) study, teachers referred to dictionaries to explain vocabulary or asked a student to translate into the learners' mother tongue, they did not understand language terms, such as phonology or intonation, and did not know what to do with students to fill the time resulting to handing out activities for students to work on individually; This is not to say that native speakers do not bring strengths to the classroom, Reves & Medgyes (1994) concluded that native speakers are more effective in teaching advanced language learners.

Students interviewed felt that the structure of RV classes needed to be improved. Catherine, associate professor, the Harris, also highlighted this issue during our interview (see section 7.2.4).

She added:

What you find is instead of going and researching what it is structurally reading all the literature on it, looking through the various teaching materials there are for, whether it's Egyptian Arabic or Levantine Arabic or potentially Moroccan Arabic I don't know the literature on Moroccan Arabic. Instead of doing that they say, 'well, I can do a class because I know how to use the language you know and all we're doing is teaching or transferring, we are transferring communicative competence so all we have to do is play around with videos on YouTube and have a conversation club.' And I think that now is what is driving what students are learning in dialect classes and it's disastrous frankly. You may as well not bother in fact you'd be far better devoting that time because students don't have enough exposure to Arabic really, you'd be far better devoting that time to doing some more /fʊʂħɑ:/ [SA] if the dialect's going to be nothing more than a little conversation club. (Transcript VII)

Catherine has picked up above on the same issue as Amelia (transcript 7): that tutors are selected to teach their RV without any training in it. From this quote, in addition to those made by Jessica (transcript XII), we can speculate that it is not just students who have suggested that the approach to teaching RVs needs to be more structured. George, L5 student, the Elkington, however, felt that, at his HEI, RVs were taught more effectively than SA (transcript 11).

There are tutors in England who see the importance of teaching RVs as varieties in their own right. Margarete, the Shenton, stated that, in preparation for teaching the RV at her institution, she spent time analysing the language system herself so she could explain it to her students (transcript II). Although tutors are not trained to teach RVs, some have taken it upon themselves to understand their varieties in depth so they can pass this understanding on to learners. Charlotte, lector, the Shenton, explained the approach taken at her HEI:

What we try and do is we introduce the sort of grammar and structure in /ʕami:ja/ [RV] and then we kind of work in parallel and introduce them in /fʊʂħɑ:/ [SA]. So as you saw today we

were doing lots of work on /ɪ.li:/ [which, RV] and the kind of relative pronoun and how to put together the two clauses, so we've been doing that in /ʕami:ja/ [RV]. And then I gave them a handout, a worksheet for exercises in /fʊʃħa/ [SA], and they had in their booklets an explanation. It's basically the same but instead of /ɪ.li:/ [which], use /al.leti:/ [which, feminine], /al.leði:/ [which, masculine] and /al.leðina/ [which, plural], and they just do exercises. So we'll go over it in class so any rule that we do, we do the numbers, we present it in /ʕami:ja/ [RV] first, and then in the /fʊʃħa/ [SA] class we'll talk about how the numbers are in /fʊʃħa/ [SA; ...] We follow what we call a structural approach. So, we're introducing what we call structures, that's the main thing. So we kind of take it one structure at a time and keep kind of going back and forth between /ʕami:ja/ [RV] and /fʊʃħa/ [SA]. The idea is that we introduce it in /ʕami:ja/ [RV], /ʕami:ja/ [RV] generally speaking has the fewer rules, and so it's slightly more simplified, they get used to the idea, do lots of speaking and listening and then we translate it if you like into /fʊʃħa/ [SA]. So this is the equivalent in /fʊʃħa/ [SA], and we focus more on the reading and writing. We still do listening, not very much speaking in /fʊʃħa/ [SA]. So speaking and listening in /ʕami:ja/ [RV]. Those are the two key skills we focus on, then reading and writing in /fʊʃħa/ [SA]. You know the aim is that eventually they'll be competent enough in both to use them in kind of real-life situations. (Transcript I)

This approach was observed at the Shenton with both varieties incorporated into the same classroom (transcript A). New vocabulary was introduced to students in both varieties, which were colour-coded when written on the board. Most of the lexis was the same with slight modifications for pronunciation. Charlotte outlined the benefits:

when you saw me writing on the board, all of the new vocabulary we were introducing, most of it was the same, and now they understand that, that actually there is a lot of overlap. What we're trying to do is, I said to them at the beginning of the year, I said, think in your minds about three levels of difference. I said there's lots of similarities, then then the differences, the kind of most basic level, is pronunciation. So a word like ثلاجة /θela:dʒa/ (fridge [SA]) is /tela:ga/ (fridge [Egyptian]) but we introduce it in letters that are introduced that are pronounced differently in /ʕa:mi:ja/ [dialect] than they are in /fʊʃħa:/ [SA]. So they know that /dʒi:m/ and /gi:m/ is one that's different, or the /fe/ that we pronounce as /teh/ or /seh/ things like that. So, when I say you know ثلاجة /θela:dʒa/ (fridge) it's the same word but pronounced in the /ʕa:mi:ja/ [dialect] way, that's one level of difference. The second level of difference is you know, the word might be completely different so we say, I don't know, اللي /ɪ.li:/ (which) and /al.leði:/ الذي (which). They're two different words, but the structure is the same. We might use the /beh/ on a verb, so انا بكتب بس /ana: bektob bes/ (I write but) in انا اكتب فصحي /fʊʃħa: ana: aktob/ (MSA I write). It's the same structure, but it's maybe a different word or there's a difference there. The third level is something that's completely different, or is said in one but not in the other and that's when it's really different.

(Transcript I)

More Arabic-specific research is needed on this topic, as researchers are still undecided on whether proximity between languages, especially RVs, leads to faster learning or hampers it (Siegel, 2010). Camilla, course leader, the Elkington suggested that the similarities between SA and the RVs would make it too difficult for them to be learnt side-by-side (transcript VI). However, the effectiveness of the IA at the Shenton does present a strong counter-argument to this claim, especially as the similarities are highlighted to reinforce language acquisition.

At the Stratton, the tutor created a comfortable learning environment through her use of the RV (transcript G). For the first ten minutes of the session, she remained in MSA, with the odd tag question in the RV, then the first full sentence was rendered in the RV, “شو يعني هاي” /ʃu: jaʕni: haɪ/ (what does that mean?). As the session continued, there were increasing instances of RV lexis and structure being used by the tutor, who seemed to use it to encourage student participation:

رقم ثلاثة عشر رقم ثلاثة عشر رقم ثلاثة عشر اي واحد
 rʊqm θela:θa ʕaʃɪ rʊqm θela:θa ʕaʃɪ aɪ
 waħɪd/(number thirteen, number thirteen, which one) I need a volunteer
 انت حكيتي؟ /ɪnta ħakɛti:/ (have you spoken?)

She says “رقم ثلاثة عشر” /rʊqm θela:θa ʕaʃɪ/ (number thirteen) in MSA, including pronunciation of the /q/ and /θ/ phonemes, and the standard gender agreement for noun and number, then states, in English, “I need a volunteer.”²⁴⁰ When she directly addresses a student, the tutor switches to the RV, using the male pronoun “انت” /ɪnta/ for a female as in the Jordanian RV and the Jordanian equivalent for ‘to speak’ حكيتي /ħakɛti:/ as opposed to the MSA equivalent تكلمت /tekel.lɛmti/ or تحدثت /teħad.daθti/. It appears that she is drawing on her RV as a separate linguistic code to create a more comfortable, less formal learning environment, through switching to it to encourage class participation. This was mentioned by Sarah in the interview, “I tend to mix the two [...] and then I

²⁴⁰ Gender agreement for numbers follows a complex pattern, which many native speakers do not follow when speaking Arabic.

find it even more gives this classroom a better dynamic” (transcript VIII). Similarly, when investigating the use of code-switching in IA classrooms, Najour found that the most prominent trigger was for questions, as was the case at the Stratton (2018: 305f).²⁴¹

Najour concludes that, “the preference and style of the teacher, however, remains the most important variable when it comes to how dialect is integrated in the classroom” (2018: 314f). In contrast to observations made in that study, at the Stratton, the tutor draws on the RV when offering her personal opinion on the sayings studied, for example, “هاي كثير سهلة” /haɪ ketiːr sehl/ (this is very easy), “حلوة هاي” /ħalɔːwa haɪ/ (this is nice; transcript G). In these examples, she has used the dialectal pronoun هاي /haɪ/, omits case endings which would be pronounced in MSA, and it is one of the few instances where she pronounces the ث /θ/ as a ت /t/. The tutor switches to the RV for comical value, when joking with the students. For example, “دير بالكم لمن احكي” /diːr baːlkɔm lemen aħki/ (watch it when I speak; transcript G). This could tone down the formality of the session and add to the effect of the RV being used to create a comfortable learning environment. The tutor draws on the RV for variation as she often says the same thing in all the three codes adopted throughout the session. This was also a prominent reason for code-switching in Najour’s study, which she refers to as “repetition” (2018: 305f). An example from this study was, when asking for the meaning of a word, the tutor switches between the MSA “ما معنى” /ma maʕnaː/, the RV “شو يعني” /ʃuː jaʕniː/ and the English “what’s...” (transcript G). This further supports the idea mentioned by Sarah that the use of the RV in the classroom makes it more dynamic (transcript VIII), creating a more comfortable learning environment.

²⁴¹ Najour (2018) examined tutors’ speech in Arabic-language classrooms at the University of Texas at Austin and interviewed 20 instructors.

7.2.5. Coursebook

Al Kitaab. What an awful book (respondent 90).

4.9% of survey respondents complained about textbooks not being constructed well, and 3.3% referred to *Al-Kitaab* specifically, which is the most widely used in English HEIs. There are a limited number of textbooks available for TAFL, a challenge for educators when teaching the L2 (Soliman *et al.*, 2017: 14). As stated by Ryding, many Arabic programmes have been created without specialist input (2013: 67). In such programs, the coursebook is the main source of the curriculum and students progress from one level to the next depending on how many lessons are covered from the textbook. Educators have stated elsewhere that Arabic resources are insufficient, of low quality, and contain mistakes (Soliman *et al.*, 2017: 14). Tomlinson noted that, “in attempting to cater for all students at a particular age and level, global coursebooks often end up not meeting the needs and wants of any” (2012: 158). *Al-Kitaab* largely draws upon a ‘communicative’ approach to learning MSA including some sections on RVs. However, no universities in England currently take this approach to TAFL, revealing a mismatch between the two.²⁴² Furthermore, due to the lack of Arabic-specific SLA research, textbooks have been designed based on the views of tutors, as opposed to academic research (Soliman, 2018).

In this study, students interviewed expressed different views on *Al-Kitaab*:

What we learnt all centres around *Al-Kitaab*, it is very political, and in an academic sense it's very, very important but in terms of everyday life, it's not really what you'd expect [...] I personally really like it, most people don't like it but I really like it, but I think it could be supplemented. (Transcript 6, Elizabeth, the Stratton)

²⁴² There is not currently an up-to-date equivalent on the market focusing solely on MSA.

Although Elizabeth does see weaknesses in *Al-Kitaab* (the vocabulary lists), she does not necessarily view this negatively, and thinks the textbook just needs to be supplemented.²⁴³ Anne, the Forder, stated that she enjoys the vocabulary lists and the listening material, but she thinks the listening should be made more accessible for self-study (transcript 5).²⁴⁴ She also stated that the grammar is not comprehensive enough.²⁴⁵ Sophia, student, the Harris, stated:

I don't mind it, like I don't really hate it. I think mmm, I much prefer book two to book one. I found book one was good for starting out but now we have moved on to book two it is so much better because it is learning about historic figures and it is just so more interesting. I do find that some of the texts that we do because you know for each chapter it is a long text and all the vocab we learn for that week is in that text. And I do find some of the texts in *Al-Kitaab* really, really difficult and I Google translate every other word and I don't know how productive that is because I am not going to remember what I'm Google translating and it already has all this vocab to learn at the beginning so why not just include that in the translation section at the beginning rather than making me translate all that stuff. I can see why they want us to practice like identifying the root and then applying the root to the structure and then finding the meaning from that. But sometimes it is just really random difficult words and I think why? Yes, so I think that aspect of *Al-Kitaab* I don't really enjoy so much. (Transcript 8)

The point of reading exercises is not to translate every word, but to obtain the gist of the overall meaning. It could be that Sophia is not cognitively ready to read these texts, as stated by Adams (1990: 234), readers, "who pause on many words should be given an easier text." In *Al-Kitaab*, learners are presented with rather complex texts containing the new vocabulary, which could be counterproductive. When discussing the case of Arabic specifically, Hansen (2010: 579) argues that learners should be exposed to texts which can, "be understood so easily that learners' cognitive capacity can be directed to word recognition alone—instead of analytical processes."²⁴⁶ It could be that the communicative approach adopted in *Al-Kitaab* is not compatible with Arabic SLA.

²⁴³ This could be an influence from Arabic tutors' views' on the 'academic variety' of Arabic (see section 6.8).

²⁴⁴ This was also flagged up in my interview with Charlotte, the Shenton (transcript 1).

