

Arabic: a Language Worth a Worldwide Language

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Language is of a colossal importance in communication and interaction between the different populations all over the world. As one of the widely spoken languages, it has always been questioned whether Arabic can be a wide worldly spoken language or not. The paper tries to shed light on the richness of this language and its place in the previous civilisations and the sprang out of new sciences. It attempts as well to show its importance in the world of globalization as a considerable number of people speak it and learn it for some specific purposes by providing some reasons that push others to learn it from the point of view of the western world. It tries to suggest how to make of it a language that intrigues foreign learners and a language known and spoken all over the world as English is actually.

key words: Arabic, a worldwide language, culture, identity, pride.

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1. Introduction

Language is the thing that registers the culture and identity of a population; it allows to know about the customs and traditions of a certain country and to learn about its history. It permits interaction between people, whether for economic, cultural, scientific or political reasons. Then, learning another language opens widely a door for knowledge and interaction with others. And in the world of globalisation where we live actually making of the whole world a small village where people are able to interact at the same time from the different corners of the globe, it becomes necessary to communicate with the one at the other side of the world or of just the screen of a computer or a mobile. Therefore, it becomes a must to learn English being the lingua franca, or the first language, spoken and/or understood by the majority of people. However, it seems that Arabic is gaining interest and spreading world widely. It is argued that: “Arabic is a fascinating, complex language with a rich history and beautiful script, and it's definitely worth consideration as a field of study!” (Audsley, 2019). It is a very rich language, this richness comes from its different dialects reaching over 30 dialects (Salameh, 2021) which vary in the single country from one region to another, in addition, it is written in different calligraphic forms and styles which make of it a more enjoyable language. The interest of foreigners, notably the Americans in learning English rose greatly after the events of 9/11 as they were trying to learn about the people causing what happened at that time; 231% of the students started studying Arabic in the American universities, notably between 2002 and 2009, (Johnson, 2018); but the number declined by 10% between 2009 and 2016—years in which America continued to fight in Iraq and later against Islamic State (idem). As a brief

over view in history, it should be mentioned that Arabic has already had an influence on the Eastern world. Chejne (1968: 4) said that:

it has its own contributions to several eastern and western languages. in lands as remote as

Indonesia, Indochina, Burma, Pakistan, Afghanistan, as well as in those areas bordering the

Arab world of today, Arabic has left its mark on both vocabulary and scripts and more than

thirty percent of the Persian vocabulary is of Arabic origin. The same could be said of Turkish

before the linguistic reforms in the 1920's, when the Arabic alphabet was replaced by the

Latin script. ...the language of the island of Malt, which is a hybrid mixture of Arabic and Italian.

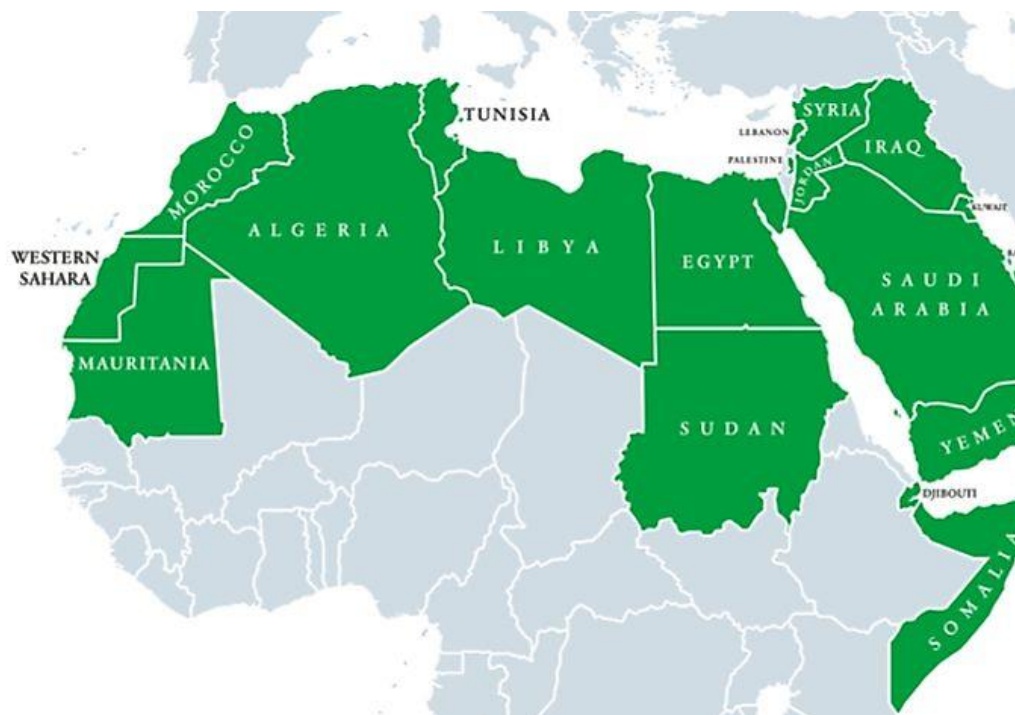
The same author added that: "It has also made contribution to a number of Western languages, mainly Portuguese and Spanish. Such words in common English usage as *cipher*, *algebra*, *arsenal*, *admiral*, *alcove*, *alkali*, *alcohol*, *lemon*, *sugar*, *coffee*, and *rice*. (Chejne, 1968: 4). Additionally, by the seventh century, when trying to spread their empire, the Arabs spread with them Arabic and by the way Islam, being their religion "which extended across the Middle East, North Africa, Central and Western Asia, and even parts of China." (Salameh, 2021).

