



**The II International Conference
«METHODS OF TEACHING ORIENTAL LANGUAGES:
ACTUAL PROBLEMS AND TRENDS»**

Abstracts

Methods of Teaching Arabic

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Teaching the Arabic Language: Problems in language or the speakers

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When I submitted for an entrance exam at the “Ecole Normal” 45 years ago, the examiner asked me, “Which of your teachers do you love most?” I answered immediately: “The teacher of the Mathematics and the teacher of Arabic.” However, the Arabic language period is no more interesting or favored these days. Very often, students nowadays waste their time in this period. Has the teacher changed? Has the language itself changed or have people changed themselves?

The case of distaste towards the Arabic language period is almost reflected in the acquisition of the skills and competencies of the Arabic language so that teaching Arabic has become an almost unsolvable problem on short terms. This does not merely threaten good communication only, but it also threatens national existence in the world of globalization.

Although I don't pretend to carry a magic stick to solve the problem which far extends individual effort but on rather involves language counsels and centers that design educational policies, in spite of this, I will do my best to pinpoint the drawbacks and deficiencies, hoping to shed light on the causes/ reasons behind this deterioration in Arabic. According to my humble experience in teaching Arabic, in all the cycles including the university level, I suggest the following solutions that may stop the deterioration of language acquisition in this period of civilization and communication.

We first observe-while studying the Arabic language situation nowadays- the deterioration in all types of mass media, verbal and non-verbal. Such deterioration imposes itself in grammar, pronunciation and structure which totally underestimate our national heritage and the function of language in the formation of the mind and the conscience of the speakers. It is enough, for example, to just listen to a female broadcaster on TV who uses the French word “couple” simply because she doesn't find its synonym in the Arabic language.

Additionally, the language of advertisement boards, mall and commercial shops dwarfs the Arabic language and shows total ignorance towards it.

As for students, we notice structural and language problems as of the basic education. And the matter extends to even students of graduate studies. The common mistakes are related to pronunciation, reading, spelling, ...etc.

The matter is mostly transparent in social communication areas and in writing letters where Latin letters mostly replace the Arabic ones, which threatens real communication between the Arabic individual, his heritage and values.

The question is: what are the basic reasons behind this deterioration?

The first issue is the duality of language and the gap between the formal, standard Arabic and colloquial Arabic. This is a common all over the Arab countries and even within the same country. And even though the colloquial spoken Arabic is basically correlated with formal standard language, it departed totally from it with time in structure, pronunciation and grammar. The learner nowadays asks about the meaning of words he thinks they are colloquial although they are an integral part of our standard language. At times, the learner gets mixed up and uses uncommon colloquial vague words or resorts to foreign words in spite of Arabic, available ones.

Furthermore, this ambiguity and problem reinforces itself nowadays through the teaching of scientific subjects in foreign languages, English or French in most Arab countries under the pretext of the inability of the Arabic language to cope with the scientific progress, a thing which the present and the past refute totally.

The influence of the intellectuals and educators on the Arabic language might be positive, or might be negative. The positive side demonstrates itself in oral presentation, in poetry, and in science. The negative side, however, demonstrates itself in grammatical structures brought through translation.

What makes things worse is that the curricula underestimate the Arabic language which leads official policies to push language backwards

To solve such a problem, we need educational policies that aim at stopping deterioration as a priority, such policies have to make the Arabic language as the major language or science in our countries. Foreign languages can merely be taught as languages of civilization. Additionally, research in the field of linguistics and language should be encouraged. And in content and structure the official textbooks should be the target of interest, making good use of technology in teaching and encouraging reading in Arabic might help a lot.

Eventually, we ask: Does the problem reside in language or in us as speakers?

Culturological Aspects of Teaching (Based on the Arabic Language)

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There are a great number of problems concerning methods of teaching. One of the most serious and important is that of selecting the necessary educational materials and organizing them during a lesson. In order to find out how to teach, one should make out the object of teaching first. The problem of selecting educational materials is not only linguistic but pedagogical as well. On one hand, the objective is to study a language structure; on the other hand - to teach how to understand

a language and produce an unlimited number of expressions. The effectiveness of selecting and organizing educational material depends on how training it will be under certain conditions.

It's worth mentioning that knowing realia, in this case the realia of Arab countries, plays a large role in studying languages. Moreover, an important methodological principle is to use culturological or in other words country-specific elements in process of teaching. It is essential to take into consideration that all aspects and elements related to a country's history, its literature, economics, religion, social psychology, philosophy and ethics compose language structure, language zone. Thus, language is not only words and grammatical models. It is a number of elements which may be characterized by one word – culture. For example, Arabic is permeated with Islam and Islamic traditions since for many centuries religion has been a major form of social consciousness in Muslim society. That is why piety was traditionally the most valuable feature of a person's character. Thus, it is not enough to know Arabic words and grammar to understand and translate texts in Arabic. The introduction to the Arabic language should begin with the introduction to Arab-Islamic culture and Arab mentality.