²⁴⁵ It is also cited as a weakness by many tutors.

²⁴⁶ Hansen argues that, "introducing learners to the Arabic alphabet and its sounds and then moving on to teaching them top-down reading strategies is not necessarily sufficient. In this view, the most widely used methods for teaching Arabic communicatively may lack emphasis on automaticity training as a crucial subskill in reading, as most reading practice—beyond the propedeutic course within the first semester of study—often focuses on training of top-down reading strategies like skimming and guessing from context" (2010: 579).

Tutors interviewed expanded on their criticism of *al-Kitaab*. Sarah, the Stratton, stated the coursebook needs to be supplemented, materials need to be updated and the language in listening texts is not pure MSA:

Our problem is that we don't have a good Arabic textbook for teaching Arabic [...] we know *al-Kitaab* has a lot of flaws in it and it is a good book but we don't think it is sufficient as it needs a lot of the supplementary material [...] some of the material is very dated [...] even the listening some of it has got /ʕami:ja/ [RV], we just stick to showing the /fʊʂħa:/ [SA] or recording our own audios. So, we don't stick to it, so we take it as a base but then we supplement it in the way that it should be supplemented. (Transcript VIII, Sarah, the Stratton)

Timothy, the Forder, believes that the weakness of *Al-Kitaab* is the topics covered: beginners are tackling complex subjects before mastering the simple ones.²⁴⁷

The best thing I can say about *Al-Kitaab* is what one person said, he said we seem to be learning about Maha more than learning Arabic. Maha did this, Maha did that and my comment on that said that it is easier for somebody studying *Al-Kitaab* to speak about the United Nations but he can't go on buy a sandwich at the canteen which is really a tragedy. So, you need somewhere in the middle between those, something that would give the student an opportunity to speak and learn formal Arabic but also something that would need on day-to-day language, something that he can use in the street, on the bus, in the post office, in a bank or something like that. (Transcript X, Timothy, the Forder)

Jessica, the Sealey, elaborated on the reasons she does not like *Al-Kitaab* or *Alif Baa*, as neither introduce the structure behind the grammar or alphabet in a clear or engaging way:

I don't know how to describe my feelings about *Al-Kitaab*, I don't like *Al-Kitaab* and I don't like *Alif Baa* either. I think there's no point in teaching students letters with words that they can't understand. I much prefer to go through vocabulary that allows us to form meaningful words straight away because when they do dictation, it's very hard to ask them to practice at home and write words that they don't know the meaning for [...] We're asking them to recognise when the long alif is and the short. At the end of the day, it's very difficult to engage when you don't know what you're writing, so when it comes to *Alif Baa*, I don't think it's very engaging. Plus I think the videos are very hard, so they cannot do listening unless it differences in pronunciation but the other videos are very hard, and at times because they use so much /ʕami:ja/ [RV] in the videos. You teach them all in /fʊʂħa:/ [SA] which is a completely different structure and I'm happy to teach both [...] and *Al-Kitaab* is, the

²⁴⁷ This supports the idea of reverse privileging in the Arabic classroom (Ryding, 2006; 2013; see section 2.2.4).

grammar is very shallow, there's no easy. They don't even use a communicative way to explain grammar, just like a few points, a few very confused points here and there [...]the students come and ask me, so at the end of this year, or at the end of this course, where am I in the common European framework? And so, for me I would like to say, you're taking 4 hours a week at the end you're going to be a B1, to be a C1 and I go through the description of the level and this is what you're going to be, and that would be the same for an A1. But I don't think *Al-Kitaab* is very close to a beginner, so I don't enjoy using it. (Transcript XII, Jessica, the Sealey)

Whilst Jessica criticises the approach to grammar in *Al-Kitaab*, claiming that it is not in line with CLT, Catherine, the Harris, finds fault with the wider approach to grammar in CLT in general, whilst specifically referring to *Al-Kitaab*:

Typically, now in this kind of *Al Kitaab* approach to teaching Arabic, the focus is so heavily on what they call communicative competence, the 'big discovery' that the Americans have made, which then means what students are doing is working on a language as if it is a collection of vocabulary with grammar that has to be kind of hidden. Grammar is like a bit of pill which is crushed into the spoonful of jam. So, they're fed lots of jam and to make it less painful they crush the pills of grammar up into the jam and try and hide it. Where actually I think that that makes students afraid of grammar and then they learn not to see it as a whole structure that is there for analysis. (Transcript VII)

Catherine further explains that it is problematic for students that they do not have a proper grammar reference for Arabic as *Al-Kitaab* is simply not extensive enough:²⁴⁸

what grammar books do you use, they've only used *Al-Kitaab*, how do you reference grammar, they look it up online, there's all sorts of bollocks on there. So, they're not being taught to think critically about what they're using but they've got no choice because *Al-Kitaab* is not possible to use as a reference grammar because its grammar is crushed up. (Transcript VII)

As an example of this, when initially introducing the verb conjugations, the book omits the dual and the feminine plural (see Brustad *et al.*, 2011: 74). When arguing in favour of the IA (see section 2.3.1.3), Younes (2018: 43) refers to its "simpler grammar," expanding on what is meant by this, stating, "in a truly integrated program, students learn to use certain aspects of Arabic grammar actively for conversation, while they learn other aspects found only in Fusha [SA] for passive

²⁴⁸ Also mentioned previously by Anne, student, the Forder (transcript 5).

recognition or for use in writing.” The idea that Arabic grammar needs to be simplified is widespread. In contrast, the results of this study indicate that students who have been taught Arabic grammar in its entirety (at the Furley) find it easier than those who have been taught through *Al-Kitaab*'s approach of only introducing 'useful' grammar (see section 7.2.6.3). This suggests that, for Arabic, it is beneficial to be taught grammar explicitly.

At the Shenton, they only use the *Al-Kitaab* dialect sections. Charlotte's comments centred around how these sections are not accessible for students for self-study, which is problematic, as other HEIs often ignore them as part of the syllabus:

a weakness of *Al-Kitaab* is even though you have those videos in /ʕami:ja/ [RV] there isn't any text to back it up. You have the video with the vocabulary and all the structures and the grammar and everything's based around this story and then if you have zero instruction in /ʕami:ja/ [RV]. If you were to listen to one of those videos you wouldn't understand half of it and you wouldn't understand, you wouldn't begin to navigate this world of /ʕami:ja/ [RV] and /fʊʂħa:/ [SA] and see. Whereas, I think our students are quite confident in that they can see the similarities and the differences, like we said the levels of differences as well, so ok it's the same word it's just /jemi:la/ [(beautiful)] instead of /gemi:la/ [(beautiful)], pronunciation, well that's half of the difference there. So I think that's a slight weakness of *Al-Kitaab*. I think in the third edition they've added Syrian alongside Egyptian and they've added more content around the /ʕami:ja/ [RV] and explaining the grammar and things like that but we don't use it so I'm not sure exactly how effective it is or whether other people have taken it up. But I know definitely not everybody, well I don't think anybody uses the /ʕami:ja/ [RV] part of *Al-Kitaab*, whereas that's the only part for us that we use. We like the fact that it's the same video, saying the same thing in /ʕami:ja/ [RV] and /fʊʂħa:/ [SA], where we find the real value. (Transcript 1, Charlotte, the Shenton)

Anne, L6 student, the Forder, reiterated this point when she stated that although she liked listening texts, they could be made more accessible for self-study (transcript 5). I asked some students how they approached the RV material in *Al-Kitaab* and the responses varied:

We didn't listen to them in class but yes, I did listen to them in my own time just because it was interesting. And when you heard people speak and when we listened to Al-Jazeera sometimes as well the sounds, it was easier to try and figure out what they were saying even if at times it was a bit like decoding something that you didn't understand. But, yes, I did I listen to them but we didn't listen to them in class, no. (Transcript 12, Henrietta, L5, the Forder)

Although they were not used in class, Henrietta, like Anne, listened to them in her own time. In England, where RVs are not taught at most HEIs, it would be useful for these sections to be accessible for students.²⁴⁹ Many students will not refer to them:

No, I haven't. I think because it doesn't count for anything and we are not expected to do it I have just left it on the assumption that oh I will just do the /ʕami:ja/ [RV] stuff on my year abroad. (Transcript 8, Sophia, L5, the Harris)

Mia, lecturer, the Holdaway, stated this is a very logical approach for students to take, to learn what is required for the exams (transcript V).

There appears to be a wide range of criticism of *Al-Kitaab*, from limited exercises for students to practice, an illogical choice of topics for beginners, complex texts, a shallow coverage of grammar, and inaccessible dialect sections. Although *Al-Kitaab* is the most widely used textbook for Arabic in England, some HEIs have adopted other resources as a result of the shortcomings of *Al-Kitaab*. At the Holdaway, they use *Arabiyyat Al-Naas* instead of *Al-Kitaab*:

we began with *Al-Kitaab*, for many years we used *Al-Kitaab*. Then we, but we vary it a bit. At the moment we use *Al-Kitaab* for the first year, but we're probably going to use more *Arabiyyat Al-Naas*. In the second years we've tried both and they prefer *Arabiyyat Al-Naas*. (Transcript V, Mia, the Holdaway)

It is surprising that the Holdaway uses *Arabiyyat Al-Naas* because it has been designed in accordance with the IA.²⁵⁰ Sarah, the Stratton commented on some of the other materials available, but emphasised that they are not suitable for degree-level Arabic:

²⁴⁹ This is a criticism of the book as opposed to a suggestion that tutors should be dedicating class time to make these sections accessible for students.

²⁵⁰ As discussed by Younes (2018).

for the Language for All, I always use for example 'Mastering Arabic.' I don't think that that is a book which is suitable for teaching it at a degree level. Because you need to look at what is in the market and we don't have one single book to say follow that as you say like a recipe for teaching Arabic. So, the closest thing that we have at the moment to like a fully structured curriculum is *Al-Kitaab*. (Transcript VIII)

It appears that *Al-Kitaab* is the closest book on the market which could be followed as part of the university syllabus, although many tutors, as above, would still argue against this.²⁵¹ In theory, tutors could substitute *Al-Kitaab* with an additional grammar book, but it is perhaps more convenient to refer to one book, and work through it page-by-page.²⁵²

Some HEIs have found alternative resources to *Al-Kitaab* which they use as part of the syllabus.

Camilla, the Elkington, explained how they refer to a variation of materials, most of which she gets when travelling in the Arabic-speaking world:

we do a combination so we've got, I don't know if you can see we've got books in drawers anyway whenever we travel. We use some materials from *Al-Kitaab* but not as much as before. We have James Dickins, I can't remember the other one. But for books whenever I go to Qatar I look through, I go to book shops, we have lots of books, we've got books from Tunisia that's done especially for foreigners learning Arabic and we've got books from Damascus university. So, what we do, we have them all, then we decide let's say today we want to talk about present tense, we look at all the exercises they've all got and from that we base our lectures we give handouts. We use a lot of handouts. But, if you want handouts with pictures then we just take a certain percentage and we just copy and scan because it's easier than us doing it. But we've employed an intern this year and she did electronic. We told her what we wanted and she's done electronic quizzes as well so that's for the students then to go and practice at home they just go through blackboard and do it. We do try and use our own but the ideas come from all of these places but because of copyright we change this but the principle is the same, not one text book we use loads. (Transcript VI)

²⁵¹ TAFL books have been published by Edinburgh University Press but these are focused on specialist areas of the language as opposed to a composing complete language syllabus. For example, *Advanced Media Arabic* (Lahlali, 2017), *Essential Skills in Arabic: From Intermediate to Advanced* (Lahlali & Kesseiri, 2017), *Advanced English-Arabic Translation: A Practical Guide* (Lahlali & Hatab, 2014), *Internet Arabic* (Diouri, 2013), *How to Write in Arabic* (Lahlali, 2009), *Business Arabic: An Essential Vocabulary* (Mace, 2008), and *Arabic Grammar: A Reference Guide* (Mace, 1998).

²⁵² A grammar companion to *Al-Kitaab* could be useful but does not currently exist.

This was raised by George, L5, student, the Elkington during our interview:

He would never make us study from one book, he would always come in with printouts, sometimes *Al-Kitaab* cards, sometimes from other books which I think is better, generally speaking. Because sometimes *Al-Kitaab*, it doesn't explain what it's trying to say very well, sometimes. [HEI] students, they study directly from *Al-Kitaab*. So, they know it quite well, but I don't think that was a disadvantage to me. I think it's better to learn from more sources so you can cherry pick the ones that you like [...] We have the textbooks. If I needed to look I could look and I have books on grammar, etc, but it's quite rigid and structured if you study from the book. It's very specific what you have to do, whereas if you are changing it as you go along and taking from different sources a bit more natural, bit more flowing, you can address what you need to address in your own time instead of following a rigid structure. (Transcript 11, George, the Elkington)

He appreciates the variety of resources and believes that there is not one textbook which can provide all the information needed for learning Arabic. In the questionnaire, when asked if they had any suggestions to improve courses, students requested to find an alternative coursebook to *Al-Kitaab* or to diversify materials (8.9%):

- there needs to be better coursebooks available. Everyone seems to use the *al-Kitaab* series but it is not the best. Even the lecturers complain about it (respondent 23);
- do not use one book for the entire course. This does not create progression, this promotes archaic thinking where you cannot think outside of the book. Create booklets encompassing all elements from speaking, listening, reading and writing (respondent 70);
- I think they [sic] should be more structures, for example have actual scheduled grammar lessons rather than following the text book and learning them as they come (respondent 92).