1. The population speaking Arabic.

According to *Ethnologue* (2021, 24th edition), standard Arabic (excluding its dialects) is in the 5th position with a speaking population of 274 million using it as L1 and L2. It comes after English, mandarin Chinese, Hindi and Portuguese. And with its different dialects, it is considered to be spoken by 422 million speakers (native and non-native) in addition to the diaspora in the different countries.

It should be mentioned that standard Arabic is not at all spoken in everyday conversations. It is mainly used in mosques (the Holly Coran with Classical Arabic), at schools, for media, for administrative purposes, in law and for formal communication with foreigners.

There is a total number of 24 independent countries speaking Arabic. They are concentrated in the Arabian Peninsula, the Middle East, and North Africa, which is known as “The Arab World”. However, there are around 25 Arab speaking countries that claim Arabic as an official or co-official language including Saudi Arabia, Chad, Algeria, Comoros, Eritrea, Djibouti, Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Bahrain, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen (Salameh, 2021). They are listed and classified according to the number of speakers (see appendix 1). And the map below shows the localisation of these countries.



Map1: Arabic Speaking Countries

Source : <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/arabic-speaking-countries.html>

It is clear that Arabic is spoken by the population located in the Arab peninsula, north Africa and even in far east Africa. In addition to the diaspora in the different countries in the different continents.

2. Reasons to learn Arabic

In literature, many authors wrote about reasons to learn Arabic, the thing that refers highly to its importance. The researcher opted for non-Arabic authors to know about their opinion about the language and its importance and to avoid any bias. One of these is Audsley (2019); some of the reasons he cited are summarised in what follows.

1. Arabic speakers are in high demand

In some counties, Arabic is the language of business and commerce, the thing that offers a great opportunity for those who are fluent speakers of Arabic or at least achieve a level of advanced competency in reading, writing, and conversational skills.

2. It's essential to understanding the world's second-largest religion, Islam

Islam is the second largest religion in the world, and the first largest religion in the Arab world. It is also a lifestyle. Then learning Arabic is also gaining insight about Islamic beliefs and traditions as language, culture, and religion are intimately linked together. So interest in the religion makes interest in the language.

3. Travel will be easier in Arabic speaking countries

If intrigued by the Arab culture and countries, then studying Arabic is considerably important. Travelling there will be easier if you speak, read, and write Arabic. Interaction with the population will be better if you master the basic expressions, accordingly, the speaker will benefit from the hospitality of the host people. Audsley (2019) claims that a native speaker of Arabic is

eager and happy to help a foreigner learn more about the language if he hears him saying but few words in Arabic.

