University
of Glasgow

WELCOMING LANGUAGES

PROJECT REPORT

GIOVANNA FASSETTA
SAHAR ALSHOBAKI
MARIA GRAZIA IMPERIALE
LAVINIA HIRSU
NAZMI AL-MASRI

IUG Arabic Centre

UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council

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School of Education, University of Glasgow (UK)
Arabic Center, Islamic University of Gaza (Palestine)

THANKS

Heartfelt thanks to all the Scottish education staff who participated in the project as Arabic language learners. Thanks for believing in the project and for lending your time and efforts to it.

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Welcoming Languages (WLs) is a 12-month proof-of-concept project funded by the UKRI (AHRC) between Jan 2022 and Jan 2023. It was carried out by a team based at the University of Glasgow (Scotland) in collaboration with a team based at the Islamic University of Gaza (Palestine)

The project explored the potential for inclusion of a 'refugee language' in Scottish education as a way to enact the idea of integration as a two-way process that is at the heart of the "New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy" (Scottish Government, 2018). It did this by offering a tailored beginner Arabic language course to education staff in Scottish primary schools.

Arabic is a language spoken by many children and families who make Scotland their home (who we call here, in line with the Strategy, the 'New Scots'). It is also the language for which the project team already had experience of collaboratively developing a beginner course.

The WLs project started from the premise that, by learning language useful in a school setting, education staff can make Arabic speaking children and parents/carers feel welcome, to see that their language is valued and that staff in their school are willing to make the effort to move 'towards' them.

The aims of this proof-of-concept project were: show that it is possible to build a culture of hospitality in Scotland that includes language as a crucial element; make space in Scottish education for the many languages that New Scots bring with them; give space in Scottish schools to a greater number of languages, including those of the people and the communities who have more recently settled in Scotland.

Learning one of the languages spoken by New Scots can be a form of 'linguistic hospitality' (Phipps, 2012) that the settled community extends to the New Scots, a practical but also a powerful symbolic sign of welcome that can be extended to other languages and other services in Scotland.

RATIONALE

WHY A REFUGEE LANGUAGE IN SCOTTISH EDUCATION?

The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy for 2018-2022 (Scottish Government, 2018) stresses right from the very start that "[...] refugee integration [is] a two-way process, bringing positive change in refugees and host communities, and helping to build a more compassionate and diverse society" (p. 3). Despite this recognition of the need for integration to include adaptation both by those

seeking refuge and the receiving community, when it comes to language learning, the two-way process looks more like a one-way street, as refugees are expected to learn the host country's language and to use their home language only within the private sphere (indexed by the use of the term 'home language', which we also use in this report).

However, as language is a crucial part of identity formation for young people from refugee backgrounds (Valentine et al, 2008), language teaching and learning should be crucial for a two-way process of integration, with both people seeking refuge and host communities endeavouring to learn and accommodate each other's languages (Phipps & Fassetta, 2016; Valentine et al., 2008). While there is a general understanding that home language maintenance is good for children and schools strive for some representation of the languages pupils speak (see e.g. Canagarajah, 2014), there is no or very little space in the public sphere for refugees' home languages. Some Scottish schools are acknowledging the diversity of languages spoken by pupils by organising informal language classes for teachers. This, however, is an exception to the rule, carried out informally and only very sporadically. The Welcoming Languages project makes a case for investing in long-term, sustainable approaches to language diversification in education, led by linguists, expert course developers and language teachers and tailored to the specific needs of the language learners..

The Scottish language policy for schools has seen the introduction of a 1+2 approach to modern language (The Scottish Government, 2012). This means that pupils can expect to learn two additional languages alongside their home language. The approach allows for 'language tasters' to give pupils a sense of what other languages sound and look like. Although it has had, so far, limited and patchy uptake, this policy opens the door for the teaching of a much greater variety of languages than the 'traditional' ones and thus also to the languages that asylum seekers and refugees bring with them.

To date, the emphasis in integration has been on learning English or the language of arrival contexts. While research on target language learning by refugees (adults and children) abounds, and while there is a rich literature on modern language teaching in schools throughout the UK, there are no insights, as far as we are aware, on how teachers and other education staff can acquire a 'refugee language' in order to welcome them. A start in this direction has been made by Phipps's (2012) autoethnographic reflections on linguistic hospitality and solidarity and by the critical analysis around Scottish language policy by Phipps and Fassetta (2016) which recommended a diversification of language teaching on the grounds of a range of considerations, including welcoming of refugees and migrants. A wealth

of research on multilingualism, affect and decolonisation, which supports the need for diversification of language teaching, is further exemplified by the work of Kramsch (e.g. 2008), Ros i Solé (2016) and the special issue on Researching Multilingually in the *Journal of Applied Linguistics* (2013).

The Welcoming Languages project makes a timely praxis-oriented contribution to theoretical, methodological and policy insights into the issues of: refugee integration, language education and intercultural studies. It works to inform theoretical reflections on integration and contribute to current thinking around decolonising education, critically evaluating which languages are worthy of study and the assumptions upon which this choice rests. The outcomes are of interest to a wide range of stakeholders in Scotland but also in the rest of the UK and internationally. Stakeholders include people with refugee backgrounds, educators and policy makers (i.e., Education Scotland; the General Teaching Council for Scotland; the British Council), as well as statutory and volunteer services who work with asylum seekers and refugees and/or who have interest in diversifying language teaching and learning and in inclusion and social justice in education.