The first comment suggests that students' perception is influenced by their tutors. Given the abovementioned weaknesses in *Al-Kitaab*, it would not make sense to follow the book page-by-page. However, depending on the amount of time tutors have to plan their lessons, this may be the most time efficient solution.

Louise, the Forder has created her own syllabus for TAFL using materials she designed. Whilst she clarified in our interview that she does refer to *Al-Kitaab*, she emphasised that she uses the book as opposed to letting the book use her (transcript III).²⁵³ At the Furley, they have gone one step further than this, in creating their own coursebooks, which were complemented by students in the surveys (3/7) and 2/3 interviews:

They're really good textbooks [...] compared to especially compared to the [HEI] and [HEI] and [HEI] people and [HEI] as well the level of Arabic people reached in their first year especially and the textbook, they're using *Al-Kitaab* and I think that their understanding of Arabic was very different. They could possibly have a discussion about something but if you asked them anything about grammar they were generally quite weak, and probably because I was taught it in this kind of way I think that if you don't have a really good understanding of Arabic grammar you're, it's very hard for you to get to the higher level of really understanding 'cause that's really the key to it, and once you understand grammar the rest of it becomes really easy. (Transcript 7, Amelia, L6, the Furley)

This highlights, from this student's perspective, the minimal amount of grammar covered in *Al-Kitaab*. *Al-Kitaab* could have been compiled drawing heavily on CLT, which is based on acquiring European languages and not specific to Arabic language acquisition (see section 2.2.4).

Whilst *Al-Kitaab* does not present a comprehensive introduction to SA grammar, the coverage of the RVs is even more minimalistic with no grammar rules, vocabulary lists or practical exercises. This is problematic for HEIs that would like to include RVs within the curriculum: the lack of materials. Zaki & Palmer (2018) experienced this during their research at the American University of Sharjah, the United Arab Emirates. In Autumn 2014, they introduced the IA for their two Elementary Arabic 1 classes and one Elementary Arabic 2 class, also offering the Egyptian, Levantine and Emirati varieties. For the Spring 2015 classes that followed (again, two Elementary Arabic 1 classes and one Elementary Arabic 2), they no longer included Emirati, but one class of each Egyptian and Levantine for Elementary Arabic 1 and Levantine for Elementary Arabic 2. This is because, "the practicality of

²⁵³ As tutors do when they follow *Al-Kitaab* page-by-page.

offering three different dialects and maintaining this throughout the semester proved to be challenging,” particularly because they had to prepare material for the Emirati variety (ibid: 284). Zaki & Palmer (2018: 296) added that they had to prepare extra materials for the Egyptian and Levantine varieties because, in *Al-Kitaab*, they, “are not equally presented when compared to MSA.” This led them to conclude that, “more attention needs to be paid to the development of robust curricula of Arabic dialects to be integrated with MSA” (ibid).

7.2.6. Arabic compared to other L2s

Table 15: Summary of students answers (in percentages) to survey question 24, “How do you find learning Arabic in comparison to other languages?”

Arabic in comparison to other L2s	%
difficult	65.0
easy	17.2
different	8.1
same	3.3
logical	2.4

Survey participants who stated they had learnt other languages were asked how they found learning Arabic in comparison. This question acts to inform whether the way Arabic taught is true to *Arabic* language acquisition. 65% wrote that Arabic was more difficult than other L2s (79% of participants who answered the question; see table 15). 74% stated they had learnt other languages, and the statements “enjoy learning languages” (93.5% of agreement) and “for the challenge” (87% of agreement) were agreed with by a high majority of participants, appearing in the top five reasons to learn Arabic. This, in addition to 34.9% studying towards a degree in more than one L2, indicates that the majority of students opting for Arabic are experienced language users with a keen interest

in learning them. As L2s are supposed to be easier to acquire the more you learn, it could be surprising that so many participants found learning Arabic so difficult.

Respondent 100, L5, noted, “teaching of Arabic in general seems to be undertaken in a different way to European language teaching. It feels less coherent in some ways so making the switch is a challenge.” This respondent further elaborated on this in their response to another question on suggestions to improve courses, stating, “more speaking practice, more 'immersion'-style teaching from the beginning. Arabic does not have to be so intimidating to learn, it can be treated as any other language.” This touches upon the issue of solely relying on student comments. As explored in chapter 2, Arabic requires a different approach to other L2s which does justice to the reality of the language. I asked students interviewed how their experiences learning Arabic differed to that of other languages. Five respondents also highlighted that the difference was the approach taken to teaching the language. James, L6, the Sealey, elaborated on how he felt the approach to acquiring Arabic at his HEI was outdated, especially in comparison to the teaching of Turkish:

In contrast, I started learning Turkish in third year and the Turkish lecturer in a weird way basically she was funded by the Turkish government and she came over to teach. So, the way she was taught to teach a language was it was all about for instance the first class she didn't speak any English to us. Well, she never spoke English to us and it was all about things in the classroom and just basic speaking and that is how she started off. We didn't start off on this high level or trying to help us understand the deep levels of grammar and our rate of, well I understand Turkish is not as hard as Arabic but in terms or rate of development it was completely different. And actually, when it came later on to understanding grammar some of it just clicked into place as you had been using some of the rules without realising it. So, I feel that the way they teach Arabic is quite outdated. And English for instance, I have been on teaching English courses and ETC and because it has been taught so much the way to teach it has developed a lot more. Whereas Arabic and especially at university I felt like it was dated and staggered whereas our language institute in Jordan it was, I mean they specialised in it and they were a lot more at the forefront. They still had things they could improve on but they were at the forefront of trying to teach it a lot more like teaching other modern language whereas at university I felt it was a very backwards way of thinking about teaching a language. (Transcript 15)

Whilst James appreciates that Arabic is a different language, the comparison drawn between his experience learning it in England to that in Jordan suggests that the approach at the HEI could be

updated. However, as mentioned by James, a university and a language centre have different strengths.

A similar idea was touched upon by Alexandra, L5, the Furley, when she stated that her Hebrew classes were more communicative:

I think the system that we followed is the Ulpan system [for Hebrew] which is what the Israeli government has designed for new immigrants to train and absorb them. So, it's a very cleverly designed course whereas – and so it's designed to make you be able to communicate as much as possible as soon as possible whereas the Arabic is very different. (Transcript 14)

Alexandra and James' comments are both referring to how other L2s are, perhaps politically, impacting the way they are taught. TAFL could be affected by the way it has been taught historically in addition to the approach in the Arab world itself. Arabic was taught to study the “wisdom” of the Arabs and Muslims in the Golden Age of Islam” as opposed to as a medium of communication (Younes, 2015: 28; see section 2.3). This was raised by Charlotte, lector, the Shenton, when discussing why most HEIs in the UK are reluctant to move away from the MSA approach:

from the UK perspective if you like, historically Arabic was taught as a classical language and so, for example, here at [the Shenton], this faculty is Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, there's another faculty called modern languages. Arabic is a modern language, but historically it hasn't been seen to be that. So, I think a lot of universities up to say 50 or 60 years ago were only interested in it as a classical language so maybe historically there's some reminiscence of that so it's seen as being a classical. (Transcript 1)

The way Arabic was taught historically, could be affecting the approach taken in classrooms today. This could be the way that an outsider views the language, who is probably making the decisions as to what would count as a “modern language.” Another student highlighted the differences within the languages themselves, which could explain the approach:

Arabic is almost mathematical, once you know the grammar, you know the language but Farsi [Persian] is the opposite, the grammar is quite simple but speaking the language is quite difficult, just because it's very poetic. (Trascript 7, Amelia, the Furley)

Amelia argues that it is the structure of the language itself which means grammar has a more central focus on some courses. This is supported in section 2.2.1, which suggests L2 Arabic learners benefit from more explicit grammar instruction.

7.2.6.1. A challenging language

Although 74% of survey respondents stated they had learnt other languages in addition to Arabic, 82% answered the question comparing it to other L2s. Of the participants who stated they had not learnt other languages, 90% commented that Arabic was a more difficult language to learn. Is it as difficult as perceived? Or is it the perception that it is difficult? The United States Foreign Service Institute has classified languages into four levels or degrees of difficulty, based on the amount of time required to attain a certain level of proficiency. As summarised by Stevens (2006: 35):

Group I (relatively easy) languages include French, Spanish and Norwegian; Group II languages include German, Greek and Farsi; Group III languages include Czech, Russian, Finnish and Turkish; and Group IV (relatively difficult) languages include Arabic, Chinese and Japanese).

This is not surprising if you look at the relationships of the languages: those listed in group I and group II are Indo-European (IE), group III are Slavic, Finno-Ugric and Turkic which, along with the languages in group IV are not part of IE.

Stevens (2006: 38) drew comparisons between Arabic and other languages to measure if Arabic is as difficult as perceived based on the following linguistic factors:

- Overall relatedness of the languages
- Grammar: Inflections
 - derivational

- inflectional
- Vocabulary/ Lexicon (including derivational morphology)
- Writing system
- Spoken/ written dichotomy, including diglossia.

Stevens' research led him to believe that Arabic is not as complicated as perceived. Languages perceived as being 'easy to learn', such as Spanish, in some respects are linguistically more complex than Arabic (2006: 62). Stevens adds that this is not to say that the difficult aspects of Arabic do not exist, but they are exaggerated. He claims that these perceptions discourage students from taking the L2 up. It could psychologically affect students' acquisition process of the language and create a learning plateau (see Appleby, 2013). Difficulties exist in acquiring any language, which can differ from student to student. However, just because some aspects of Arabic can be viewed as being easier than other languages, the effort taken to learn the L2 must not be underestimated. Learners of Arabic commence their studies as adults which makes it more difficult to acquire and requires explicit teaching of learning strategies to assist the SLA process.

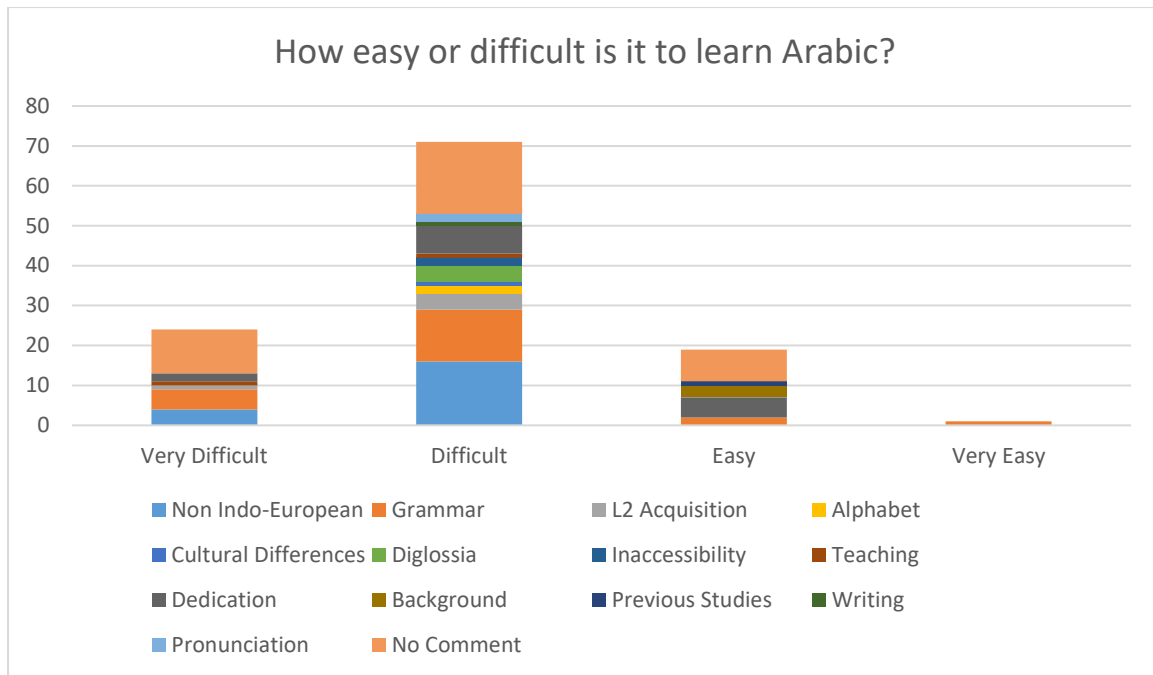
When comparing Arabic to the acquisition of other languages, 8.1% survey participants commented that Arabic grammar is difficult, whereas 6.5% stated that the grammar is 'straightforward,' 'logical' or 'mathematical'. 60%, who found Arabic grammar complicated, had been learning the language less than a year and 62.5%, who categorised it as easy, were studying Arabic for longer than a year. There are a lot of grammatical rules to learn which could be overwhelming at first, but it makes logical sense once learnt. The majority of students who initially found Arabic grammar challenging were studying at the Furley where the first year is spend intensively studying it for 20 hours a week. However, those who found it easier at later stages were also at the Furley and appear to have benefited from it, praising the resources used (they designed their own coursebooks at this HEI; see section 7.2.5).