4. Knowledge of Arabic will give you access to a growing market and jobs

Being highly interested in job opportunities, learning Arabic will give a great chance to its speaker, Cameron Bean reported that “Given that less than 1 percent of US college students study Arabic, just 32,000 out of 21 million total students, Arabic language skills will separate you from the crowd, no matter your professional field,” (cited in Audsley, 2019). Then, mastering the skills of Arabic, notably, speaking, writing and reading can provide an opportunity to gain a position at a company or organization in a growing and evolving job market. Meanwhile, the Arab countries tend to reform and diversify their commerce and economics, the thing that makes interaction with them a must and hence the use of their language to perform these interactions successfully is inevitable particularly in the Arabian Gulf in the different fields, be it tourism, finance, construction or else.

5. Arabic speakers make good salaries

Being knowledgeable in Arabic can give its speaker the opportunity to earn higher than an average salary according to Katie Russell who wrote in The Daily Telegraph that “in 2016 roughly 20 percent of employers said Arabic was a useful language to them, which rose to 26 percent in 2017” (Audsley: 2019).

Another author wrote about the facts and events that make of Arabic a global language. Costa (2021) thought about:

1. Politics: after the events of 9/11 and the Arab spring, a need for Arabic speakers rose to address the political, military and economic concerns around the Middle East and North Africa.
2. Globalisation: within this era, the internet allowed thousands of people to learn Arabic to cope with the growing economic demands as the number of Arabic speaking countries is considerable due to the developing economic growth in the Middle Eastern States offering opportunities for new jobs.
3. Migration: because of wars in the middle east which caused poverty, instability, unemployment and more, the number of migrants increased, hence the host population become interested in their language and their culture so that to be able to communicate and interact with them.
4. Culture: Arabic literature writers and renowned singers intrigue foreign learners. In addition, the Arabic calligraphy is regarded as one of unparalleled beauty in its uniqueness in symmetry, forms and curves. Costa (2021) reported that the British Council in 2019 claimed that Arabic was the second most necessary language for the United Kingdom in the next 20 years. She added that this importance is a priority language in diplomacy and security and in international and education strategies.

In general, speaking a second language, not only opens new doors but also has numerous other advantages. One will gain valuable insight into another culture and access to another world. Then, learning Arabic can give access to the foreigner to learn about the culture, the tradition, the religion, the commerce, the hospitality and kindness of the Arab population. This is better argued by Nelson Mandela when he said: “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart.” It is argued that Arabic is one of the most coveted language skills (Audsley, 2019), the thing that makes of it a language that deserves to be learnt.

3. How to make Arabic more attracting in the world?

Being an international language and having an international day for Arabic is not enough for the value of this language. More importance should be given to it.

A question can be raised at this level which is: What is the position of Arabic in the world of globalisation? However, another question imposes itself asked by Albakai (2015): What is the position of the Arab individual in the era of globalisation? He explains that language is but a tool of communication, hence the fault is not in the language as much as it is in the speakers of this language; he adds that there is no doubt that the Arabic language was never incapable of keeping pace with globalisation.

It is known that the powerful countries impose their systems and power over the other countries. This is directly due to their power whether at the political, the economic, the cultural or the scientific level. And the power now is not at all at the hands of the Arab countries struggling with their politics and economy, and let alone science and knowledge. This makes the Arabic population less capable of making of it a powerful language as it deserves. Arabs had been powerful centuries ago when they were powerful with their pride and confidence in themselves, with their civilisations, with their military power to face the non-believers that allows them to spread their empire in north Africa, Europe and Russia, with their knowledge and science in the different fields from which foreigners took their scientific knowledge which became progress, development and prosperity. This knowledge made of them proud of their identity, religion, hence, language. At a given time, Arabic calligraphy was an ornament on the walls of the European castles. The thing that does no more exist now. To use Albakai's (2015) words, innovation is in the language of the innovator and since innovation is within the hand of the western world, English is the worldwide language and Arabic is far from being one.

Nevertheless, this doesn't mean that nothing can be done vis-à-vis this language. Each individual is capable of offering a little help for the promotion of the Arabic language waiting for the Arabs making of their countries powerful ones. And this can be explained in what follows.

