

# Challenges Facing Arabic Second Language Learners in Saudi Arabia: Examining the Impact of Diglossia



جامعة الأميرة نورة بنت عبد الرحمن  
Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University

Students: Shahad Alshabr, Eman Alzahrani, May Alotaibi, Reem Alshehri  
Supervised by Ms. Reem Alfuraih

## Abstract

The study examines the challenges Arabic second language learners face in terms of phonetics and diglossia aspects. The study discusses the diglossia among the learners. The methods used are observation, informal interviews, two questionnaires, and a diagnostic test. This study's participants are (26) level one students and 6 teachers in Arabic Teaching Institute as Second Language at PNU. The results indicate that Arabic learners have no difficulty pronouncing sounds similar to those in their native tongue. The data does not support the hypothesis that spoken Arabic is more understandable to learners than written Arabic. Furthermore, the hypothesis that learners have difficulty speaking and understanding Saudi colloquial language is approved.

## Introduction

Every language is unique and there are idiosyncrasies in each language across the globe. For example, Arabic is the language of Islam and Islamic culture. Since it is the language of the Holy Quran many Muslims who are not speakers of Arabic desire to learn it. However, learning a second language is not easy for many and learners face difficulties in learning Arabic. This study answers the research questions.

## Research Questions

- 1- Do Arabic second language learners have difficulty pronouncing sounds that are similar to their first language?
- 2- Do Arabic second language learners have difficulties speaking and understanding Saudi colloquial?
- 3- Which is easier for the Arabic second language learners to comprehend spoken Arabic or written Arabic?

## Research hypotheses

- 1- Arabic second language learners have difficulties pronouncing sounds that are similar to their first language.
- 2- Arabic second language learners have difficulties speaking and understanding Saudi colloquial.
- 3- Arabic second language learners find spoken Arabic easier to comprehend than written Arabic.

## Methodology

To achieve the objectives of the study, the data were collected using:



### Observation

The observation was held in the learners' classroom to observe their difficulties.



### Informal Interviews

are held with the learners to ask them about their purpose of learning Arabic.



### Diagnostic Test

A diagnostic test to measure the learners' level.

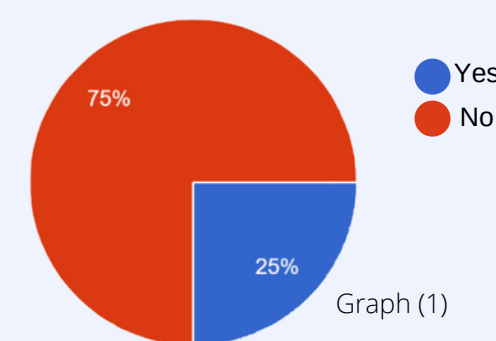


### Questionnaires

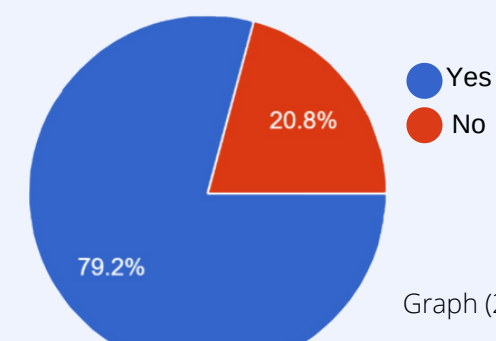
Two questionnaires are distributed to learners and teachers about the difficulties Arabic second language learners face.

## Results

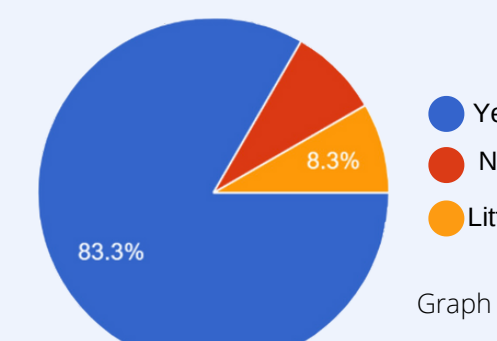
- Graph (1) indicates that learners of Arabic have no trouble pronouncing sounds that are comparable to those in their native tongue.
- Based on graph (2) the data doesn't support the hypothesis that learners find spoken Arabic more comprehensible than written Arabic.
- The hypothesis that learners have difficulties speaking and understanding Saudi colloquial language is approved in graph (3).
- Graph 4 shows that most learners plan to learn the Saudi colloquial variety or other Arabic dialects



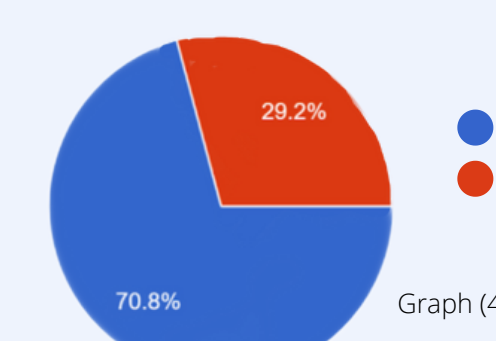
Do you find it difficult to pronounce the Arabic letters (Arabic sounds) that are common to your mother tongue and Arabic?



Do you find yourself more fluent in written Arabic or spoken Arabic?



Do you have difficulty understanding the Saudi colloquial?



Do you plan to learn Saudi colloquial variety or any other Arabic dialects?

## Discussion

- Children are superior to adults when it comes to learning a second language and especially in the phonology area that is; adult learners carry an accent. (Johnson & Newport 1989) This is proven in the study they do have an accent duo to, their age range from 21 to 26.
- The diglossia phenomenon is inevitable among learners of Arabic as a second language. The outcome of the data confirms that learners have difficulty speaking and understanding Saudi colloquial.
- Based on the learners' questionnaire a greater number of learners are motivated by religion and the rest are motivated by professional and personal reasons.

## Recomendation

Instructors of Arabic second language learners recommend:

1. Learners should listen and read on a daily basis.
2. Learners should avoid translation from their first language.
3. Learners should be patient and persevere.

## Research Limitation

- For some learners, we had to communicate in English for them to understand
- There are questions in the questionnaire that were hard for the learners to understand and needed to be explained.
- Finding a time that works for both our schedule and the student's schedules was hard.

## Conclusion

This study explores the difficulties Arabic second language learners face regarding phonology and diglossia areas. It concludes that learners of Arabic have no trouble pronouncing sounds that are comparable to those in their native tongue. The research discovers that learners find written Arabic more comprehensible than spoken Arabic. One of the hypotheses that the research proves is learners have difficulties speaking and understanding Saudi colloquial variety. For future research it is recommended that further studies carry syntax. Future studies should consider all the Arabic second language learners in Saudi Arabia.

## References