WHY ARABIC?

Arabic speaking refugees have been relocated throughout Scotland, including over 3000 recently-arrived Syrian refugees who have been dispersed in all of Scotland's 32 local authorities prior to the suspension of the resettlement scheme due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As a consequence, some Syrian families live far away from other Arabic speakers, their children have no opportunities to speak this language outside the home and no way to practise or learn to read and write in Arabic. Syrian parents worry that their children may lose their proficiency in Arabic, and that they will never be able to achieve full literacy in the language (also as a means to access the Qur'an), as evidenced by feedback from the families that has been collected by COSLA, the umbrella association of Scottish Local Authorities. Further to this, the research commissioned by the Scottish Government on the substantial consultation for the Integration Strategy 2018-2022 recorded 90% of participants naming language as the most important element in enabling integration.

As a research team, moreover, we already collaborated in the Online Palestinian Arabic Course (OPAC) project (2017-2018), an AHRC funded project whose primary output was the design and development of a language course for beginners in collaboration with the Arabic Center at the Islamic University of Gaza (Palestine).

The experience and expertise in designing a bespoke Arabic language course gained during the OPAC project, means that the Welcoming Languages team can build on previous experience to work on an Arabic course tailored for Scottish educators. Teaching Arabic is thus an excellent - and practical - starting point for the project to demonstrate the feasibility to introduce refugee languages in Scottish education that could be expanded, if appropriate, to other refugee languages. Moreover, while speakers of Arabic (and of other refugee languages) are available in Scotland, it is amply demonstrated that speaking a language does not necessarily translate into being able to teach it. The Palestinian team are trained to teach Arabic online to total beginners and have experience of course development gained during the OPAC project. It made thus sense, for the Welcoming Languages project to start from Arabic and education what we hope is an experience that can be expanded to other languages and services in the future.

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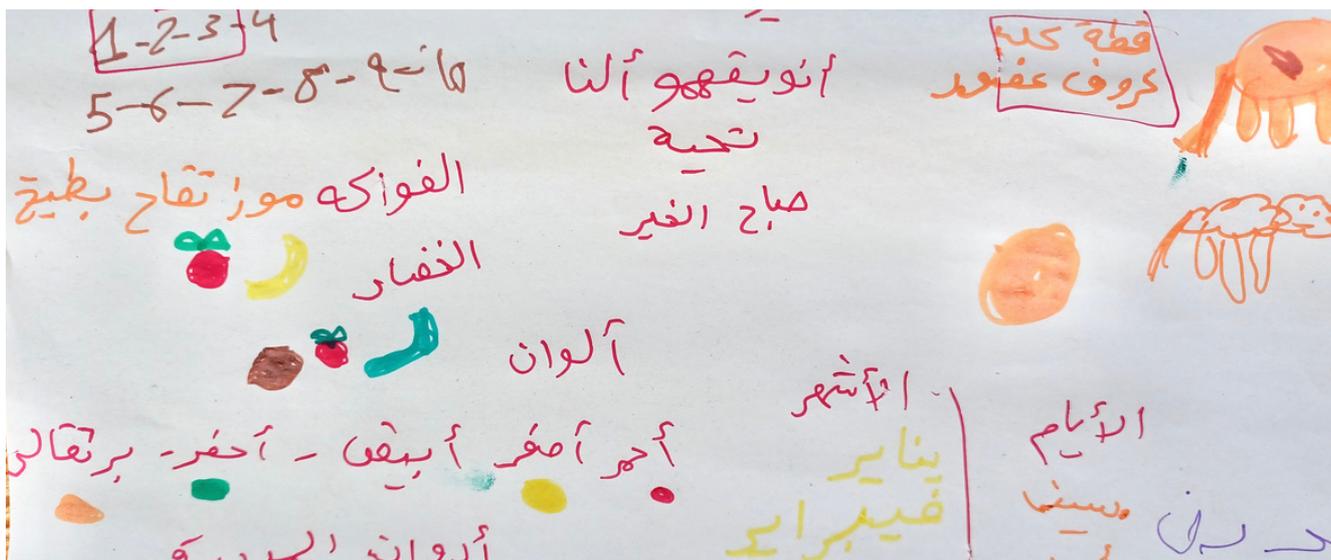
THE PROJECT'S STEPS

STEPS	DESCRIPTION
STEP 1 NEEDS ANALYSIS	The UofG team asked education staff in participating schools and Arabic speaking parents/carers and children what language items they thought should be included in the beginner Arabic course
STEP 2 COURSE DESIGN	The IUG team, with the support of the project's Research Associate, developed an online Arabic language course that took on board the needs that emerged from the language needs analysis (step 1).
STEP 3 COURSE DELIVERY	Staff in the participating primary schools took a 10-lesson beginners Arabic language course (20 hrs in total) designed by the IUG team. The course was divided into two blocks of 5 lessons each, one before and one after the summer holidays
STEP 4 EVALUATION	After step 3 was completed, the UofG team carried out interviews and focus groups with Arabic learners and Arabic speaking children, to gather feedback and evaluate the extent to which the project achieved its aims. It also gathered feedback from the Arabic language experts at IUG.