7.2.6.2. How easy or difficult is it to learn Arabic?

Students were asked how easy or difficult it is to learn Arabic (see figure 13). Understanding students' perceived difficulties with the L2 can help tutors to be empathetic towards those difficulties and provide focus to SLA sessions. The most frequently cited reason for students finding Arabic difficult was it being a non-Indo-European language (16.3%), some elaborated that it makes vocabulary retention difficult and the grammar is different to any they have studied before.²⁵⁴ The next most frequently cited reason was grammar (14.6%) which was mentioned by 2.4% of students as making the language easy to acquire. Grammar was the only reason the student who stated Arabic was very easy to learn gave for their response, who was a non-Arab student with an A-level in French. 7.3% believed Arabic is complicated because of the dedication it requires, whereas 4.1% found it easy due to their investment in learning the language. 3.3% cited diglossia. Other reasons included the inaccessibility of the language (see section 7.2.6.5), the alphabet, cultural differences, writing (in particular all the rules to be remembered when writing a sentence) and pronunciation. There is no clear correlation between difficulties in learning the language and HEI. There will also be differences between individual learners: regardless of how logical one learner views Arabic grammar another may just not be able to comprehend it in those terms.

²⁵⁴ This is in line with the above classifications of languages made by the United States Foreign Service Institute.

Figure 13: Answers to question 26, "How easy or difficult do you find learning Arabic?"



7.2.6.3. Grammar

As abovementioned, Arabic has a lot of grammatical rules, but once they are learnt, they form patterns which could make it easier. Participant 112, L5, who stated Arabic was difficult to acquire due to the extensive grammar to keep in mind when constructing sentences also wrote:

to be honest, I always thought of Arabic as one of the hardest languages to learn. which is true, it is very difficult but, in some ways, it is a much simpler and more logical language than others I have previously learnt. It makes more sense to me and in terms of grammar, things click into place quicker.

Many participants referred to Arabic as being logical or mathematical, which can be highlighted when teaching the language. Participant 104, L5, stated that Arabic was very complicated due to the grammar but has identified the logic behind the L2, "grammar, requires a completely different way of thinking. almost mathematical." Participant 11, L4, finds it easy, "None of the grammar is inherently complex, it's just a case of remembering it all!" Because the Arabic derivational

morphology system takes a long time to learn, students tend to perceive it as being complex (Stevens, 2006: 42). The different structures in Arabic to L1 English provide a further challenge to overcome. This also means it is learnable, even exceptions typically form less regular sub-patterns to the patterns (ibid), and could explain why more advanced learners of Arabic find the grammar logical.

7.2.6.4. Vocabulary & pronunciation

13.8% survey respondents referred to the amount of lexis to memorise posing as complicated because they cannot relate it to Indo-European languages, or, because it takes a lot of dedication. Vocabulary retention has been noted as one of the most challenging aspects of Arabic (Al-Batal, 2006; Al-Shalchi, 2018) and, because learning words through reading poses a serious challenge to L2s with a different script (Gu & Johnson, 1996), languages like Arabic require additional vocabulary-building activities to aid retention (Al-Batal, 2006). As Arabic is taught at HEIs *ab initio* it would be expected that students will have extensive lexis to memorise. This could be simplified by referring to the Arabic root system. Al-Batal (2006: 338) stated:

The root and pattern system of Arabic represents a powerful tool for incidental vocabulary learning. Native speakers of Arabic utilize their subconscious knowledge of this system when they encounter unfamiliar words. In reading and vocabulary-building activities, teachers need to introduce the root and pattern system early on in the curriculum, aiming toward developing first awareness and then vocabulary acquisition skill. At every possible opportunity, teachers should point out similarities that exist among words of the same root and encourage students to guess the relationship in meaning for words that share the same root.

However, when elaborating on the difficulties of learning Arabic, participant 93, L6, wrote:

Much more complex. This is not only due to the different alphabet, but also to the almost complete lack of cognates and perilously complicated grammar. It is also odd learning Arabic because no one actually speaks Modern Standard Arabic, therefore a dichotomy emerges

whereby Arabic is very useful in terms of its global hegemony however utterly useless at the same time.²⁵⁵

Whilst this answer highlights many issues, it suggests that the respondent is unfamiliar with the Arabic root system. This can make memorising vocabulary more predictable, as students do not have to learn lists of individual separate items (Stevens, 2006: 42). The three-letter root can be learnt, along with the appropriate grammatical prefixes and suffixes. Table 16 provides a list of words derived from the Arabic root كُتِبَ /kataba/ (to write).

Table 16: Arabic words derived from the root كُتِبَ /kataba/ (to write).

Arabic	Phonemic	Translation
كاتب	ka:tɪb	writer
كتابة	kɪtɑ:bɑ	writing
كتاب	kɪtɑ:b	book
كتب	kɔtɔb	books
كتبي	kɔtɔbi:	bookdealer
كتيب	kɔtɪɪb	booklet
مكتوب	maktu:b	letter
مكتب	maktab	office
مكتبة	maktaba	library
مكتبي	maktabi:	individual office
مكتب	mɪktab	typewriter
مكاتبة	mɔka:tɑbɑ	correspondence
اكتتاب	ɪktɪtɑ:b	registration
استكتاب	ɪstɪktɑ:b	dictation

²⁵⁵ This also highlights the frustrations of students when they are shielded from the language situation (see section 7.2.6.5).

This could assist in reading, as a student can guess an unfamiliar word from the root. Obviously there are exceptions to the rules, for example, student is طالب /tɑ:lɪb/ from the root طلب /tɑ:lɑbɑ/, to demand, rather than coming from درس (darasa) to study, which would, grammatically make it دارس /dɑ:rɪs/. However, in Iraqi, “شنو دارس” /ʃnu: dɑ:rɪs/ means, “what did you study” which is also derived from the root. The grammar of the Arabic language can help in learning vocabulary. Studies have indicated that native Arabic speakers rely upon the root system to aid intradialectal communication (see sections 2.1; 2.3.3). L2 learners can also draw on it to aid communication. The Arabic root system can also be misleading and not solely depended on as a point of reference. There are other strategies which can be given to learners at the start of their studies to aid vocabulary retention as researchers agree it leads to higher retention rates (Cheng, 2011; Lee *et al.*, 2010; Liu, 2010). As studies suggest learning vocabulary may be even more challenging for students who also acquire a new writing system (Muljani *et al.*, 1998; Hamada & Koda, 2008), learning strategies need to be included in the classroom.

Two survey respondents cited pronunciation as being a difficult aspect of Arabic, also mentioned by James in the interview (transcript 15). The widely used textbook for learning the Arabic alphabet does not detail the phonetic differences between new phonemes and just expects the learner to hear the differences for themselves through the provided recordings, creating an added complexity for learners to pronounce them. Explaining the differences in articulation would be useful as, for adult learners, it is difficult to pick up a new phoneme by solely listening to it.²⁵⁶ For example, in

²⁵⁶ Some argue that as adult learners have passed the critical period (CPH) they are unable to achieve native pronunciation (Lenneberg, 1967; Patkowski, 1980; Scovel, 1988). Although the CPH is still in dispute, it is clear that pronunciation is particularly difficult for adult learners.

English we do not have retroflex consonants which require a speaker to curl the tongue so students would often pronounce the /d/ (ض) as a /d/ which is another letter in Arabic (د).²⁵⁷

7.2.6.5. Diglossia & inaccessibility

5.7% survey participants referred to Arabic as complex due to diglossia, 3.3% when discussing the differences between learning Arabic and other L2s and 3.3% when commenting on how easy or difficult it is to learn Arabic.²⁵⁸ Respondent 37, L6, wrote, “multiple dialects make it difficult to get to good level for communicating with arabs [sic] generally.” Currently, in HEIs throughout England, a majority of students are not prepared to deal with the language situation, which would explain why they find it challenging. Whilst this thesis has revealed that a majority of HEIs include RVs at some point in the course (see section 6.1), sociolinguistics does not compose a compulsory part (see section 7.1). 57.1% of respondents stating diglossia makes it a complicated language were in their final year of courses prioritising MSA.²⁵⁹ The remaining 42.9% were in the first year of being introduced RVs at their HEI. This suggests that whilst diglossia is, for some students, a difficult concept to digest at first, it does not pose a long-term complication, as advanced students at HEIs that support RVs have not cited them as a difficulty of learning Arabic.

Arabic diglossia could make the language inaccessible for students, cited by 1.6% of survey participants. This poses a problem for learners wishing to self-study or increase their exposure to the language through watching an Arabic movie, listening to music or reading a novel. Advocates of the IA argue that including more authentic use of the language on courses would make it easier for

²⁵⁷ Hansen (2010: 572) found that even native Arabic speakers are “uncertain about the exact grapheme-to-phoneme correspondence of letters that are both graphically similar and represent different phonological values in the standard and the local language varieties (e.g., they often confuse ض and ظ.”) This further demonstrates the difficulties of pronunciation in Arabic.

²⁵⁸ 0.8% cited diglossia in response to both of these questions so this has only been included once in the total amount.

²⁵⁹ 3.3% of all participants in the study.

students to access the language outside of the classroom and reinforce learning (Younes, 2018: 42f; see section 2.3). Mia, the Holdaway, brought this up in the interview:

the issue of the availability of materials, it's fine once you're intermediate, advanced, sorry advanced not intermediate, it's still difficult for intermediate students because most of the authentic materials are too hard [...] it's only manageable with support for fourth year students so in some ways there is less than it looks like, but they can still expose themselves, watch children's Aljazeera. (Transcript V)

Whilst the availability of materials could pose a problem for students on a pure MSA course, Margarete, Lector, the Shenton, saw it as a positive advancement (transcript II). This appears to be an additional benefit of the approach taken at her HEI, to teach students through the IA.

7.2.7. Concluding remarks

From the student questionnaires and interviews it appears that the majority are not developing an understanding of the Arabic language situation which starts with diglossia. Many are unaware of it before travelling to the Arabic-speaking world and, solely experiencing it first-hand will not provide them with a background understanding. Through the interviews and classroom observations it surfaced that any inclusion of diglossia is at the discretion of the tutor. This research revealed instances of effective incorporation of diglossia into the classroom at the Forder and the Harris. Students at those HEIs are benefiting from a deeper understanding of the language situation as tutors have taken it upon themselves to go further than the existing curriculum and raise awareness surrounding the language situation. However, more learners would benefit if this was reflected in the curriculum because it is central to what makes the acquisition of the L2 so unique.

This research revealed that classrooms are emerging which are reflective of Arabic in the Arab world with the RV being used authentically alongside MSA. Six HEIs support the usage of the RV in the classroom upon students' return to the UK. Learners at other HEIs reported being frustrated to lose

the progress they had made in the RV whilst abroad. However, only two HEIs allow students to authentically use the RV in exams which could be sending mixed messages to learners if they can use the RV in the classroom to be penalised in exams. The Shenton is the only HEI to employ the IA and is utilising it effectively with support from both staff and students. Those classroom observations provide an example of how RVs and MSA can be used within the same classroom, focusing on the structures behind both. It appears that students are deeply benefiting from this 'structural' approach and are using both the RV and MSA effectively. The observations from the L6 class at the Furley demonstrate how students can learn to authentically modify the formality of their speech and more than one RV can be incorporated into the same classroom.

The data suggest that, when developing the curriculum, there are pedagogic issues to be addressed: an updated teaching approach; teacher development and appropriate teaching materials. Whilst classrooms were found utilising SLA research by taking a holistic approach to SLT and incorporating effective practices from CLT, others were found to be using the GTM in communicative sessions and depending heavily on the L1. It could be a result of using MSA in inauthentic situations leading to the use of English to tone down the formality. However, this is not a suitable solution for learning an L2. Some tutors and students suggest that the approach to teaching the language is outdated and being impacted by how it has been viewed historically. There are also challenging aspects of the language which need to be considered when teaching the L2. Some of the major difficulties voiced by students suggest that, alongside a focus on certain sociolinguistic factors, there is a need for explicit instruction on grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary building exercises. This research shows that TAFL is benefitting from a new wave of professionalism due to the existence of tutors with a background understanding of the L2. However, there is evidence that there is a need for further tutor development to support an updated approach to TAFL and to ensure that every student

obtains a linguistic understanding of the language. Whilst *Al-Kitaab* has been widely criticised within this study, it appears there is no current alternative on the market, nor are there appropriate materials for learning RVs. Some HEIs were identified which have developed their own coursebooks or are drawing on a wider range of materials which seems to be an effective alternative for university-level Arabic.

