Learning Arabic Media Related Vocabulary through Twitter at the University of Alabama

Saad Bushaala

The University of Alabama
Tuscaloosa, AL, USA

Safa Elnaili

The University of Alabama
Tuscaloosa, AL, USA

Maysoun Ali

Community Child Center/Headstart/ECEAP Program
Pullman, WA, USA

Abstract

This research paper aims to investigate the effect of utilizing Twitter in a foreign language classroom and how it would affect students' attitudes towards learning Arabic media related vocabulary. The researchers used qualitative and quantitative methods as a methodological approach to the study. The subjects of the study are American undergraduate students studying Arabic for their third semester, 11 participated in the study. The participants were asked to open Twitter accounts in order to practice reading up-to-date tweets from global news agencies. Participants took pre and post-tests, then were asked to take a questionnaire; a structured interview was also carried out along with reflections to have a better understanding of the students' attitude towards the use of Twitter in the classroom. The data were gathered throughout the semester and analyzed qualitatively and the participants' responses were coded for certain themes and then analyzed. The findings indicated that the students had a positive attitude towards the use of Twitter in learning vocabulary for specific topics -in this study media/political-related vocabulary- in the foreign language classroom. In addition, the quantitative data used as confirmation and showed vocabulary gains after the Twitter treatment. The study's findings can be applied to any foreign language and can have important implications and recommendations for language teachers and educators in the field. The findings will add valuable recommendations on how to integrate social media platforms in a foreign language classroom.

Keywords: Arabic, Foreign Language Learning, Twitter, University of Alabama, Vocabulary learning

Cite as: Bushaala, S., Elnaili, S., Ali, M.& (2020). Learning Arabic Media Related Vocabulary through Twitter at the University of Alabama. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on CALL (6)*. 157-170. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/call6.11>

Introduction

The demand for teaching the Arabic Language in American higher education systems has increased in the past years, especially after 9/11 (Al-Batal, 2006; Brosh, 2013; Abu Melhim, 2014), and the political reforms in the Middle East and North Africa post the Arab Spring. Many American universities offer Arabic as minors and majors to meet their students' needs for the language and in order to complement their fields of study. Students studying Arabic at the University of Alabama come from different specialties like: Political Science, International Studies, Religious Studies, Journalism, and History; their interest in the Arabic/Islamic world motivates them to learn the Arabic language. Arabic language teachers constantly look for the best methods to make their language learning experience motivational.

With the current situation in the Arab world, most students are interested in the political context. Their departments are preparing them to become politicians, diplomats, journalists, political analysts, and experts in their fields. Thus, in the Arabic program, they are taught Arabic through political texts especially in the intermediate and advanced levels. Students are introduced to media texts and news reports in Arabic to help them learn the language of media and politics. The curriculum includes printed news reports in textbooks, online reports from famous Arabic news channels such as Aljazeera and Alarabiya, and live streaming reports.

These media texts are rich in vocabulary, thus, posing challenges for the students to learn new words. It is crucial to empower students' vocabulary knowledge in order to prepare them for reading and comprehending such complex media texts. Since most of these media texts can be long and dense, one way of simplifying the texts is to break down their density into shorter ones. Studies have shown that having learners engage with online short texts can help improve their linguistic comprehension (Lomika & Lord, 2016). This study aims to implement the use of reading online short texts for vocabulary learning. The goal is to help students recognize and learn the Arabic media related vocabulary and hence help them engage with and understand Arabic political news texts and their context. The suggested tool to apply this approach is through the use of Twitter. The study suggests students read tweets of political news from Aljazeera and Alarabiya news platforms on Twitter. The purpose of this tool is to motivate them into engaging with the texts - in this study the tweets, by reading the tweet, finding and recognizing the vocabulary to help them understand the tweet, that is the news piece, as a whole context. The study also investigates the effect of the tool on students' attitudes towards the use of Twitter in learning Arabic media related vocabulary and how it would enhance their learning.