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Education staff involved in the project work in four Glasgow primary schools in areas with large numbers of children who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL). Arabic is one of the main languages other than English spoken by pupils and their parents/carers in these schools.

The AHRC-funded proposal anticipated that 12 primary staff would take Arabic lessons. When we reached out to the schools, however, we very quickly gathered more interest than foreseen, and about 30 primary staff indicated their interest in being part of the project. This meant that the planned one-to-one online Arabic language lessons had to be made into pair sessions, with one teacher in Palestine teaching two learners in Scotland, and that we had to recruit two extra Arabic language teachers. Eventually, **24 primary staff started the Arabic course. Of these, 19 staff concluded all 10 lessons.** A few staff found it impossible to continue after the summer break due to changes in their duties and/or conflicts in their timetable. Participating staff were able to include the Arabic course as part of their Professional Development requirements.

The participating schools (in alphabetical order) are:

Corpus Christi PS
Elmvale PS
St Francis PS
St Paul (Whiteinch) PS

LANGUAGE NEEDS ANALYSIS

The language needs analysis was carried out in March 2022 and it involved focus groups with: Scottish educators interested in taking the course; Arabic-speaking refugee children; and the children's parents/carers. Overall, we gathered the language needs from:

21 primary school staff (class teachers, EAL teachers, principal teachers, head-teachers, etc)
26 Arabic speaking parents/carers
32 Arabic speaking children

While parents/carers and staff were interviewed in English and/or Arabic (with the language support of the project's Palestinian researcher), the children were invited to write (in their chose language) and draw on group posters what they felt was important for staff in their school to be able to say in Arabic.
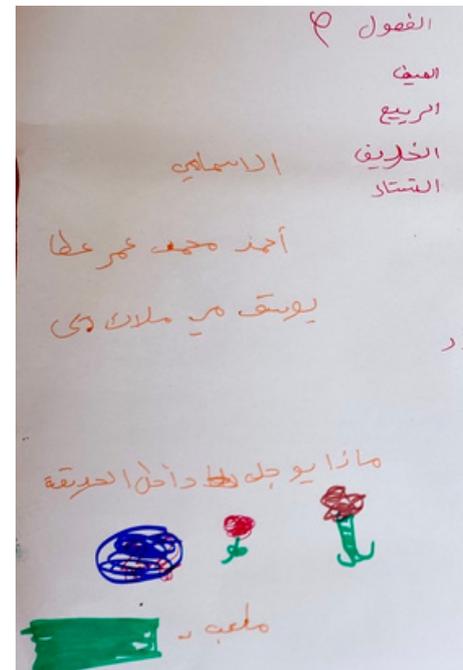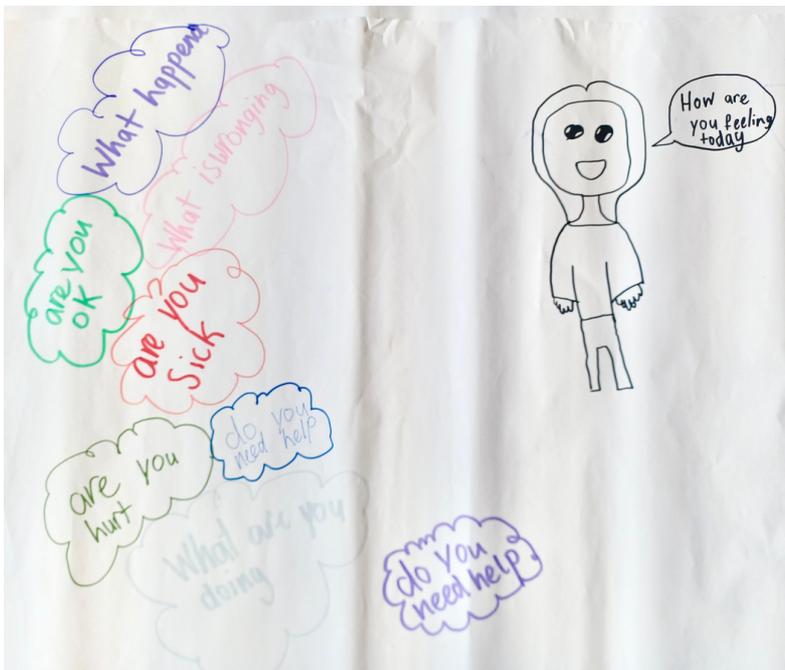
Examples of children's responses

The language needs analysis revealed that - according to school staff, Arabic speaking children and parents/carers - the Arabic language course should develop along three main themes, which we termed: (a) language for hospitality - which includes simple expressions to make Arabic-speaking pupils and families feel welcome; (b) language for wellbeing - which includes language to express basic needs, feelings and emotions, to be able to respond to pupils' needs, especially at times of distress; (c) language for school - which includes instructions, school routine, and simple subject-specific language. All those consulted also concurred that learning the Arabic alphabet/script would be important, as well as making Arabic visible within the schools through multilingual posters (see Imperiale et al, 2023).