Chapter 8: Conclusion & recommendations

In this chapter, the research questions are addressed which act to advise the overarching theme of how degree-level Arabic can do justice to the reality of the language as it is used today.

8.1. Conclusions

8.1.1. What factors are specific to the Arabic language situation?

Section 2.1. explored the research on the language situation in the Arabic-speaking world to conclude that it is a complex one, which, due to more than one prestigious variety of the language and a tendency to code-switch, cannot solely be categorised under Ferguson's (1959) classic diglossia. In the Arab world, the function of H is covered by more than two varieties: CLA for religious and literary purposes, MSA for education and the media, a western language for technological or scientific communication and an urban variety for social prestige (see section 2.1.3.2). This study defines it as an 'overlapping multiglossic' language situation which is specific to Arabic. These aspects which make the language unique need to be included within the undergraduate curriculum.

This creates an added complexity when teaching the L2. Section 2.2. highlighted that communicative competence for Arabic has not yet been addressed, a definition of which needs to include the implications of Arabic as an 'overlapping multiglossic' language. Historically, the L2 was treated as a classical language, and its depths of grammar were included for laborious study as the academic aspect. When CLT was introduced, the intense details of grammar were eased out and MSA was taught communicatively, both undermining the classical approach of teaching Arabic grammar in its complexity and the inclusion of teaching students to communicate in the L2. The current approach is doing justice to neither.

Research into the approaches of teaching Arabic as a diglossic language lacks empirical research (see section 2.3). The US has highlighted successful outcomes for the IA but more needs to be done. It is out of the scope of this study to specify exactly what CLT means for Arabic or which of the approaches identified in section 2.3. is the most effective. It highlights that these are issues specific to the discipline which need to be addressed in further research. This affects the acquisition of Arabic whether that be in the UK, the US, a language centre or a university. The context of HE has not yet been considered in the literature for Arabic, addressed in this study. Chapter 3 highlights that the answers to making the Arabic curriculum more reflective of its reality can be identified by investigating three angles: research, student needs, and tutors. This warrants a study of its own, as it needs to be tailored to the specifics of the discipline (see Chapter 3), but it is hoped, through this study, to provide an initial contribution.

8.1.2. What are students expecting from their degree course in Arabic? Which varieties would they need to learn to meet their goals?

Similar to studies carried out in the US (see section 2.3.2), the results of this study suggest that the most frequently cited reasons to learn Arabic relate to speaking and communication (see section 5.1.1).²⁶⁰ A majority of students spend a year abroad and expect their HEIs to help to prepare them for this by equipping them with a suitable language code. Most universities do not, creating a mismatch between student expectations and the content offered on courses. This points to a need for transparency surrounding what is included in an undergraduate degree in Arabic and greater dialogue between students and tutors both prior to the course commencing and during it. Other reasons to learn the language with direct implications for which variety needed to be learnt were culture, politics, the media, and a career, discussed below.

²⁶⁰ Although not completely comparable, as those studies were carried out in the US, these results do reveal a slight increase.

Previous studies suggest that, to connect with native Arabic speakers and integrate into Arab culture, students need to be able to converse in any one of the RVs (Isleem, 2018; S'hiri, 2013a; Palmer, 2008; see section 5.1.1). Because MSA is not spoken in day-to-day situations, it seems obvious that this would be the case. To converse with other Arabic speakers, L2 learners need to acquire some competence in an RV. Even if they opt to use MSA, speakers frequently switch to the RV, meaning following a dialogue is challenging without some background knowledge of it. As observed from students' experiences (section 6.6), MSA is an important vehicle for communication: students can draw on it when they are in a location where the RV they speak is not received favourably, and, they can use it for clarity within their conversations. Both varieties assist in effective communication, not solely RVs or MSA. Speaking an RV or MSA does not prepare students for how their Arabic is received. A crucial component is to understand the usage of varieties so they can be drawn on skilfully and appropriately. This background understanding meets the criteria of knowledge expected from HE but also acts to support the practical acquisition of the language: an important component of a degree in Arabic.

Culture was cited by a large majority of students as a reason for learning Arabic (see section 5.1.2) and, previous studies suggest that students view both varieties as important for cultural understanding (Al-Batal & Glakas, 2018; Zaki & Palmer, 2018). Authentic cultural materials are increasingly using a mixture of both MSA and RVs, meaning that knowledge of an RV in addition to MSA would help students to develop a deeper cultural understanding. In Zaki & Palmer's study (2018) respondents viewed MSA as important for cultural understanding as it provided access to the Arab media. In this study, a majority of respondents expressed the desire to use their language skills to access news articles and broadcasts (see section 5.1.3), for which they would need a strong command of MSA. Studies have shown that RVs are being introduced into the media (Al-Batal, 2013; Khalil, 2019), which suggests that learning RVs would help students follow the news. As students can

access the Arab media with ease through the internet, it would not only facilitate their SLA but ease their frustrations through understanding their difficulties in comprehending certain broadcasts. An awareness of the importance of both MSA and RVs could motivate students to learn both, whether that be at university or through self-study. Although it was not among the top five reasons to learn Arabic, a better understanding of Arab politics had a high level of agreement from participants (see section 5.1). MSA and RVs play an important role in the political domain, for example, many politicians tactically code-switch within their speeches in an attempt to appeal to the masses (Bassiouney, 2009).²⁶¹

Studies suggest that L2 skills give graduates a competitive edge in the workplace (Grosse, 2004), which could explain the large number of respondents learning Arabic to prepare for a career. Many respondents linked this desire to a career in politics, diplomacy or government agencies. In those fields, understanding RVs is a crucial skill. Whilst not covered in the scope of this study, given issues with the level of a graduate's Arabic language proficiency, an undergraduate degree in the language would likely not prepare a student to work as a specialist in the language.²⁶² This could explain why some students commented that the prospect of a career resulting from their Arabic language studies seemed less likely as the course progressed. Whilst it is clear that there is a majority of students who expect learning Arabic to increase their employment prospects, this is not the sole purpose of a university education (see section 3.1). There are attributes of learning Arabic that might be seen as commendable, such as learning a different alphabet, the understanding of a different culture via its language, etc., which demonstrate a candidate can think beyond the paradigms of their own worldview.

²⁶¹ The extent of which differs from location to location.

²⁶² This issue was raised by three tutors in this study; for further discussion see Holes, 2003.

There are domains which could require solely mastering an RV (such as in preparation for holidays) or SA (for example, for religious or translation studies) but these are not sole reasons to study towards a degree. To fulfil the reasons for learning Arabic in this study, it appears that having an end result of being able to code-switch or, at the least, to understand how Arabic varieties are used, would provide learners with a richer understanding of communication, culture and politics. This awareness of how the language works does justice to the reality of the language and provides students with the academic knowledge expected from a university. Some careers do require an understanding of RVs, so, if courses do not teach them, providing students with this knowledge would help them to have realistic expectations on their career prospects and help them to better prepare for their future.

8.1.3. Is including regional varieties in the undergraduate curriculum supported by:

8.1.3.1. *Research?*

Research into Arabic linguistics and SLA suggests that, to reach the goals outlined in the course benchmarks for Arabic, RVs need to be supported on degree courses with a major component in Arabic. There is a need for further research to address the implications of learning more than one variety of Arabic. Since the 1990s, academics have been arguing when and how to introduce RVs, but none of those arguments were based on empirical research. Even studies published recently leave many questions unanswered (see section 2.3.1). Whilst there is a strong argument that RVs need to be included for learners to become competent communicators, and to reach their goals for learning the L2, the answer is not to simply include a 'dialect' module. There are other aspects of the language which need to be considered including a linguistic understanding of Arabic. It is widely believed that MSA is the only variety worthy of academic study (see section 6.8). This study argues that reaching an academic level in Arabic requires an awareness of how the varieties operate and are used by native Arabic speakers. Solely teaching MSA and ignoring the reality of the language situation does not provide a full understanding which needs to be included in the university curriculum. This can be addressed by clarifying to students from day one that MSA does not

constitute a coherent whole, like other L2s such as German, French or Spanish. Including this awareness of the different varieties of Arabic and how they operate with MSA needs to be prioritised.

8.1.4.2. Tutors?

Four tutors explicitly mentioned that MSA should be prioritised on degree courses but three were undecided on whether there is a single approach which could be implemented across the board. One was in favour of the IA. Therefore, the majority of tutors are content with the approach currently offered in their institutions. Research suggests that tutors are deeply influenced by the way they were taught and, as RVs are acquired as mother tongues and SA through education, it is understandable that learning RVs at university can seem unnatural. The reasons quoted against including RVs: that it would confuse students; RVs are only needed in the Arab world; and MSA solves the dilemma of which variety to teach, have already been widely addressed in the literature (see section 2.3). This suggests that there are tutors who need to familiarise themselves with the research and alternative approaches to TAFL. Some did have an incomplete understanding of the language situation themselves, identified through further comments such as MSA being the academic variety and certain Eastern Arabic varieties being 'closer' to MSA. These incorrect notions are then passed onto students, as a confirmation bias. Even if HEIs are to decide not to teach RVs, it is important that students are gaining a background understanding of how the language is used.

Despite some criticism found in the literature (Featherstone, 2018) echoed in this study (abovementioned), tutors with a deep understanding of the language situation themselves were identified, highlighting an increasing amount of professionalism in the field. This research shows that, the (three) tutors who were undecided on which approach is suitable for Arabic, had a background knowledge in Arabic linguistics or L2 acquisition, had thought about the language processes in more detail and consequently transmitted an accurate analysis to students. Tutors are

taking it upon themselves to analyse their RVs from a linguistic perspective and are investing time in introducing a background understanding of the language to their students, who have openly stated they are benefitting from it (see section 6.2.2). The next step is for this to be reflected in the curriculum (see section 8.2.1).

8.1.3.3. Students?

Similar to their tutors, the majority of students believe it is important first to gain a solid grounding in MSA before moving onto learning an RV. This could suggest that tutors' views are impacting students', who, like their educators, are cautious of an approach which is different to the way they were taught. However, the majority of student survey respondents were in favour of RVs being included as part of the curriculum at early stages of the course, as they wished to learn them prior to the year abroad (see section 6.2). The reality of using Arabic during their year abroad and interactions with native Arabic speakers is highlighting to them the importance of RVs for communication. Without a prior knowledge of an RV, integration and understanding native speakers during the year abroad is challenging. Despite these realisations, students do not have a background understanding of how Arabic varieties are used, rendering their knowledge incomplete. Upon their return to England after the year abroad, students are disappointed to lose progress in the RV, but also ashamed of the mixture of varieties they have acquired. The reality is, this is how Arabic is used in practice. It would be much more beneficial to build on this knowledge as opposed to erasing it, and encouraging students to speak inauthentically after they have made other advancements during the year abroad. This research provides effective examples of how this can be done. For example, at the Shenton, students can use the variety acquired abroad with minor adjustments in examinations and the classroom, which provides evidence of how the final year can support and develop the language acquired during the year abroad. A background understanding equips students with the skills to draw on their varieties of Arabic skilfully and appropriately.

Students generally agreed that some modifications needed to be made to courses to either include more exposure to the RV, or to make the approach to teaching RVs more structured. The IA, perceived by students and tutors as being daunting and confusing, is the only approach to have been received well in practice. This corresponds with data from previous studies which suggests that students learning Arabic through the IA are satisfied with the approach (Zaki & Palmer, 2018; Al-Batal & Glakas, 2018; see section 2.3.1). However, only one participant learning the L2 through the IA was interviewed, a larger pool of participants needs to be included to reach a more reliable conclusion. Furthermore, if the IA was to be adopted this would still not solve the more pressing issue of doing justice to the language situation, which needs to be supported on courses (see section 2.1).

8.1.4. How is Arabic currently treated in the curriculum? Does it do justice to the reality of Arabic?

This thesis highlights the importance of the year abroad for language acquisition: it is when students make the most progress in the language due to their intense hours of study at a language centre and the ease at which they can interact with locals. At two HEIs it is not compulsory, which puts the students who cannot go abroad at a disadvantage. Secondly, this study reveals that only three HEIs have integrated RVs as part of the curriculum. As highlighted in the following section, this means there is a mismatch between curriculum and pedagogy.

The majority of degree courses focus on acquiring practical skills in MSA as opposed to authentically using the language. This was the response of Arabic departments when CLT was introduced and, as a result, degree courses were missing some components of communicative competence: sociolinguistics and discourse (see sections 8.1.1; 2.2). This has led to gaps in a student's practical usage of the language. To be reflective of Arabic as a living language, two HEIs are equipping students with more authentic language skills through teaching them to moderate their speech or to

speak in a different variety, leading to code-switching at more advanced levels. This is more reflective of Arabic and does justice to its practical usage. When not supported by the theory of the topic, understanding the language situation becomes solely a by-product of SLA. Language use is constantly changing, a background understanding is more beneficial and in line with the knowledge expected from a university. This reinforces practical skills obtained. If courses are to decide to solely include MSA in the curriculum, the variety needs to be presented to students as what it is, making the language situation a crucial part of any degree-level course. A completely authentic solution may not be suitable for Arabic SLA, especially beginners, but more research is needed into that field.