1. Being a good ambassador when being outside your Arabic country.

Travelling abroad is inevitable. As much as a person is happy to spend a nice time and enjoy a good time, as much a preparation for providing a good

image of the country to the others is important. This image is represented by good behaviour and education, by being helpful and respectful. This raises the others' interest in the people and maybe to the language.

2. To be proud of the Arabic identity.

Being proud of one's own identity is a power that can be transmitted to the others. Knowing the origin and the previous glorious days raise the pride of the identity. Besides, the Arabs, being emotional and empathetic can teach the people of the world think to take care of each other instead of thinking of their own deals and wealth. This pride can give a power to its speaker and hence not being ashamed to have it and to transmit it.

3. Be proud of your language and try to use it outside your country.

As previously stated, this pride enables the Arab speaker to use it when the opportunity occurs. It can be done when visiting a museum or a monument, when buying from a shop, when eating in a restaurant, or else. Maybe the speaker can use the Arabic word to teach others what is said in their own language.

4. Be proud of your culture. To show it whenever the opportunity occurs.

The culture is the identity of any nation and any population. And language is one aspect of culture. If the speaker is proud of his culture, he does not find any objection to show it to the others and to make it known to those who do not know it, and consequently, he becomes an ambassador of his Arabic culture where he transmits the Arabic language in an indirect way.

is proud of its language and As a good example of a country which culture and is showing it to the whole world is Qatar in the football events that happened during the Arab World Cup events (December 2021) where their culture is represented in the new buildings. These buildings will receive people from different folks of the world and this offers them the opportunity to make their culture known and by the way their language. As an illustration, a stadium is shaped into the form of their traditional cap and given its name ‘athoumama’; and another one is given the form of a tent and its name in Arabic as well ‘al bayt’, in addition to a mall called ‘alluwlua’; and more can be cited. However, it would have been better, as the competitions are for the Arab countries to write the names of the football players in Arabic above the Latin letters on their jerseys. In this way the graphics of the Arabic letters are made known being side to side to the Latin words.

5. Conclusion

Arabic is known to be a rich language encompassing a lexicon exceeding the twelve million words, witnessing strong Islamic civilisations, registering the pre-Islamic poem, and holding the Holy Quran. It had been the language of knowledge and science in a civilisation that succeeded to make a balance between knowledge and morality. Unfortunately, it declined after the decline of the Andalusia.

Compared to the number of people speaking Arabic nowadays, it is a language that deserves to be well-ranked and gain the status of a worldwide language. But what should be done to make of this language known and used in the world is the task of its speakers. Then, as Arabs, we should be

convinced that Arabic can be the language of science as it used to be centuries ago since Ibnu Sina, Al buhturi, Alkhawarizmi, Ibnu Alhaithem and else wrote their knowledge and inventions in Arabic registered in old books. These were the cradle of the actual knowledge and science. Arabs should be proud of their identity, culture and language; this pride is reflected as a power to the others that may intrigue them to learn about the people, and consequently about the language. It is also preferable to use the language, particularly abroad, whenever the opportunity occurs to make the language known even if it is just some few single words through interaction with foreigners in shops, restaurants, public places or else. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the Americans register their history in Arabic secretly somewhere in their archives as Arabic is the only language which still has its vocabulary in its original form.

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Appendix 1:

Table 1: List of Countries by the number of Arabic Speakers

Source : <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/arabic-speaking-countries.html>

Rank	Country	Number of Arabic Speakers
1	Egypt	82,449,200
2	Algeria	40,100,000
3	Sudan	28,164,500
4	Saudi Arabia	27,178,770
5	Morocco	25,003,930
6	Iraq	22,908,120
7	Syria	17,951,639
8	Yemen	14,671,000

Rank	Country	Number of Arabic Speakers
9	Tunisia	10,800,500
10	Jordan	5,083,300
11	Libya	4,526,000
12	Lebanon	4,180,000
13	Somalia	3,788,000
14	United Arab Emirates	3,607,600
15	Mauritania	3,140,000
16	Oman	2,518,816
17	Israel	2,039,000
18	Kuwait	1,735,000
19	Palestine	1,610,000
20	Chad	1,320,000
21	Qatar	1,215,446
22	Bahrain	690,302
23	Eritrea	249,700
24	Djibouti	97,900