"to be able to communicate at basic level [...] so that they feel that they are welcomed into the school and the community and [inaudible]. I mean maybe 'we value you" (Class teacher)

"alphabets and simple sentences like Assalaamu aleikom [hello], what's your name? These simple things" (Father)

"It concerns me the most when they're crying in class, and you say "what's wrong? Why are you sad?" [...] or "[Are] you hurt?" "Are you unwell?" Ehmm, you know, that's the communication that that eh, it is most important, I think" (Class teacher)

"For example, are you sad? Is there anyone bothering you? Did you argue/fight with your friend? Or anything like that" (Mother, Arabic in the original)

"I am a class teacher, but it's just really hard to kinda say like 'you come to the carpet?' or 'you stay there'. Or... cause we say to everybody, 'if you need help, come to me'..." (Class teacher)

"When I want to ask about the child. For example, whenever I want to come after work to ask about my kid, how was he during the day, how did he behave every day, so these things are necessary for them [staff] to learn because I, for example, do not know how to speak [English]" (Father, Arabic in the original)

COURSE DESIGN

As noted earlier, the funded proposal had budgeted free lessons for 12 primary education staff. However, in the four Glasgow schools we contacted we found over 30 people interested in taking the course.


While a few staff had to withdraw before the start of the course as they could not make the dates/times available, 24 primary staff became Arabic learners as part of the project. To ensure all had the opportunity to take the course, the lessons were designed for pairs of learners rather than the one-to-one lessons originally anticipated. We also contracted two new Arabic teachers to ensure that all Scottish staff could find a suitable date/time for their lesson.

The Welcoming Languages project provided funding to teach a short 20-hour beginner course (10 x 90' lessons plus preparation/practice) to the participating Scottish educators. A team of language experts, designers and teachers based at the Arabic Center of the Islamic University of Gaza (Palestine) developed materials to address the language needs identified at the needs analysis stage. The process of selecting the Arabic variety to be taught, and of tailoring it to the needs identified, was recorded through reflective notes during each of the regular meetings with course designers and language experts in Gaza.

The designing process thus included: a) deciding which Arabic variety to teach; b) creating a map of common expressions; c) discussing a situational syllabus presented through a storyline; d) developing the first unit (two lessons), piloting them and discussing the challenges; and e) developing the rest of the units after getting regular feedback from learners and teachers.

The overall course was structured around six situational units based on the needs emerged at the analysis stage: (1) Greetings and Hospitality; (2) School Instructions and Subject Language; (3) Classroom language; (4) Emotions and Wellbeing; (5) Engaging with Parents. These are illustrated more in detail in the next section.

The Palestinian partners at IUG have expertise in developing tailored Arabic courses and teaching Arabic language effectively through online tools. This expertise allowed them to take leadership in developing and delivering a course that would respond to the needs of Scottish education staff, which constitutes a reversal of the usual dynamics of needs/expertise in international projects that include organisations and institutions based in Low- and Middle-Income Countries.

Screenshot from the course materials

COURSE CONTENT AND DELIVERY

The course content, designed to meet the needs identified at the needs analysis stage, was articulated in five situational units/topics. The variety of Arabic chosen was the Levantine dialect, as this is the most common variety spoken by pupils and their families. However, care was also taken to select words and sentences that would be more similar to Modern Standard Arabic, as this is the most common variety used as language of instruction (and in the media) across the Arabic-speaking world.

Unit 1 **(Greetings and Hospitality)** introduced language related to greeting and welcoming students, including words and sentences such as: hello, welcome, how are you? What's your name? Where are you from? Where do you live? Nice to meet you, etc. *Unit 2* **(School Instructions and Subject Language)** introduced school instructions, subject language, and classroom requests such as: let's write, let's play, where is the pen? Use this paper, add, take away, multiply, can I ask a question? Which page please? Thank you, etc. *Unit 3* **(Classroom language)** focused on classroom language, including: the days of the week, asking about time, and phrases like: what did we do yesterday? When will (subject name's) be? What time will x be? etc. *Unit 4* **(Emotions and Wellbeing)** introduced language to address discomfort or distress such as: are you okay? What happened? Why are you sad? I am sick, I have a headache, do you want me to call mum/dad? etc. *Unit 5* **(Engaging with Parents)** focused on language related to parents' engagement, such as: how's my son/daughter doing? What is your job? Where do you work? etc.

Throughout the five units, the course also included giving feedback and praise such as: good job! Well done! Excellent! It introduced formal as well as informal welcoming language (e.g. hello, good morning, good afternoon, how are you, how are things, etc.). It taught phrases for unlocking language independently such as: what does x mean in Arabic? What is this called in Arabic? It also introduced the Arabic alphabet in each lesson, to give an idea of how the Arabic script works. The course also included some cultural aspects and insights into different dialects to raise Scottish education staff's awareness that there are many varieties of Arabic.

The materials were created using Articulate Storyline software, which facilitates the creation of interactive content. This allowed the course to be multimodal, including

video and audio materials as well as games, and it gave learners the option of accessing interactive (clickable) transliteration for every word/phrase presented. The digitisation of the materials was also chosen for learning sustainability, as it allows learners to go back to the materials for self-study and at their own pace.

The course was delivered across two school years, and this represented a challenge that we could not fix. The project was funded for 12 months starting January 2022. However, the time required to set up the project, identify participants, collect language needs and design/develop the course meant that we were only able to start the lessons in May 2022. We therefore decided to do a first block of 5 lessons prior to the summer break (May to late June) leaving the second 5-lesson block for the new school year, to ensure staff would enjoy time off during the summer break. As well as leave a rather large gap in the teaching/learning process, this timing also meant that the Arabic course coincided with the end of a school year and the start of a new one, both very busy periods in primary schools. However, the vast majority of the staff who started the course managed to complete it, which is a clear sign of educators' commitment and enthusiasm.