HEIs which do not support RVs within the curriculum have adopted this stance because they believe introducing RVs to students too early in the course would be a source of confusion; it is only necessary to learn when travelling abroad, and prioritising MSA solves the issue of which variety to teach. Whilst it is easier to decide to focus on MSA, as stated elsewhere, these reasons have already been widely addressed in the research (see section 2.3.1), suggesting that decision-makers at HEIs need to familiarise themselves with alternative approaches, even if they do not decide to employ them. Each of these reasons does not consider a major aim of a HE, and that is supporting a fuller understanding of the subject itself. Even if courses are not providing practical instruction in an RV, the language situation is part and parcel of the discipline and is central to what makes the language unique (see section 2.1).

8.1.5. How is Arabic it taught? Does it do justice to the reality of Arabic?

This thesis is the first known to have investigated what happens within undergraduate Arabic classrooms in England. The observations act to compliment the other research tools, enabling the researcher to see first-hand how the varieties of Arabic are used in the classroom. The approaches used for TAFL have been identified (see section 7.2), and the extent to which language diversity is supported within the classroom setting (see section 7.1). There are other aspects of TAFL which can

be investigated in more depth from these observations (such teacher talk vs student talk; learning techniques, etc). There was not enough room for that in this study, but it can be expanded on in further research. In the following sections, conclusions are drawn from the main themes highlighted in this research: language diversity in the classroom; approaches to SLA and teaching materials.

8.1.5.3. Language diversity in the classroom

Some HEIs acknowledge the importance of RVs for communication and have been allocating classroom time to them, whether that be through a few sessions to prepare students for their studies in the Arab world, or allowing them to be used in the classroom after the year abroad (see section 7.1.2). Although these are useful steps in the direction of making the discipline more reflective of its reality, more can be done (see section 8.2). It reveals a mismatch between how RVs are treated in the curriculum vis-a-vis the classroom (see section 6.2). Allowing students to use RVs during classes but penalising them for doing so in examinations may be confusing. Whilst this could be interpreted as HEIs experimenting with including RVs in the curriculum, it is sending mixed messages to students. Some tutors are dedicating class time at the beginning of the term to understanding Arabic diglossia, which provides evidence of how Arabic lecturers are integrating current research into the classroom as advocated in the HE literature (see section 3.4). This is a positive finding which can be expanded on. Every university student should benefit from a fuller understanding of the language.

This research has revealed effective incorporation of RVs into classrooms, supported in the curriculum. Observations from the Shenton provide an example of how MSA and RVs can be taught effectively side-by-side and, from the Furley, support how students can skilfully and authentically draw on the different varieties of Arabic. However, student and tutor comments from some HEIs suggest that improvements can be made (see section 7.2.4). Tutors themselves may not have a linguistic knowledge of their own RVs and are often solely appointed because the RV is their mother

tongue, as opposed to understanding the language situation.²⁶⁵ This points to a need for tutor development. Lecturers identified as transmitting accurate knowledge on RVs and the language situation had taken it upon themselves to study the structure behind the RV itself, supporting the importance of understanding RVs as language systems to do justice to the variety in HEIs.

8.1.5.4. SLA

Student survey respondents requested an updated approach to TAFL. Some linked this to their experiences learning other L2s which, they believe, are approached more appropriately for SLA. Tutors interviewed stated that the way Arabic has been taught historically and how it is approached in the Arab world is affecting the L2 classroom, which is not necessarily compatible with SLA for adult learners.²⁶⁶ Some classroom observations suggest that there is an over-dependence on English, which, although not in line with SLA research, could be because using MSA in classroom settings feels inauthentic to tutors themselves, making them draw too heavily on English.²⁶⁷ Whilst some classrooms and courses were found to be taking a holistic approach to teaching the language in line with SLA research, others drew on the GTM even in classes dedicated to speaking (see sections 2.2; 7.2). The GTM is effective for teaching grammar and translation, but speaking classes should be focusing on exposure to the L2 and communication skills. Due to the specifics of Arabic, the GTM can be used advantageously for teaching structures which are unfamiliar to L2 learners. It is clear that the approach to teaching Arabic for communication should be updated. Arabic-specific research needs to be considered as wider SLA research is skewed in favour of a select few languages. Although it is not the sole purpose of a university to act as a language centre, as Arabic is offered *ab*

²⁶⁵ This is because they acquired them as a mother tongue and have not considered the existing structures behind them.

²⁶⁶ As clarified by Lightbrown & Spada (2013: 38), “cognitive maturity and metalinguistic awareness allow older learners to solve problems and engage in discussions about language, this is particularly important for those who are learning language in classroom, with limited time in contact with the language” (see section 2.2).

²⁶⁷ In language classes, either the L1 should not be used in the L2 classroom or its usage should be minimal (Cummins, 2007; Turnbull, 2001).

initio, language acquisition classes need to focus on the most effective way to learn the L2. It is arguable that the university, as a research-based institution, can offer more in this regard.

8.1.5.5. Availability of materials

Another widely cited issue for TAFL is the main textbook. *Al-Kitaab* was criticised by students and tutors alike for its limited exercises for students to practice, an illogical choice of topics for beginners, complex texts, a shallow coverage of grammar, and inaccessible dialect sections (see section 7.2.5). Although tutors state that *Al-Kitaab* is the most suitable textbook on the market for university-level Arabic, many of the shortcomings make it incompatible with Arabic SLA especially for university students, as well as a clear mismatch between the approach taken in *Al-Kitaab* and English HEIs. To address this, some HEIs refer to a range of materials as opposed to solely relying on one book and one HEI has developed their own textbooks. More can be done to provide more suitable materials to learners of Arabic, however, the workload of the tutor may not allow sufficient time to do so. If we are going to accept that a solution for Arabic beginners is to teach MSA drawing on each of the four skills, this needs to be reflected in materials with an appropriate amount of grammatical competence. This study has shown that students with explicit grammar instruction did not cite grammar as a difficult aspect of the language.

8.2. Recommendations

8.2.1. How could the curriculum better reflect the reality of the Arabic-speaking world?

8.2.1.1. A linguistic understanding

As clarified above, student need provides a strong argument in support of a module which can prepare them for how Arabic is used *in practice*, and, as stated elsewhere, understanding the language situation is a key component of the theoretical research. This is supported by tutors with a linguistic understanding of the language, who have dedicated classroom time to understanding diglossia. This needs to be a compulsory part of the curriculum as opposed to being at the discretion

of the tutor. All three angles explored in this study: the theory, student need and tutors' expertise provide evidence for the need to amend the curriculum to make it more reflective of the linguistic reality of Arabic.

This thesis has revealed that there are other aspects of the language which make studying it unique: the script, grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary, which all need to be considered when finding the right balance for Arabic (see section 8.2.2.1). It is essential to address what communicative competence means for Arabic (see section 8.1.1). All this highlights the pressing need for further research and curriculum change in Arabic.

Looking closely at the *Arabic* language situation, we can see the complex environment in which MSA operates (see section 2.1). It is one of many varieties of the language. Understanding this provides a theoretical background of the L2 to support its practical acquisition. Clarifying the language situation to students could motivate them to acquire more varieties, have realistic expectations about language use during the year abroad and provide a complete understanding of the language they are specialising in. Through his notion of 'Background Practices', philosopher Hubert Dreyfus (2017) suggested that learning an L2 is not as simple as a direct translation or a set of grammatical tools, we have to come to terms with a different set of practices and how they operate as a background to language use. For Arabic, this includes an understanding of the language situation. It could be a source of frustration for students realising that they will need to learn at least two different varieties of the language to become competent communicators. It is worse to realise halfway through their degree course, as is the case currently for a majority of students, that the MSA they have learnt is one of many Arabic varieties and part of a language situation they were unaware of, even shielded from in fear of 'confusion'. Students accept that it could be difficult to learn an RV alongside MSA,

but, when aware of the importance of RVs for communication and understanding Arab culture, alongside other reasons, they want to (see chapter 5).

Purely focusing on MSA at university is supporting the idea that it is the only variety worthy of academic study, which does not reflect the linguistic reality of Arabic. It is important for HEIs deciding only to include MSA to ensure that students understand the place of other varieties from a linguistic perspective so they do not graduate with the idea that RVs are somewhat inferior or unstructured. Even if RVs are not to be taught, students need to understand that they have an essential role in the Arabic language situation with their own structures and systems.

A missing component from degree courses, which is more important than practically acquiring RVs, is the relevant linguistic theory which starts with diglossia. Providing learners with this background of language use acts to complement skills acquisition with academic knowledge expected from a university. It would then be down to the HEI to decide if they provide instruction in a given variety, but it would be crucial to transmit the idea to students that no one variety is linguistically inferior to another. This knowledge of Arabic linguistics would then help students to appreciate the importance of all RVs and their place in the language situation.

8.2.1.2. Introducing RVs?

This study has identified a strong argument to include RVs in the curriculum drawing on research on the language situation itself and for students to reach their goals in learning Arabic and to be able to communicate in the language, a course outcome in the subject benchmarks. Pedagogic issues could be holding back curriculum change, such as how to teach two varieties of the same language (see section 8.2.3). However, any instruction in RVs needs to be supported by their language systems.

The answer is not solely to include a dialect module focusing on the acquisition of a particular RV, it needs to be supported by the theory.

There are further issues with solely including a 'dialect' module. Only teaching MSA has been supported due to solving the dilemma of which variety to teach. Some HEIs have decided to allocate a few sessions on the variety for the year abroad, which is not feasible for most HEIs with more than one location for students to travel to. This feeds into the idea that RVs are only needed for the year abroad. Linguistically, any variety alongside MSA would be beneficial to learners, yet, the HEI itself selecting one variety, or one group of varieties, can be seen as discriminating against others.²⁶⁹

Instead of solely introducing a 'dialect' module which involves the practical acquisition of a single RV, this thesis urges HEIs to experiment with introducing a module on Arabic linguistics, providing students with the option to study the variety of their choice if desired (discussed below). Drawing on research from HE highlights the importance of engaging students' interest in the curriculum, which can be supported by including student need in the process and more choices for learners (see chapter 3). Chapter 5 showed that most students are in favour of learning RVs but they have different preferred varieties, and, there are those who wish to master MSA first. Providing learners with the choice of which RV to acquire within a compulsory module on Arabic linguistics means they actively become involved in their education through opting for the variety that interests them, if desired, which would also improve their academic outcomes (see section 3.3). Students can tailor their course to their individual needs whilst also obtaining a fuller understanding of the language situation from the theory of the module.

²⁶⁹ Amelia, Furley, stated that she felt her HEI discriminated against the North African varieties in focusing on the Eastern Arab world.

8.2.1.3. The 'Arabic linguistics' module

This study urges HEIs to experiment with introducing a module on Arabic linguistics. The theory of this is very similar to the L6 modules on Arabic linguistics at the Harris and the Furley. However, as suggested by Catherine, the Harris, this would be more useful for students to commence from L4 (transcript VII). In theory, it would provide a deep understanding of the language itself and act as a stepping stone to learning the RV of their choice, if so desired. An awareness of the language situation is compatible with what would be expected from Arabic at university, distinguishing it from other forms of education: a fuller understanding of the subject matter (see section 3.1).

As part of the Arabic linguistics module, the theory is supported by another component which can be interpreted as making courses more student-centred: the choice to study an RV. The module can thus be adapted for the diverse needs of each student once they have familiarised themselves with the supporting theory. Learners can complete their own projects focusing on the language system behind their preferred variety and the specifics of the region, which they research themselves, making their inclusion also more manageable for tutors. As it is the students' responsibility to investigate how to systemise their chosen variety, they would understand it as a language system, supported by the theory of the course. Presenting this information to their classmates familiarises them with other RVs and helps them to draw conclusions on the similarities and differences between varieties. This acts to eliminate bias from inter-Arab dialect perceptions that a given variety is inferior to another or somehow 'closer' to MSA. If students are being introduced to an RV as part of another module, when researching their favoured variety, they can benefit from their knowledge of the other and pick up the second more easily. Learners can choose whether they wish to do this, or continue using MSA or their tutor's RV.

Student engagement is seen by many as an effective way to make institutions more competitive, accountable and inclusive, and to develop and improve students' experience in HE (see Chapter 3). Providing more choices to students is advocated as an effective way to bring about this change. There are benefits of TDL, such as the lecture, enabling tutors to cover a wide scope of material, simplify readings for students and provide structure. A module on Arabic linguistics can be tailored for both of these needs: teaching the theory on Arabic linguistics provides the tutor-directed structure to the module, which is complimented through giving choices to students to be responsible for researching and understanding their preferred variety.