It should be underlined that Arabs' worldview as a cliché exerts influence upon all sides of the life in Arab society. The worldview itself was and still remains under the influence of Islam. "Islamic paradigm" is not cut out of the mass consciousness. It plays a major role in Arabs' life.

When teaching, one should take into account that Arabs enrich their speech with proverbs and sayings which make it more obvious and understandable. A large number of traditional sayings have sprung up during the development of the Arab culture for a long period of time.

It is a well known fact that a proverb in the East acts as a law, as a judge. It estimates a person's and group's behavior from the standpoint of moral principles. A proverb is a teacher. At the same time it is a sharp weapon to protect Arab traditions from interference. However, the wisdom of centuries reflected in proverbs may not be only diverse but contradictory too, because proverbs share the experience of various social groups and strata of the society lived at different times.

When teaching Arabic, one should remember that there is a literary form of this language, so called "lofty form" that originated from the language of the Quran and mosques, sacred for all Muslim people, and a spoken form i.e. everyday language, the roots of which should be traced back to the dialects of Arabian tribes.

Thus, teaching Arabic means studying peculiarities of Arab mentality, traditions and values; peculiarities of Arabs' national character. It is also necessary to study Arabs' ethno-cultural identity, originated by the peculiarities of the historic and cultural development of each Arab country.

About Choosing Methods of Teaching the Arabic Language

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Nowadays there exist two methods of teaching the Arabic language in Russia. The first one is teaching the language by books, written in soviet time, based on European linguistic tradition. The second one is widely spread in religious institutions and represents methods of teaching language based on Arabic traditions. Due to the analysis of both methods the author - a native speaker – who initially supports the “Arabic traditions” method as the most relevant and effective, comes to the conclusion that both methods may give good results. Nevertheless, task of present-day teachers of the Arabic language is to develop the one method combining both advantages and disadvantages of the above mentioned two traditional methods.

Grammatical Categories of Arabic verb: Formal and Semantic Approaches

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Traditional western orientalist descriptive system (including Russian) of verbal grammar going back to the historically latest version of Traditional Arabic Grammar faces trouble in applying proper western grammatical concepts like 'tense', 'mood', 'voice' to consistent and coherent analysis of Arabic verb. 'Aspect' even is not discussed as a rule in Arabic textbooks.

This paper will discuss the causes of this reluctance to use concepts of modern Western linguistics in relation to the grammar of Arabic. It will be shown that standard descriptions of normative grammar of Standard Arabic to be found in most textbooks are crude translations of Traditional Arabic Grammar.

The core problem here is that traditional Arab grammatical description is formal while the grammatical categories of modern linguistics, particularly the ones mentioned above, tend to be semantic. In traditional grammatical description we find that the perfective form فَعَّلَ is tensed but falls outside the scope of the category of mood. At the same time, the forms of imperfective subjunctive and and imperfective conditional moods are considered not tensed. It will appear even more confusing, if we consider such explicitly conditional forms as فَعَّلَ لَوْ . It seems unreasonable to assume that these forms are not tensed given the fact some of them can easily go together with particular temporal adverbials such as 'tomorrow' or 'yesterday'. On the other hand it may seem curious as well that the definition of verb imply in fact simple verbs leaving

aside such analytical forms as +!!..!&#!&□!,5. So natural question in this respect is why we cannot put such analytical form in, say, subjunctive?

It should be clear that the methodology of teaching a foreign language in terms of defining the basic grammatical categories ought to be based on the ways of teaching the mother tongue. Inventing a new conceptual system for every foreign language may turn out an unbearable burden for the students. In the globalizing world where the students learn three and more languages at the same time the need for unification of the basic inventory of the grammar categories which can be made in a rationally coherent way is evident. This is particularly important in the light of communicative approach to language teaching which is rather elaborate in 'European' languages but has been hardly thought of in Arabic.

The paper offers a semantically oriented approach resolving the problems of logical inconsistencies of the traditional description and building a new classification of verbal categories. This classification implies that if we assume the obligatory state of a grammatical category then every verbal form must be mapped onto a particular slot of a grammatical category.

The new pragmatic-semantic methodology is felt the more necessary given that the traditional formal-prescriptive approach is not applicable to the Colloquial Arabic varieties which display much more analytical properties than Standard Arabic.