Ola, one of the Palestinian teachers, delivers a lesson from IUG

THE PROJECT'S FINDINGS

At the end of the 10 lessons, we collected feedback on the project from:

Scottish staff
8 pairs/individual (total 13 staff)
3 focus groups in schools

Children
8 children (in one school) from Syria, Yemen and Iraq

Arabic trainers
5 Arabic teachers

Course Achievements

The feedback from education staff who had been learning Arabic highlighted the several positive considerations in relation to the tailored Arabic language course.

The staff consulted agreed that the content of the course was practically useful (e.g. greetings; simple classroom language; etc.) and clearly responding to their needs as educators. Relevance was identified as a crucial element in maintaining motivation for busy primary staff. The one-to-one/pair lessons made the course even more responsive, as the educators could ask their Arabic teachers for specific words/sentences needed in their everyday practice. The one-to-one/pair lessons were also praised for allowing flexibility to take the course at different dates/times if required, to accomodate unforeseen clashes. Some of the participants felt that learning with a colleague was less intimidating than a one-to-one lesson, but staff taking one-to-one lessons also reported a positive experience. The Arabic teachers were unanimously praised as expert, patient and flexible, which also helped to maintain educators' motivation to learn. The staff reported seeing clearly a progression over the 10 lessons, feeling more confident about their Arabic and also starting to pick up some words/sentences when children or parents are speaking.

> "It's been good to have like basic commands, to say to the children 'Let's draw', 'Let's write', 'Stand up/Sit down', 'Listen'... and for them... they value the fact that we've been learning Arabic [inaudible] and we're saying something new to them, like 'Marhaba' or 'Saba al kahir', you know, and they are looking at you like 'Ah! I can't believe you're learning Arabic'... to see the smile on their faces when they hear Arabic"

Hi Lubna, just wanted to show you some of the children's notes in my notebook. They have been giving me homework too. It is really having a positive impact on the children so thank you for all your hard work!
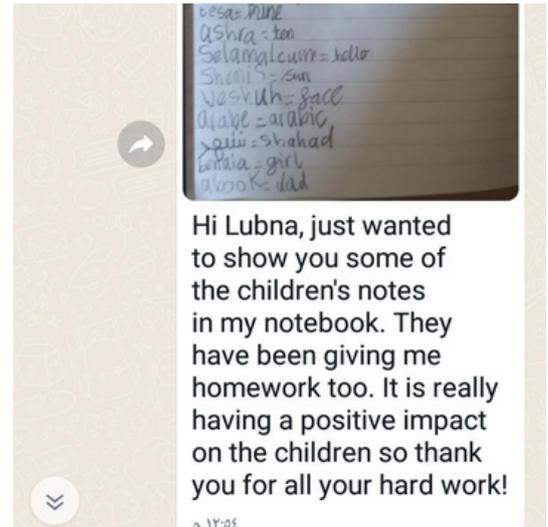
Challenges

The participating staff identified challenges in taking the Arabic course along two main issues: time and linguistic complexity.

The timing of the course delivery was not ideal. The start of the project's funding, and the need to include time for needs analysis and consequent course development, meant that the first set of 5 lessons were delivered before the summer break (May - June 2022) while the second set of 5 lessons was delivered at the start of the following school year (September/October - November 2023). The substantial gap in learning made some staff feel they had lost impetus, while others noted how the Arabic course ended up coinciding with the end and the start of a school year, both very busy times in primary schools. This arguably contributed to 6 of the original 24 learners not continuing the lessons after the summer break, although other contingent issues were also indicated (two members of staff moved to other schools not in the project; others indicated unresolvable clashes with other tasks in their timetable).

Finding spare time to do the lessons was also indicated as a challenge, as was finding time to practice the language before the next lesson, as other tasks had sometimes to take precedence (e.g. training, meetings, etc.). Finally, the vast majority of the staff noted that the 90-minute lessons were too demanding after a long day at work, and most agreed that 60-minute inputs would be more manageable. Most staff also noted that the Arabic lessons did not factor in enough time for practice and consolidation. This was a choice made to try and accomodate as much of the language needs as possible within the constraints of a relatively small project, and

the expectation was that staff would practice between lessons, with the help of children and parents/carers. However, almost all the educators suggested building more of practice time, recaps and consolidation activities in the course itself.

Some of the Scottish primary staff felt that the course content (grammar, sounds, script) was quite hard, although they all recognised that this was due to the fact that Arabic is quite unlike other languages they have experience of. They also felt that the final lessons included a lot of more complex content compared to the first ones, and that the pace had sped up quite substantially. However, this was not an issue and all staff recognised that the relatively short duration of the course meant that the course designers/teachers needed to pack quite a lot of content into the lessons.

The recommendations were that, in future similar courses, the content needed to be spread out over a few more lessons, allowing also more time for practice and consolidation and a slower pace for learning. A few of the Scottish staff also noted that the different varieties of Arabic spoken by the children and families meant that some of the children did not recognise words/sentences when the staff tried to practice them, although they also acknowledge that mispronunciation may have been an issue. In these cases, however, the Arabic speaking children were more than happy to model the pronunciation for the staff, with a few of the children even creating bespoke 'homework' and activities for them.