8.2.2. Pedagogy

8.2.2.1. Which approach?

There are solid arguments in favour of learning through each of the approaches outlined in section 2.3.1. and positive outcomes for learners through each of them. US research is showing the IA in a favourable light, which is effective at the Shenton. What communicative competence means for Arabic needs to be considered here: do HEIs opt to prioritise MSA and have an inauthentic approach to teaching the language at beginner levels? Do they have a separate module for an RV from beginner levels and code-switch later? Or do they assign each variety to a situation from the beginning to avoid potential overlap? There are pluses and minuses for each of these approaches. However, there is a need for further research: is one of these approaches more beneficial for *Arabic* language acquisition? Different approaches may suit each HEI and their cohorts, but they do need to familiarise themselves with the approaches which are not used at their HEI. This research has revealed that students in England are graduating without an understanding how MSA, the variety of Arabic they speak, is used. In theory, before we have more concrete answers on how to approach teaching Arabic as a diglossic language, any of the approaches advocated in 2.3. could be adopted. It needs to be supported with a module on Arabic linguistics, giving students the choice to study an RV whilst ensuring students have a clearer understanding of what is being provided on their courses.

Despite diglossia and the existence of RVs being cited as making Arabic confusing, it does not pose a long-term complication, as advanced students at HEIs that support RVs have not cited them as a difficulty of learning the L2 (see section 7.2.6). The approach to TAFL needs to recognise aspects which make Arabic a difficult language to acquire. Primarily, an understanding of the language situation, as forementioned, but also issues related to grammar, phonology and vocabulary. These points are signposted here as they came up in this study, but there is a need for further research. This would tailor the approach to being beneficial for learning Arabic, as opposed to drawing more widely on the field of SLA research which does not consider the complexities specific to Arabic.

Grammar was quoted by some students as being a challenging aspect of the language, but others said it was easy due to being logical and mathematical (see section 7.2.6). Those who did not cite it as a setback, were at the Furley where grammar is studied intensively in its entirety. Grammar needs to be explicitly taught so it does not pose a long-term challenge. The literature review supports this as for L2s with different structures, like Arabic, students benefit from explicit instruction (see section 2.2).

Many students noted that it was challenging to communicate with locals during the year abroad (see section 6.6). Some spoke MSA as it was clearer and more easily understood, even when they had an RV at their disposal. This relates directly to the difficulties for L1 English speakers to correctly pronounce Arabic, who would benefit from understanding the differences in articulation when acquiring phonemes which have no equivalent in their L1.

Learning vocabulary is a difficult aspect of Arabic for learners which has also been noted in the literature for L2s which use a different script to the L1 (see section 7.2.6). Some classrooms were

seen to be referring to the root system when introducing new vocabulary which facilitates their acquisition for learners. Strategies like this need to be included within the classroom.

8.2.2.2. Tutor development

This research has revealed that there are many misconceptions of Arabic diglossia and the status and functions of varieties which need to be addressed. This has been directly affected by some perceptions of RVs from the Arab world which have been imported into the L2 classroom (see section 2.1.4). Some tutors may need training so they can view the language situation from a linguistic perspective and pass it onto learners. This research has revealed that there are professionals in the field transmitting a deeper understanding of the language, but it is solely at the discretion of the tutor. Too many students are graduating with an incomplete view of the L2 so it is clear that Arabic linguistics, and diglossia in particular, should have a compulsory place on every degree course composing a major component in Arabic. If HEIs do opt for either prioritising MSA or teaching MSA only, students need to be provided with a clear understanding of what it means for their language use.

8.2.2.3. Coursebook

It appears that there is not a suitable textbook composing a syllabus for degree-level Arabic and, the availability of materials for RVs is even more minimal (see section 7.2.5). Therefore, before deciding to incorporate an RV, HEIs need to consider the time it would take to develop their own materials which provide an understanding of the chosen RV as a complete language system.

8.2.3. What are the obstacles (if any) to curriculum change?

Whilst one HEI cited practical reasons for not being able to integrate RVs into courses: resources, student numbers and not having space on the course, the majority of HEIs, as abovementioned, either stated that it would be too confusing for students or they would be unable to select one RV to

teach.²⁷⁰ The introduction of RVs is also being impacted by the way in which Arabic is acquired in the Arab world and, that MSA is the only variety worthy of academic study. A university education needs move beyond this and provide students with a theoretical understanding of the language as it is used today.

8.2.3.1. Confusion

The argument that learning more than one variety of Arabic is confusing is widely addressed in the literature. Academics argue that it can be managed and eventually diminishes. Students who may view it as complicated in the beginning, still want to learn RVs in addition to MSA (see section 6.2). The results from this research suggest that students have not been deterred from learning RVs due to confusion: the majority want to learn them after gaining a strong grounding in MSA.

8.2.3.2. Which variety?

The question of which variety to teach has been addressed in the literature, clarifying that learning any variety is linguistically beneficial to students, regardless of the location of the year abroad. Despite the research supporting this (Trentman, 2011; S'hiri, 2013a; Batal & Glakas, 2018), the extensive number of Arabic varieties and implications of selecting one of them does make it difficult to decide which one to teach, because it could lead to discriminating against certain RVs/ countries. Learners may have preferred varieties to learn and, survey results looking into those favoured suggest that the incorrect notion of one being 'closer to MSA' has been fed into the L2 classroom (see section 6.5). Students can be given the choice to learn an RV through individual research projects (see section 8.2.1). If the HEI selects an RV for classroom instruction, it needs to be presented as one of many which is by no means superior to others.

²⁷⁰ Only three HEIs in England offer Arabic as a single honours course (Towler, 2018: 20) and the majority of students are studying towards joint honours in Arabic, which must make it difficult for HEIs to decide what to make compulsory on courses.

8.2.3.3. *The Arab world*

This research suggests that the way that Arabic is acquired and taught in the Arab world is affecting TAFL and is acting as an obstacle to doing justice to the reality of the language as it is used today in the curriculum. Native-Arabic speakers acquire their RVs as mother tongues and receive no formal education in them because they only learn SA at school. Native speakers without a linguistic understanding of Arabic do not understand that there are language systems behind RVs nor that they can be formally taught. These perceptions need to be addressed so that Arabic can be taught in a way which is true to the reality of the language. Adult learners at English HEIs acquire the language differently to L1 speakers and benefit from a linguistic understanding.

8.2.4. What needs to be considered when making changes to the undergraduate Arabic language curriculum?

Chapter 7 reveals some pedagogic issues which need to be considered when making changes to the curriculum: teaching, materials and assessment, in addition to the content of the curriculum.

Research suggests that in addressing the importance of what is required to be included within the curriculum, student views, tutor views and academic research should all play a role. For this study, student needs and expectations are taken into account as Arabic is learnt at university *ab initio*, as opposed to making students active participants in the creation of the curriculum at the initial stages of their course. A key aim of a university education, which differs from other institutions, must not be overlooked: that courses inspire a fuller understanding of the discipline itself. The desk research revealed the current emphasis on putting students at the centre of learning and engaging with them during curriculum development but it is unreasonable that students should directly inform a discipline they are new to (see chapter 3). There are pluses of TDL which can be integrated into a module with SCL so the advantages from each approach can be utilised without placing too much emphasis on students as active participants at the start of courses (see section 8.2.1).

Subject benchmarks suggest that sociolinguistic competence is important for a degree in Arabic. However, the results of this study show that graduates of Arabic are not acquiring this knowledge as a compulsory part of their degree courses. It could be because there is not sufficient research addressing the question of what a degree in Arabic should include. I would also add that the generic course outcomes provided through subject benchmarks do not recognise that they have different implications for each language. Although this research contributes to the field, it is clear that there is more to be done to make an undergraduate degree in Arabic more comparable and improve learning outcomes.

It is problematic for university courses to find space in the course for a module on Arabic linguistics including some practical knowledge on an RV/ RVs, especially as the majority of students are learning Arabic on joint-honours courses (see Towler, 2018). HEIs need to weigh up the importance of compulsory modules to assess how they can reach the subject benchmarks and do justice to Arabic itself. Further research needs to investigate which modules are compulsory on to assess what they provide learners vis-à-vis what a module on Arabic linguistics and RVs develops.

8.3. Concluding remarks

There is a pressing need for Arabic degree courses to present a clearer picture of the language which is consistent with the knowledge differentiating a HE from other forms of education. With the numbers of students opting for the L2 still on the rise and academics undecided on how best to teach it, the field requires further research. Whilst some have drawn on wider SLA research, leading to teaching MSA communicatively, this is incompatible with the specifics of Arabic and the requirements of adult L2 learners. Research needs to address what communicative competence means for Arabic, which would benefit the field as a whole.. Whilst, initially, I was looking at the question of whether RVs could be included on undergraduate degree-level courses, this research has

revealed that there is a more pressing issue for HEIs is to find a place for understanding the linguistic theory behind the language, starting with diglossia. TAFL is still being influenced by ideas imported from the Arab world which are not supported by empirical research and, consequently, not in line with what a degree in Arabic should be for: a fuller understanding of the subject matter (see section 2.1.4).

When making changes to the curriculum, this study recognises the shift within HE to engaging students more deeply within their courses and seeks to find a solution for Arabic which is more in line with student need. Because Arabic learners are new to the discipline, a radical change to courses making them active participants in the process from day one is not advised. There is a need for greater communication and transparency, both prior to the course and once it has begun, to mitigate confusion and frustration around outcomes. This study has highlighted what students need and deserve to know, drawing on the theory itself in addition to students' reasons for learning the L2 and their individual experiences. The main recommendation is for HEIs to experiment with introducing a module which includes an understanding of the language situation outlined in section 2.1, coupled with student-led projects on the RV of their choice. This not only helps to develop student awareness but also facilitates student empowerment and makes them more accountable for their own education. It makes Arabic not only fair to students but also manageable for educators. This study highlights that the next step is to investigate how this module can be implemented in practice. HEIs firstly need to assess the importance of other compulsory modules to see where it fits. A pilot project would be useful to assess its effectiveness and the impact on students. In the meantime, HEIs who are not already doing so should be presenting MSA to learners as what it is. Simply referring to MSA as the 'standard' is not doing the variety itself any justice, nor is it providing transparency surrounding what is provided on an undergraduate degree course in Arabic.

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Appendix 1: Pilot questionnaire

Part I: Personal Information

1. Are you...?

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

2. What is your age?

3. Are you...?

- Arab
- Non-Arab
- Of Arab origin (one or more parents are Arab);
please specify:
- Of Arab origin (not including parents);
please specify:

4. What is your religious affiliation?

- None
- Practicing Muslim
- Muslim
- Prefer not to say
- Other, please specify:

5. What is the name of your current university? (*optional*)

6. When did you commence your studies in Arabic at this university?

- 2011
- 2012
- 2013
- 2014
- 2015
- Other
Please specify:

7. Have you been to an Arabic-speaking country as part of your course?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please list them:

8. Have you travelled to an Arabic-speaking country independently of this course?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please list them:

9. How many years have you studied Arabic?

- 1 year or less
- 2-3 years
- 4 years
- More than 4 years

10. Were you exposed to Arabic prior to commencing your course at this university?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide details

11. What is your course of study? (e.g. Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies)

Part II: Reasons for opting for Arabic

12. What are your reasons for learning Arabic?

a. To prepare for a career

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- n/a

Feel free to elaborate:

b. To better understand Arab politics

- Strongly agree
- Agree

- Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
- Feel free to elaborate:

c. To better understand Arab culture

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - n/a
- Feel free to elaborate:

d. To read the Quran or religious texts

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - n/a
- Feel free to elaborate:

e. To read historical texts or literature

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - n/a
- Feel free to elaborate:

f. To read modern Arabic literature

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - n/a
- Feel free to elaborate:

g. To read the modern Arabic press

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree

- Strongly disagree
 - n/a
- Feel free to elaborate:

h. To understand radio or TV broadcasts

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - n/a
- Feel free to elaborate:

i. To understand films, videos or music

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - n/a
- Feel free to elaborate:

j. To write formal correspondence or documents

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - n/a
- Feel free to elaborate:

k. To write personal correspondence

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - n/a
- Feel free to elaborate:

l. To travel to or live in the Arabic-speaking world

- Strongly agree
- Agree

- Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - n/a
- Feel free to elaborate:

m. To speak to other Arabic speakers

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - n/a
- Feel free to elaborate:

n. To speak to family members

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - n/a
- Feel free to elaborate:

o. Enjoy learning languages

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - n/a
- Feel free to elaborate:

p. For the challenge

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - n/a
- Feel free to elaborate:

13. Do you have any additional reasons for studying Arabic?

14. Did your reasons for continuing to study Arabic change as the course progressed?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide details:

15. Please rank the below skills in order of importance:

	most important	important	unimportant	least important
Speaking				
Listening				
Reading				
Writing				

Part III: Learning Regional Arabic Dialects

16. Can you speak a regional Arabic dialect?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please state which one(s):

17. Have you learnt a regional Arabic dialect as part of your university course?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please state which one(s):

18. How important is it to you to learn a regional Arabic dialect?

- Extremely important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not important at all
- Not sure/ do not know

19. What is your preferred regional Arabic dialect?

- Levantine
- Iraqi
- Gulf
- North African
- Egyptian
- Other, please specify:

20. Who or what shaped your opinions about learning a dialect (*e.g. university instructors, Arab friends, etc.*)?

Part IV: Course Evaluation

21. What have you enjoyed the most about your course?

22. What have you enjoyed the least about your course?

23. Have you learnt any other languages in addition to Arabic?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please state which one(s) and to which level (basic user, independent user or proficient user):

24. How do you find learning Arabic in comparison to other languages?

25. What suggestions do you have for improving Arabic languages courses?

26. Would you be interested in being interviewed in a follow-up study?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide your email address:

27. Would you like to see the results to this study?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide your email address:

If you consent to your data being used, click "yes". If you do not, click "no" and exit the survey.