Learning Management Systems as Methodological Instrument for Added Effectiveness of Teaching Arabic in Higher School: the Case of "Basic Course of Arabic Language"

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Learning Management Systems represent educational technologies of the new generation, which open innovative opportunities and principally new approaches to optimization of the teaching/learning process. Having been implemented in HSE since 2009, LMS is becoming more and more popular with the passing of each year as an integral part of educational process. This is also true in teaching of foreign languages and eastern languages in particular.

In this paper we plan to present results of LMS use in the process of teaching of foreign language for the non-speakers starting from 0-Level on the example of "Basic Course of Arabic Language", First Year of education. The Course is being taught in the frame of educational programme for the specialization of: "Eastern and African Studies" (undergraduate), as implemented at the School of Asian Studies of HSE, from the start of 2010 i.e. during the last 4 years.

We hereby analyze, on the basis of statistics data, the difference in the rates and results of teaching/learning of the course during 2 years without and 2 years with the use of LMS.

We will visually display presentation of results of several examples of project activity of students during the course in the area of development of language skills such as: reading texts in Modern Standard Arabic, oral and written translation, listening and understanding of original speech. This will also include methods of optimization of students' self-studies outside of class hours, including uploading tests reports to the Course electronic page for evaluation.

We also plan to initiate discussion on "pluses" and "minuses" of using LMS in the teaching/learning process. We will argue that the most evident "pluses" of LMS being actively exploited during "Basic Arabic Course" are:

1) Developing high levels of self discipline in students:

- strict time limits of the results to be uploaded: technically the student can not upload his/her report later than indicated in the "Project", thus the "must-do-in-time" principle;
- high level of self control during audio recording text reading: psychologically it is more difficult to upload a not completely prepared recorded file for evaluation, the file, which then will be kept in the system, than reading a not completely prepared test in class ("fire-and-forget" phenomenon);
- opportunity to fully participate in the learning process remotely in case of missed class sessions (full access to course material through electronic page);

2) Increase in effectiveness of "instructor - student" interactive communication:

- possibility for instructor to comment on accomplished tasks and to monitor individual work on revision of mistakes;
- possibility to upload samples of translation, keys to tasks, etc., which makes it possible for students to self-control work results;

3) Increase in effective coordination of learning levels and evaluation status in case of several instructors teaching the same course in different groups:

- joint course account for all instructors and one combined assessment log for all students;
- possibility for any instructor to upload tasks and study material for all students;
- free access for all instructors to all results of students activities;
- unlimited period of storage of all students accomplishments during the course period for further reevaluation of the course dynamics as well as each student's achievements in the time-line analysis;

- quantitative monitoring of success levels of individual student and group of students, which leads to the possibility to adjust tactical approach to the course instructing with adapting current tasks when necessary "on-the-fly".

4) Personalization of learning process:

- instructor's comments as well as evaluation results are accessible strictly on the personal basis (in accordance with the principle of personal data protection)

Accumulated empirical data leads to the following conclusion: while the volume of additional work (outside classroom) on behalf of instructor and student increases significantly, especially on the preparatory stage where the methodology is being laid down for remote forms of instruction, there is a clear bonus of volumes of time which is freed for the most effective classroom time to be dedicated to the instruction in grammar of Modern Standard Arabic.

We may conclude that LMS as of now has the yet to be fully comprehended merit for the methodology enhancement of instruction in the Basic Course of Arabic Language in higher school.

Artistic Discourse Within the Lingua-Cultural Paradigm

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In the course of "Practicum of artistic texts reading in Arabic: stage I and stage II" the leading role is handed to lingua-didactic and lingua-cultural aspects of texts.

In teaching of foreign languages artistic texts are considered valuable first and foremost because of their multifunctional nature: their educational, aesthetic, cultural, regionalist and lingual functions help to boost effectiveness of the teaching process and motivate students. At the same time they represent one of venues of multicultural and inter personal communication thus furnishing a conduit into the national culture of native speakers and understanding of uniqueness of their national mentality.

Modern tendencies in methodology of language teaching aim at not only a model grasp of foreign language as such, but to a large extend concentrate at environs and background knowledge of culture and existence of speakers of the given language which is a must for overcoming of "language barrier" between different communicating cultures. According to M. Lotman, artistic text is capable of instilling interest in the reader to study language, itself being a universal tool - a unique authentic material for understanding (through reading).

According to the aims of systemic educational process artistic text is being utilized as: an object for analysis (philological, stylistic, lingua-regional); illustration of function of language units of all tiers (lexicon, derivation, grammar, style); a means to master different types of speech and basics of target language culture.

