

A Comparative Study of Language-in-Curriculum Development for Newly Arrived Speakers of Arabic Varieties in Host Countries of the Middle East, Europe, and North America



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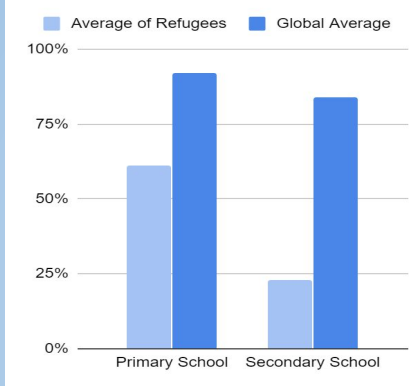
Overview

A. Addresses the challenges in language-in-education curricula development for speakers of different Arabic varieties or dialects—to include refugees, immigrants, and asylum seekers—who have arrived in host communities of the Middle East, Europe, and North America.

B. Considers how Western literacy policies and practices, as influenced by early 19th century European colonialism and contemporary globalization (Or, 2016), have led to the challenges in language education for L1 or mother tongue speakers of Arabic in their home countries and in regions across the globe (Al Hariri, 2018).

1. A quantitative analysis that examines the challenges inherent in current language and literacy initiatives in the educational development for Palestinian, Iraqi, and Syrian Arabic-speaking refugees in the non-formal and formal educational sectors of Jordan, Lebanon, Germany, and Canada.

2. A qualitative case study of a Canadian bilingual school that examines the relationship between standard and colloquial varieties of Arabic used in curriculum instruction for Syrian Arabic-speaking refugees.



Literature Findings on Language & Literacy Disparities

Although Syrians, Palestinians, Iraqis, and Jordanians share a language commonality of Arabic, their language varieties are systematically different, which affects literacy development in Standard Arabic as early as primary school (Cochran 2018).

The mixture of languages between standard French, English, and Arabic in Lebanese public schools have led to several learning challenges and time required to achieve adequate proficiency in these languages for literacy development in mainstream schools (Buckner et al., 2017; Christophersen, 2015; El-Ghali et al., 2016)

Teacher training in Germany remains limited (Crul et al., 2016), and the country's decentralized education system has led to the exclusion of refugees in education altogether.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2016) have noted that Canadian school systems across the country continue to lack proper guidance in responding to the educational experiences and literacy needs of Syrian refugees in both the formal and non-formal schooling.

Grade Level	Arabic Language Percentage	English Language Percentage	French Language Percentage
Junior Kindergarten	90%	10%	10%
1st Grade	80%	20%	20%
2nd Grade	70%	30%	30%
3rd Grade	60%	40%	40%
4th-6th Grade	50%	50%	50%

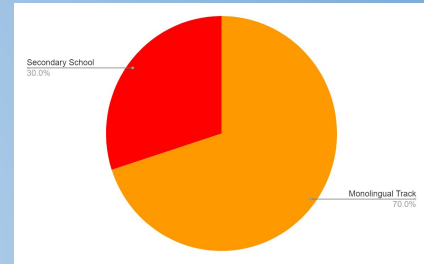
Mansur School Bilingual Case Findings

As shown in the table above, incoming Syrian students receive initial instruction at the Junior Kindergarten level, using 90 % of instruction in Levantine Arabic in all content areas within the English and French second language classrooms. Syrians in grades 4th - 5th, however, are expected to use only 50 % of their native language when learning either English or French, separately, in second language classrooms.

The bilingual program at Mansur is only partially integrated with the rest of the school through shared lunch periods, recess, physical education, and a few elective periods. However, the majority of Syrian refugee students are unable to opt into these electives, due to the double class French and English language instruction that remain in place until their transition into the monolingual track in grade sixth.

Educators work to meet the learning needs of the Syrian students through differentiated assignments in language and culture, as well as in-class support instructors. However, there remains a lack of recognition with regards to the individual language learning needs of Syrian refugee students, which shows the challenges to refugee educational policies and practices.

Mansur's bilingual mission, "to educate students in their native language, while helping them develop their English and French language skills," is not satisfied, as only 70 percent enter the monolingual track in grade sixth at Mansur after an average of three to four years in the bilingual program, whereas 30 percent of students go on to attend and graduate from secondary school as depicted in the pie chart (top right).



Future Educational Directions for Arabic-Speaking Refugees

1. Recognizing Arabic varieties as entirely separate languages values students' L1 background, and enforces the necessity for researchers to develop teaching techniques and cross-cultural language studies that attend to the educational needs of all learners (Myhill, 2014).
2. Arabization, a "grass-roots" movement by local NGOs and interagency organizations, to help strengthen the status of Arabic, and reverse the language shift caused by colonialism and globalization.
3. Recognizing the L1 and using it as a tool in developing new literacy skills in dominant languages will allow native Arabic-speaking students the opportunity to be more confident in addressing their shame or lack of confidence in their reading, writing, and speaking abilities in classroom contexts.
4. Religion, secularization and its implications for language-in-education. Religious institutions, created by the colonial powers, pushed for language standardization and the unification of monolingual practices, which should also be recognized and considered in language-in-curriculum development (Or, 2016).

References

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Data on Refugee Education

Global data on refugee attendance rates in schools show that around 61 percent of refugees attend primary school compared to a global average of 92 percent, whereas 23 percent move on to the secondary level compared to a global average of 84 percent (UNHCR Report on Refugee Education, 2018) as shown in the bar graph (top right).

Averages project a fundamental problem with the current curricula content, including issues with the languages used as the medium of instruction for native Arabic-speaking refugees in host countries (UNHCR Report on Refugee Education, 2018).