Integrating Social Media: Twitter

Language teachers, coordinators, and program directors are encouraged, more than ever, to provide variable and accessible materials to meet students' learning needs and goals. One of the most demanding venues for teaching a foreign language is the use of social media. Several studies, including the ones discussed below, have investigated the effect of social media venues, such as Twitter, in supporting language learning outcomes; most of these studies argue that the use of Twitter can help, for example, engage and motivate learners in and out of the classroom and thus makes it a successful communicative and active learning tool. Bista (2015) argued that the use of Twitter in higher education created a positive atmosphere in the classroom "Overall, participants...reported positive experiences saw Twitter as a valuable tool to use in the classroom"

(Bista, 2015, p.98). A study by Drewelow (2012) concluded that Twitter contributed in creating a communicative atmosphere in the classroom, lowering student's anxiety "Using a social networking tool also seemed to allow more shy or fewer confident students to develop a voice within the classroom community" (Drewelow, 2012, p.139), as well as promoting their in-depth discussions and engagement in the classroom. Twitter also helps engage students in their learning activities and maintain their motivation for learning (Sekiguch, 2012). Studies also show that Twitter helped train students' communicative and cultural competence through messages, it proved to be an active learning tool that is suitable in and out the classroom (Borau, Ullrich, Feng, & Shen, 2009). Twitter can lead to better engagement for students and even help increase their grades, as well as create a more active and participatory environment for the teacher (Junco, Heiberger, & Loken 2010). Studies, in addition, showed that using Twitter in language learning can serve in building a community among students when face-to-face learning is limited, a study by Lomika and Lord (2012) argued that Twitter proved to facilitate a 'fun and interactive' community for language learners.

As languages are encouraged to be taught and learned in a communicative setting, and with the development of social media technology, alongside the great demand for the integration of cyber venues in the classroom, there is no doubt that social media platforms, such as Twitter, are effective tools for language learning. Twitter creates a communicative environment for learners in and outside the classroom. It helps make language learning a social experience.

Sociocultural Approach: Learning Media Related Vocabulary

In the light of language learning and social/cultural context, Lomika and Lord (2016) argue that among the four theoretical approaches to L2 learning and social network, the sociocultural approach helps with language acquisition. The approach emphasizes learning language through interaction, "[t]his interaction can lead to developments in both identity and in relationships and can expose students to current real and meaningful language use for specific tasks" (Lomika and Lord, 2016, p. 228). In their discussion of incorporating social networking tools in the classroom, Lomika and Lord stated that these sites (i.e. social media) help students engage in their learning and improve their linguistic gains. These linguistic gains occur when engaging students with shorter texts, such as in Twitter texts: "Engaging students with shorter amounts of text, increased hashtags and pictures is something that can be appealing to the L2 learner" (Lomika and Lord, 2016, p. 236). They add that such short texts can encourage students to be more motivated in their learning. Baron (2015) has a similar perspective regarding using cybertext to stimulate language learning; her study results indicated that reading on-screen helps better in finding a specific word or passage. Baron's discussion identifies the importance of technological advances in the pedagogical arena and that the onscreen reading is growing rapidly.

Within the previous context, this study aims to implement the use of Twitter in the L2 classroom for learning Arabic media related vocabulary. The Arabic program at the University of Alabama hosts students from Political Science, International Studies, Religious Studies (Islamic Religion), and Media; students from these fields of studies learn Arabic for their interest in the Middle East and the Arabic/Islamic world. In order to meet the students' needs, a curriculum was designed for the intermediate and advanced level classes that introduces the Arabic language in a socio-political and cultural context. One of the required textbooks for the class selected for this