While arguably text plays the role of the main source of socio-cultural information about the target country as well as the means to develop different aspects of speech and an illustration of language factors in play, the teacher has to be extremely attentive in choosing training material on the basis of knowledge and communicativity value. Principle of filtering authentic texts for use in the classroom remains one of the basic pillars of the modern socio-cultural communication methodology.

The paper will show that training objectives are realized most through folklore discourse as well as corpus of supranational multicultural artistic texts, reflecting universal nature of world culture, such as folklore ballads and fairy tales. These are natural tools to study Arabic through high level of language culture, tolerance and motivation.

Role-Playing Game as a Means of Non-Formal Monitoring and Development of Communication Abilities in Advance Stage of Teaching Arabic: the Case of Practicing Economic Translation.

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The paper will deal with several results of role-playing game (RPG) method introduced into the course - "Practicing Economic Translation" in Arabic in the framework of academic programme of "BA in Asian and African Studies" as being taught at the School of Asian Studies, HSE. RPG here is analyzed as an innovative element of skill quality control and a means of teaching of professional abilities.

1. Characteristics of RPG as part of evaluation markers: RPG as a means of evaluation during advance stage.
2. RPG as a means of professional competence development (communicative and interpretative) and impetus for students' motivation. Entrance level of competence of students.
3. Types of RPG.
4. Stages of preparation of RPG. The role of course assistant.
5. Evaluation markers.

6. Results: problems and solutions.

While existing on the Subject Approach in students' learning level evaluation, the higher school education traditionally rests on **KSA (Knowledge, Skill, Ability)** criteria. The analysis of the ratio of KSA of the third year students shows that while having accumulated significant **Knowledge** of grammar and thesaurus and having obtained certain **Skills** in reading and writing, they are hardly capable of the **Ability** to use those in oral and written translation. As the competence in translation is considered to be one of the most significant indicators of the level of preparedness for the future professional occupation, there is a need for objective evaluation of translation competences in the framework of professional mock-up environment.

RPG is arguably one of the evaluation instruments closest to the stated objectives, as well as the accomplished means of honing of professional skills and abilities. Recently RPG has transitioned from the experimental stage to the full-fledged element of the educational standard. RPG has proved itself as an effective tool of education during a number of years, among the most successful examples being the MA Arabic Course in the MGIMO University.

Contemporary competence markers approach to the evaluation of educational results calls for the graduate to be able to execute complex professional tasks. Being a complex professional task, the art of translation calls for the synthesis of isolated knowledge, skills and abilities into the multifaceted competences, which outline the level of Arabist/Orientalist training. Thus the competences consist of not only KSA but personal qualities of the trainee and ***certain level of professional experience***. All these components shape the basis of construction of modus operandi of the graduate trainee versus tasks he will face in his professional career.

Motivation in Learning Arabic and Social Elevating Problems

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The problem of motivation in learning a foreign language is not new. It always accompanies the educational process. Let's recall the days when we all, dear colleagues, studied western languages in the Soviet High School Western as a part of the school program. Some of us studied English, some French or German. And then we forgot the acquired skills after 10-11 of studying.

Why did it happen? The answer is simple - there was no motivation. Not many of us then had an opportunity to actively use the obtained language skills while working with native speakers abroad or within the country.

The study of Oriental languages, particularly Arabic, in the USSR had a practical application and was of mostly associated with the implementation of special goals outside our country.

The Military Institute of Foreign Languages, which I had the honor to finish, prepared military interpreters, while the demand for them was determined by the government policy related to active military and economic cooperation with many Middle East countries, including Arab states.

This success to a great extent was caused by the state order for such specialists, and this fact, in turn, formed a steady motivation in studying Arabic. The long-term employment of Arabic translators was guaranteed.

Today the situation has changed radically. In order to travel abroad you do not need to issue a special passport and give it back when you return, as it was in Soviet times. But, at the same time, the value of the language is lost, due to Russia leaving the Middle East for various reasons. There is no former 100-percent motivation since many plans and projects of our country in the Arab region have been canceled.

I ask students what made them study Arabic. The answer is often: exotics or I want to stand out, so that people respect me for something special, and so on.

Less often students are interested in the specifics of the Arab region, its culture and traditions of the Arab peoples. It usually takes place in mixed families where there are bilingual mother or father - ethnic representatives of the peoples of the East.

The necessity to study eastern languages due to business needs is even more uncommon.

While studying Arabic, as well as any Eastern, yet complex language, the student's attitude changes several times. After all it takes time to achieve results: to learn to read or speak the language. Boring grammar, requiring a lot of persistence and patience, does not show the outlook of language acquisition.

So it is enough to conclude that there is a motivation problem, or, more simply, sustainable student interest in learning Arabic.