- Yes
- No

Thank you for completing the questionnaire!

Appendix 2: Questionnaire to be distributed to Arabic language students

Part I: Personal Information

1. Are you...?

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

2. What is your age?

3. Are you...?

- Arab
- Non-Arab
- Of Arab origin (one or more parents are Arab);
please specify:
- Of Arab origin (not including parents);
please specify:

4. What is your religious affiliation?

- None
- Muslim
- Non-Muslim
- Prefer not to say
Other, please specify:

5. What is the name of your current university? (*optional*)

6. When did you commence your studies in Arabic at this university?

- 2011
- 2012
- 2013
- 2014
- 2015
- Other
Please specify:

7. Have you been to an Arabic-speaking country as part of your course?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please list them:

8. Have you travelled to an Arabic-speaking country independently of this course?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please list them:

9. How many years have you studied Arabic?

- 1 year or less
- 2-3 years
- 4 years
- More than 4 years

10. Were you exposed to Arabic prior to commencing your course at this university?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide details

11. What is your course of study? (e.g. Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies)

Part II: Reasons for opting for Arabic

12. What are your reasons for learning Arabic?

a. To prepare for a career

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Feel free to elaborate:

b. To better understand Arab politics

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree

- Strongly disagree
- Feel free to elaborate:

c. To better understand Arab culture

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Feel free to elaborate:

d. To read the Quran or religious texts

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Feel free to elaborate:

e. To read historical texts or literature

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Feel free to elaborate:

f. To read modern Arabic literature

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Feel free to elaborate:

g. To read the modern Arabic press

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Feel free to elaborate:

h. To understand radio or TV broadcasts

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Feel free to elaborate:

i. To understand films, videos or music

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Feel free to elaborate:

j. To write formal correspondence or documents

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Feel free to elaborate:

k. To write personal correspondence

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Feel free to elaborate:

l. To travel to or live in the Arabic-speaking world

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Feel free to elaborate:

m. Increasing community in England from Arabic-speaking countries

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Feel free to elaborate:

n. To speak to other Arabic speakers

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Feel free to elaborate:

o. To speak to family members

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Feel free to elaborate:

p. Enjoy learning languages

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Feel free to elaborate:

q. For the challenge

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Feel free to elaborate:

13. Do you have any additional reasons for studying Arabic?

14. Did your reasons for continuing to study Arabic change as the course progressed?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide details:

15. Please indicate the importance of learning the skills below:

Extremely important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not important at all
------------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------

Speaking

Listening

Reading

Writing

Part III: Learning Regional Arabic Dialects

16. Can you speak a regional Arabic dialect?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please state which one(s):

17. Have you learnt a regional Arabic dialect as part of your university course?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please state which one(s):

18. How important is it to you to learn a regional Arabic dialect?

- Extremely important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not important at all
- Not sure/ do not know

19. Do you think students should be taught a regional Arabic dialect before the year abroad?

- Yes
- No
- n/a

20. What is your preferred regional Arabic dialect?

- Levantine
- Egyptian
- Gulf
- North African
- Iraqi
- Other, please specify:

21. Who or what shaped your opinions about learning a dialect (*e.g. university instructors, Arab friends, etc.*)?

Part IV: Course Evaluation

22. What have you enjoyed the most about your course?

23. What have you enjoyed the least about your course?

24. Have you learnt any other languages in addition to Arabic?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please state which one(s):

25. How do you find learning Arabic in comparison to other languages?

26. How easy or difficult do you find learning Arabic?

- Very easy
- Easy
- Difficult
- Very difficult

Please state why:

27. What suggestions do you have for improving Arabic languages courses?

28. Would you be interested in being interviewed in a follow-up study?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide your email address:

29. Would you like to see the results to this study?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide your email address:

If you consent to your data being used, click "yes". If you do not, click "no" and exit the survey.

- Yes
- No

Thank you for completing the questionnaire!

Appendix 3: Information sheet



Information Sheet:

Teaching Arabic as a foreign language at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in England

My name is Melissa Towler and I am a postgraduate student at Winchester University. I am studying towards a PhD on Teaching Arabic as a foreign language at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in England. I am therefore, inviting you to take part in the research. Before you decide to participate, it is important you understand what the project involves and what you will have to do. So, please take time to read the following information. Ask if anything is unclear.

As part of the research, I am collecting information on the way that spoken Arabic is taught at HEIs and, in particular, the spoken varieties that are used on courses. I am therefore conducting classroom observations and interviews with Arabic language instructors and students. The classroom observations and interviews will be recorded.

I can tell you that your response may be included in my thesis; however, your response will be anonymous and nobody could connect your responses with you as an individual or your institution. 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 without giving reason and without penalty.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at M.Towler.14@unimail.winchester.ac.uk.

Appendix 4: Interview consent form



Teaching Arabic at HEIs in England

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Name:

Date of Interview:

I have read the document laying out the project's purpose, ethical guidelines, outcomes and methods. I understand that no individuals will be identified in any publication or public presentation drawing on my interview material, and pseudonyms will be used where necessary. I understand that I will have the opportunity to comment on the draft report. According to the Data Protection Act (1998) the interview tapes and transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, and once the project is complete, these will be shredded and/or destroyed.

On this basis, I agree to material from my interview or observation being used for the purposes of research or publication.

Signed: **Date:**

Appendix 5: Classroom consent form



Class Consent Form

By signing this form I consent to participate in a classroom observation to be used in the research project as detailed in the information sheet provided. I am also aware that this session is being recorded; therefore any contribution I offer can be used in the analysis of this session. I have been made aware of my right to withdraw this information and provided with contact details should I wish to do so.

Please consult the project information sheet before signing this sheet.

Class:

Students' name

Signature to confirm consent

Tutor Consent

By signing this form, I consent for Melissa Towler to record the class that I teach for the purposes of the research project as detailed on the project information sheet provided. I also consent to a brief interview with Melissa Towler to be recorded and used within the research project.

I have been made aware of my right to withdraw any information I submit from the research project and have been provided with the contact details necessary should I wish to do.

Participant name

Class

Participant Signature

Date

Appendix 6: Samples of transcripts

Key to transcripts

/.../	phonemic transcription
(...)	Arabic-English translation
[...]	additional information which could be unclear from the transcript alone
Arabic numerals	student interviews
Roman numerals	tutor interviews
Letters	classroom observations

TRANSCRIPT 1

HEI: **The Holdaway**
Type: **Student interview**
Level: **6**
Respondent: **Beatrice**

Transcript:

Interviewer: When you started studying at Westminster; did they explain to you the situation in the Arab world? So when you started your course; did they say that there was a difference between how people speak and how they write?

Beatrice: You mean like the dialects?

Interviewer: Yeah

Beatrice: Well ...yeah, like, they did in the first year but it yeah a long with the time, it wasn't in the first session, but as people, my colleagues were asking the teacher, 'Is this /ʕa:mi:j.ja/ [dialect] or not?' And she would say yeah it's dialect - don't use it, it's different from /fʊʕħa:/ [SA]. Yeah they did but somehow - more indirectly - like that, but it's not like it was their course specific for that.

Interviewer: But you were just encouraged not to use it /ʕa:mi:j.ja/ [dialect] then?

Beatrice: Yes, they totally said to us, 'We study /fʊʕħa:/ [SA] and that's dialect, we should not accept it.'

Interviewer: Did you know before you started your course that Arabic was different in that respect, to other languages?

Beatrice: I didn't know.

Interviewer: So you went abroad to Morocco. What language did you use there? Did you use /fʊʕħa:/ [SA]? I noticed you also speak French?

Beatrice: I didn't use French, I used a little bit of /fʊʕħa:/ [SA]. Yeah, actually, mostly /fʊʕħa:/ [SA]. I tried not to get any /de.ɪdʒa/ [dialect] 'cause I was afraid I might mix it with /fʊʕħa:/ [SA]. We saw that the others did and it was very difficult to get rid of that and keep the /fʊʕħa:/ [SA] pure, so I tried literally to close my ears and I tried not to get anything. Of course, I got like five or six words because I stayed there one year and I stayed with Moroccan girls in an apartment - but we were talking in English because they knew English and they were happy to practice it, but yeah, no I wasn't interested in dialect. I wanted to know more but I was afraid my /fʊʕħa:/ [SA] at that level.

TRANSCRIPT I

HEI: **The Shenton**
Type: **Tutor interview**
Respondent: **Catherine**

Transcript:

Interviewer: Do they actually speak and listen in MSA or is it just colloquial?

Catherine: No, they do both. So, the way it's structured is that. Well, we're not strict on hours, so we don't say, you know. In total we do six hours a week with the first years, so it's roughly three on three but it isn't like set in stone you know. These three hours are /ʕami:ja/ [RV] and these three hours are /fʊʂħa/ [SA]. What we try and do is we introduce the sort of grammar and structure in /ʕami:ja/ [RV] and then we kind of work in parallel and introduce them in /fʊʂħa/ [SA]. So as you saw today we were doing lots of work on /ɪl.li:/ [which, RV] and the kind of relative pronoun and how to put together the two clauses, so we've been doing that in /ʕami:ja/ [RV]. And then I gave them a handout, a worksheet for exercises in /fʊʂħa/ [SA], and they had in their booklets an explanation. It's basically the same but instead of /ɪl.li:/ [which], use /al.leti:/ [which, feminine], /al.leði:/ [which, masculine] and /al.leðina/ [which, plural], and they just do exercises. So we'll go over it in class so any rule that we do, we do the numbers, we present it in /ʕami:ja/ [RV] first, and then in the /fʊʂħa/ [SA] class we'll talk about how the numbers are in /fʊʂħa/ [SA].

Interviewer: Ok, I noticed as well they were talking about the root system.

Charlotte: We follow what we call a structural approach. So, we're introducing what we call structures, that's the main thing. So we kind of take it one structure at a time and keep kind of going back and forth between /ʕami:ja/ [RV] and /fʊʂħa/ [SA]. The idea is that we introduce it in /ʕami:ja/ [RV], /ʕami:ja/ [RV] generally speaking has the fewer rules, and so it's slightly more simplified, they get used to the idea, do lots of speaking and listening and then we translate it if you like into /fʊʂħa/ [SA]. So this is the equivalent in /fʊʂħa/ [SA], and we focus more on the reading and writing. We still do listening, not very much speaking in /fʊʂħa/ [SA]. So speaking and listening in /ʕami:ja/ [RV]. Those are the two key skills we focus on, then reading and writing in /fʊʂħa/ [SA]. You know the aim is that eventually they'll be competent enough in both to use them in kind of real-life situations.

Interviewer: If they said something that was a bit too /fʊʂħa/ [SA] would that be corrected?

Charlotte: It depends. We look at something that we're working on and if it's a point, so you know if somebody said /al.leði:/ [which, masculine] today instead of /ɪl.li:/ [which, RV] you want to be confident that they understand the difference between the two.

TRANSCRIPT A

HEI: The Shenton
Type: Classroom observation
Level: 4
Tutor: Catherine

Transcript:

Tutor: طيب، نبدأ، نبدأ مع بعض (Ok, let's begin. We'll begin with some...)
Oh, actually, I'm going to give this out ال ما عندك آه انت، ما عندك ال (Oh, you don't have the) booklet
قويس؟ صح؟ طيب، قويس (Correct? Ok, good)
The relative pronoun اللي (which) this is a worksheet
طيب للفصحى، الفصحى لا في بيت ماشي؟ (Ok, for the SA, SA at home, ok?)
We're gonna cover it very quickly.
في الفصحى و (in SA and) it's in the booklet, but it's not really worth spending much time on
طيب فخلو في البيت (Ok, so let's leave that for home) read through it
طيب وفيه تمام ال (Ok, and in it of course the) booklet the section on اللي (which) and it's counterpart in البيت؟ فلا في البيت (SA. Ok? No, at home)

Student: When do you want us to complete it?

Tutor: في الأسبوع الجي يوم الثلاثاء (Next week, on Tuesday)
في الثلاثاء؟ (on Tuesday?)

Student: Tuesday

Tutor: قويس (good)
طيب نبدأ في الكتيب تمرين الكلام طيب في الصفحة الثانية في صفحة رقم اثنان فيه جمل الترجمة، ماشي بالضببط جمل للترجمة (Ok, let's start with the booklet, the speaking exercise, ok, on the second page, on the second page. There are sentences to be translated, ok? Exactly the sentences for translation)
للسؤال الثاني، ماشي، كل اثنان مع (We ask the questions) and try and respond