Finally, a small number of staff reported technical issues in relation to the online delivery of the course. This was particularly true for staff using Teams (which they had to use when taking the course from their school). However, all learners and Arabic teachers managed to solve the technical issues after the initial difficulties or found ways to work around them.

> "It's just like finding the time for it, and because it's like.., we'll have a meeting tonight, or a training course tonight or, you know, and it's it's It's like trying to... trying to arrange it" (Class teacher)

> "Well, the only thing I found challenging, and it's not a criticism of the lesson, it's more about me. And just after a day with the class and work, an hour and a half was quite long. I felt that maybe an hour would have been better. I I feel... I feel that after an hour I began to really have to push myself to listen" (Class teacher)

> "At the start of the lessons, we were able to get time out of class. It was like... it was great. [...] But in term two, it wasn't possible. So we're using our own time for planning things so that that's been a little bit of a challenge" (Class teacher)

THE PROJECT'S IMPACT

The end of project evaluation evidenced several ways in which the project had an impact on Scottish primary staff, Arabic speaking pupils and on their parents/carers. The impact was unanimously indicated as positive.

Scottish primary educators found that learning basic Arabic is practically useful: it allows them to use simple language to attract the children's attention; to give them some simple instructions; and to make connections between their learning in English and their existing knowledge (e.g. teaching numbers). Some of the educators also told us that they use simple sentences with parents/carers at the school gates. While most felt a bit less confident in speaking to adults, being able to greet the parents/carers and to ask simple questions was invariably identified as very useful to establish rapport.

As well as a practical value, however, learning basic Arabic was found to have huge symbolic value. All staff interviewed told us that the Arabic speaking children greatly appreciated the efforts made by staff in their schools, and that they felt proud to be able to help staff practice Arabic. A few children became 'teachers' to their own teachers or head-teachers, creating homework for them and helping them with pronunciation. This was something that the children we spoke to really enjoyed, and which, in their words, made them feel 'happy'. Appreciation by the parents/carers for the effort staff were making was reported by both the children and the staff we spoke to, and the children told us that their parents are keen for staff to continue learning and become more proficient in Arabic.

Becoming a language learner of a language, such Arabic, that is substantially different from the European languages taught in Scottish education made staff more aware of the challenges that children and parents/carers face when learning English. This increased even further their empathy for the efforts that children and families need to make. Moreover, by putting themselves in the position of a language learner, staff reported that they have become more aware of what works (and what doesn't) pedagogically and methodologically, in relation to language teaching/learning but also more widely.

Education staff reported becoming more alert to the need to make *all* the languages spoken by children in their schools more visible and of the importance of tailoring modern language provision to the schools' demographics rather than teaching only the the more traditional European languages offered as modern languages. Finally, some of the staff and children told us that the project had an impact also on non-Arabic speaking children, who are curious about their teacher or headteacher learning Arabic and ask to be taught a few Arabic words/sentences too.

"When we were preparing for our solo talk, and I'm not kidding, I had every child right here and at the end there was this massive applause like 'Miss, well done, you've learnt that language, that's fabulous'. I asked the children 'Why do you think Miss X is learning Arabic?' So there's this [inaudible] 'because you do Spanish and you do French' 'Yes, and what else?' 'To help the boys and girls who can't speak English yet'. So they are beginning to recognise that the reason the teacher is learning Arabic is also to help other children" (Class teacher)

"It's been really nice in that sense just to have a little bit of commonality and and also it's allowed me to kind of build an awareness of how difficult it must be for these children who come to Scotland and don't have English. And actually when... when the shoe's on the other foot and you're learning a new language that you know nothing about, it's really, really difficult. So it's kind of made me reflect a little bit on my teaching" (EAL teacher)

"We get quite a lot of new arrivals that don't have any English, and their parents don't have any English. So having the chance to have a few words to speak to them is obviously great. And I think again it's not a sense of 'Well, I can speak Arabic fluently', cause 100% I can't, but it's... it's more just kind of building a bond with parents, to know that actually we're making an effort. They're making an effort to learn English, but also we're making the same effort to make them feel part of the school community, so yeah that's good. Really helpful" (Head-teacher)

"I was happy because... I want the teacher, like, to learn another language... not just her language. Like, to learn the Arabic languages and what they do" (Pupil 1)

"How did it feel to hear your teacher speak Arabic?" (Researcher)
"Happy" (Pupil 1)
"Good" (Pupil 2)
"Nice" (Pupil)

"[My parents] are happy because ... some Arabic people can't speak English a lot, and the teacher can speak Arabic and they feel comfortable because they can speak with them in Arabic" (Pupil 2)

FEEDBACK FROM THE ARABIC TEACHERS

The Arabic course designers and teachers who led the course sessions found the experience equally rewarding. Despite busy schedules and the summer break, the learners' commitment motivated the Arabic teachers to continue and support the lessons in response to the needs and ongoing questions by the Scottish learners who wanted to know more. The Arabic teachers felt very happy when, after just a few lessons, the staff in Glasgow could already introduce themselves in Arabic, ask for key new phrases to engage with children in schools and continued to demonstrate high motivation to learn.

One of the Arabic teacher who had the opportunity to meet in person with the learners at the end of the project told us:

"the beautiful thing that we're all committed to finish it, and it's just like seeing them like willing and coming with their notebooks and happy taking the course despite, you know, all the new responsibilities they had, especially after summer break was awesome to see"

"So whenever they speak continually, that was a very special moment to me."

