**Towards Change in Reading Practice and Strengthening Arabic Language Learning: A Proposed Pedagogical Program for the Development of Creative Thinking in Language**

*Abstract*

Examination results indicate a notable weakness in understanding Arabic-language texts and creative linguistic thinking among Arab students in Israel across the age groups. These disappointing outcomes are also evinced a variety of national and regional examinations such as evaluative assessments and formative tests (Al-Bajrut [?] XXXXXX 2019).

These results are attributable both to particular factors and the many broader challenges that Arabic language education for Arab citizens in Israel faces. Some of the factors are pedagogical in character, such as the failure to keep up with new teaching methods and strategies, the neglect of the development of higher-level thinking skills and creative capacities, and the sheer paucity of Arabic language education provision itself. The resort to primary school teachers for language instruction is also short-sighted (Abu-Hussein 2003). Teachers rely heavily on testing that assesses lower-level thinking skills, whereas assessment of higher-level thinking skills that measures creative, analytical, and critical thinking capacity is both deficient in content and rarely implemented (Jarwan 2016; Majadly 2015; Hamza 2014; Delcourt and McKinnon, 2011).

This study assesses the proposed pedagogical program’s potential contribution, based on the use of timetabled reading sessions and the diversity of reading material, to the enhancement of creative thinking about language among elementary school pupils and the impact it has on their motivation and positivity towards language study.

An alternative program is proposed consistent with contemporary thinking on techniques and aspects of intellectual development and would contribute to an enlightened reading experience. It draws on theoretical concepts about creativity and “meaningful learning” in order to make the educational process more effective and dynamic. This would produce better learning outcomes founded on advanced methodologies. The program foregrounds experimentative, multifaceted, rounded and synthetic thought processes that cultivate both convergent and divergent thinking. It is based on timetabled reading sessions drawing centrally on the linguistic and psychological analysis evinced in reading and reception theory. This establishes a reading dynamic, given that it is a structured program for meaning construction that engages and enhances positive cultural, linguistic and psychological reading skills (Boissinot and Mougenot 1990). It is also based on meaning-text theory and the constructive psychological aspects of education identified in Hamoud (1998).

This study seeks to address important questions on the language such as: To what extent does the proposed pedagogical program develop textual study skills in comparative and analytical thinking, with students creatively constructing linguistic meaning in an individual way? To what extent does it cultivate a stock of knowledge, skills and ways of interacting with the text and an appreciation of the particularities of the text, its structure and contexts? To what extent does it develop students’ systematic textual analysis skills? To what extent could it prompt a qualitative change in the teaching of Arabic language texts that would inculcate creative learning practices in relation to texts?

The program incorporates Arabic-language texts units with pre- and post-study testing materials for primary school students. The study’s preliminary outcomes point to the highly positive influence of the program on students’ creative use of language in timetabled reading periods. The program enhanced both the level of creativity and of motivation towards language learning among the participants.

The Arabic-language teaching program for non-native speakers could also benefit foreigners who are studying Arabic in increasing numbers. The language could thus become a cultural bridge encouraging social and cultural interaction between different societies. Given the negativity around migration and intercultural contact in Europe and the wider world, the study would contribute to language acquisition and enhancement among Arabic-speaking migrants. It would also strengthen a sense of identity, since language is intimately bound up with it at the personal and communal level. Religious, ethnic and national identity both shape and are shaped by language (Suleiman, 2003; Joseph, 2004; Tbouret-Keller, 1997).

*Keywords*

Language education; timetabled reading sessions; reading diversity; creative language thinking; linguistic development

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