"I was seeing this motivation coming out of the screen, but when I visited the schools it was totally different. I have another point of view [...] me myself was um... surprised, when I got there, that they go beyond what we aim."

During the course, the Arabic teachers learned about the Scottish curriculum and the schooling practices and routines. They too had many opportunities to expand their knowledge by developing the lessons and talking to the educators in Glasgow about their schools. Cultural exchange moved in both directions and was made possible by talking about different cultural artefacts, such as the importance of the rosary beads/Sibha in the Muslim and Catholic tradition. At the same time, the

teachers in Gaza who did not have a chance to come to Glasgow felt that the opportunity to see in person how a school and class looked like would have added key insights to their understanding of the Scottish primary education environment:

"as a team in Gaza, we were asking ourselves, What is the school like? Oh, what should we do? What are the conversations? The daily conversations that could happen - so imagining is good, but it's not enough."
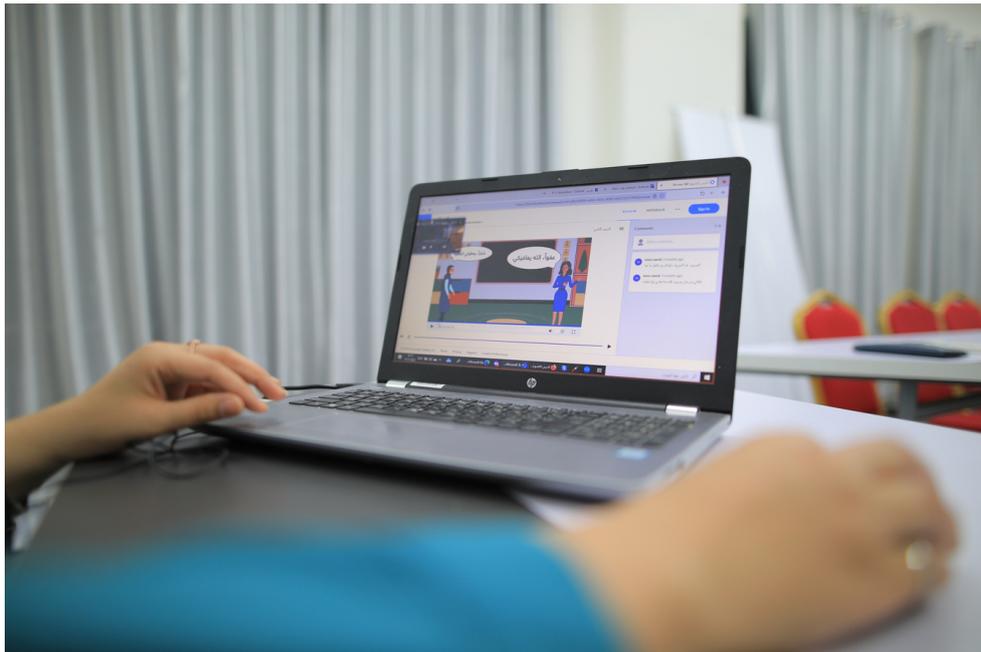
The Arabic teachers identified similar challenges as the learners did with regards to the timing of the lessons, the length of each session and the difficulty of learning a language that is completely unfamiliar to the educators in Glasgow in script, pronunciation and structure. One of the Arabic teachers also wished they had more opportunities to interact with the learners during the live sessions rather than strictly follow the online interactive materials developed. They noted that the materials could have been used for self-study, leaving more time for practice, expansion and consolidation with the tutor during the live sessions.

The positive impact this project had on the teachers and learners altogether led the Arabic teachers to the following suggestions: (i) to expand the project to a 40-hour course that would consolidate the knowledge learned by the Scottish teachers so far; (ii) to pilot and implement the course in other settings and with other languages; (iii) to create an Arabic speaking club where learners can continue to share and learn new phrases; and (iv) to organise a festival that celebrates Arabic and other languages as part of the school culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ON THE BASIS OF THE NEEDS ANALYSIS AND OF THE FEEDBACK,
WE MAKE THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Make space for pupils' languages in Scottish education, as this improves children's self-esteem and wellbeing, recognising what they have rather than simply focusing on what they lack

- Teach Scottish education staff the languages spoken by pupils, as this has both a practical and symbolic value for New Scots children and their parents/carers, providing 'linguistic hospitality' and welcoming

- Teach languages spoken by pupils to Scottish education staff, as this strongly conveys to *all* pupils, regardless of their linguistic background, that all languages are important, and that language learning is relevant and desirable

- The languages that are offered as part of the 1+2 language strategy should extend beyond the traditional 'modern languages' to include the languages spoken in the community

- Tailor language courses for staff in Scottish education to the needs of the staff, to ensure relevance and maintain motivation

- Language learning for staff needs to be delivered in ways that do not put too much demands on existing workloads

- Forms of official certification (e.g. Nat 5 or Higher examination) should be available for the languages spoken by 'New Scots' as they are for other, more traditional languages

- Online tools can be effective in language teaching/learning, especially if opportunities for in-person practice are also available

- Online tools could also support teaching/certification of languages spoken by New Scots, as they allow for clustering regardless of geographical distance

CONCLUSIONS

The Welcoming Languages project was designed as a proof-of-concept study to: show that it is possible to build a culture of hospitality in Scotland that includes language as a crucial element; make space in Scottish education for the many languages that New Scots bring with them; give space in Scottish schools to a greater number of languages, including those of the people and the communities who have more recently settled in Scotland.

We argue that the project fully met the aims it set out to achieve. This is demonstrated by: the unexpectedly large number of Scottish primary schools and staff that expressed willingness to join the project; the fact that the vast majority of Scottish staff took all 10 lessons despite very busy schedules and a less-than-ideal timeline for the course delivery; the extremely positive feedback we received from all involved (i.e. Scottish staff, Arabic speaking children; Arabic course designers and language teachers).

We believe that the success of the project is due to several factors: (1) primary educators experience first-hand the challenges New Scots children and families face, and see their role as crucial in shaping children's and families' experience of being welcomed and included as part of a community; (2) the Arabic course was tailored specifically to the situations that arise in a primary educational context and met the needs identified at the needs analysis stage; (3) the course was created and delivered by a team with the required expertise and experience; (4) everyone involved in the project engaged starting from a position of hospitality, generosity and openness. As one of the Scottish educators noted:

"[We can see] the benefits for the children, not even in terms of us initially using the language, but just them seeing that people want to be able to communicate with them, that they're making an effort. They've been able to help us, they've been getting a bit of kinda... responsibility in class. And the biggest message from me is: this should not be a CPD opportunity, this should be in education while we have a massive percentage of Arabic children [...] and if we are going to keep including Arabic children in the school, we are going to have to be able to speak to them. It's not just up to them to learn English, but if we can learn... just what we've learnt, just to show that we are making an effort as well, I think it's really important"

However, the project also had an impact beyond the specific context of education, creating connections within the Scottish primary schools' communities and between Arabic learners and their teachers too, opening new perspectives on different contexts and different cultural landscapes and fostering deeper understandings of some of the challenges New Scots experience. As noted by one of the Palestinian Arabic teachers, who have first-hand experience of living in a context of protracted crisis, the project helped everyone involved:

"to get a step closer to your other brother or sister, and in and seeing them as human beings and seeing them, not as a burden, but as people who had already lives somewhere else, and they had their own um house or home and jobs, and they they were living a good life before... before things happened, for example, and they were forced to leave before because of war because of um.. floods, or because of any catastrophe that happens in their country. [...] Seeing this land or any other land is... is more of a land that there are so many rooms um... in there for everyone, and to give them as... as if they are the same nation or the same religion or the same, you know, culture"

All this, we propose, makes the Welcoming Languages a 'value-centred' project, one that has a positive impact not only on the educational provision that is offered to all children, but also contributes to building inclusive and socially just communities, communities that take collective responsibility to reach out and support one another, valuing all different contexts and and caring about all lived experiences, both locally and across borders.
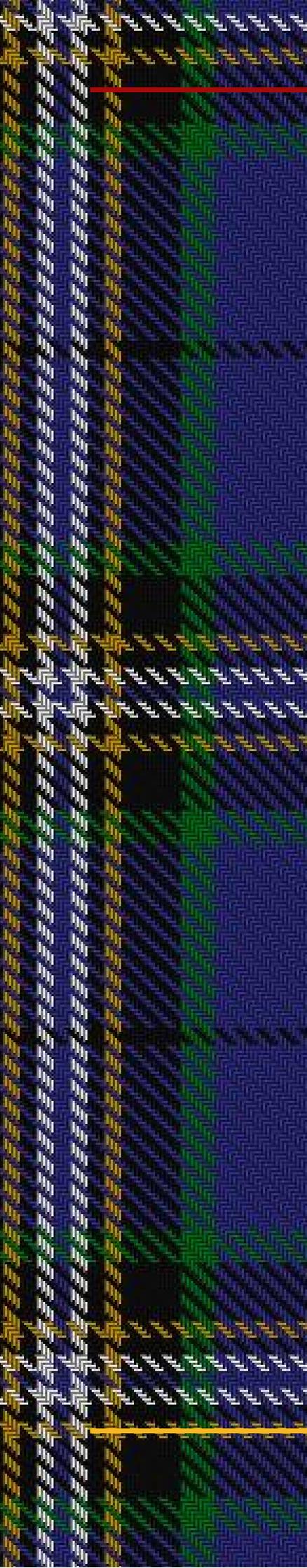
THE PROJECT TEAM

THE PROJECT WAS CARRIED OUT BY AN INTERNATIONAL TEAM BASED IN SCOTLAND (UK) AND IN GAZA (PALESTINE)

University of Glasgow (School of Education)

Giovanna Fassetta - Principal Investigator
Maria Grazia Imperiale - Co-Investigator
Lavinia Hirsu - Co-Investigator
Sahar Alshobaki - Research Associate
Lorraine Shekleton - Project Officer

Islamic University of Gaza (Arabic Center)

Nazmi Al-Masri - International Co-Investigator
Lubna Said Alhajjar - Course Developer/Teacher
Ola Lubbad - Course Developer/Teacher
Yousef Diab - Course Developer/Teacher
Jehad Abujazar - Course Developer/Teacher
Alyaa Abushaban - Local Project Administrator
Hala Shreim - Internal Coordinator
Nour Mezeid - Digital Designer
Mohammed Al-Masri - Voiceover