study is *Media Arabic: A Coursebook for Reading Arabic News* authored by Elgibali and Korica,(2007). The textbook is designed to expose learners to the language of Arabic media and news reports. Such complex and advanced texts are rich in vocabulary, thus, posing a challenge for the learners. In an effort to create a communicative and engaging learning environment in the classroom, this study aims to integrate the use of Twitter in the classroom as a complementary tool in learning Arabic media vocabulary. The purpose of selecting Twitter among other social networks is that Twitter has become one of the main venues for news search; a study by the American Press Institute found that 86% of Twitter users use it for news, and 74% of them use it daily. In addition, reading tweets is faster and accessible to students in and out of the classroom, and in order to make learning Arabic media related vocabulary a more engaging process, the study implements Twitter in the classroom to connect the students with the real world, and to expose them to the breaking news of the Arab world through recognized news agencies, such as Aljazeera and Alarabiya.

Study Questions

- How would using Twitter impact the attitudes of the participants in learning Arabic media related vocabulary?
- Would the participant's attitude towards Twitter enhance their vocabulary gain?

Study Methods and Procedures

The study was conducted for the Arabic program at the University of Alabama throughout a six weeks period. The language component focused on in the study is vocabulary, in precise, Arabic media related vocabulary. A Twitter group was created specifically for the study named ArabicNewsGroup@ArabicNewsGruu1, where all participants followed to read the shared news pieces and tweets from Aljazeera and Alarabiya news. The Twitter activity was used alongside the textbook assigned for the class.

Participants

For the study, we used the Patton (2002) purposeful sampling approach. The participants of the study were the intermediate level students with a total of 11 participants, seven females and four males, ten white, one African American and, one Hispanic. Their ages ranged between 18-23. Their majors were in International Studies, Political Science, Religious Studies, and Journalism. Nine out of 11 of the participants never used twitter in studying Arabic before. Only one participant used twitter in studying languages other than Arabic. Therefore, the majority of the participants had no prior experience in using it for language learning.

Procedures

This is a multi-case study designed with multiple units of analysis. We used Yin's (2014) four principles to collect data from multiple resources. The units of analysis were to find out improvement in learning Arabic media related vocabulary in a foreign language classroom and to explore the participants' attitudes towards the use of Twitter in learning Arabic media related vocabulary. The tools used for this study were: a questionnaire, students' interviews, and students' reflections. Before using the tools for data collection, students were introduced to two treatments, a pretest, and a post-test.

The duration of the study was approximately six weeks. For the first two weeks, participants were introduced to the new vocabulary lists, and then they explored these new words through the reading texts provided in the textbook. The reading texts were news reports about political summits and meetings, accompanied by images. Participants learned the new vocabulary through class discussions then practiced learning the words and their meanings through the texts for word recognition, meaning, and text's overall comprehension. Following the readings, the participants did some vocabulary exercises to help their learning. At the end of the second week, they were given a pre-test. The test covered the vocabulary they learned in the first two weeks and had questions of word match, word choices to fill in the blanks, and open-end questions.

In the third and fourth weeks, the participants learned new vocabulary lists; the topic was political conflict and terrorism. The number of new words introduced to them during the third and fourth weeks was similar to that in the first two weeks. This is to eliminate any factors that would affect the data results of the study, especially in the tests. The participants practiced the new words through class discussions, following that, the treatment (Twitter) was introduced in class. They were asked to read the tweets provided to them through the Twitter group created for the study. Tweets of news pieces from Aljazeera, Alarabiya, and BBC Arabic about terrorism and conflicts were shared in the group by the researcher. Participants were asked to read these tweets from their phone devices to recognize any of the words they have learned from the list and how much of the news piece they comprehend. Exercises of the same nature in weeks 1 & 2 were also given after reading tweets to help with the vocabulary intake. At the end of the fourth week, a post-test was given to the participants. The test was conducted similarly to that of the pre-test for more credibility. This data was coded later in the study using Saldana's (2013) two-cycle approach.

Questionnaire

All the participants were given a questionnaire in the fifth week after their post-test. There were 11 open and closed questions related to demographic information and the participants' experience with Twitter during the study. The questionnaire was conducted to obtain some data related to their attitudes towards using Twitter for vocabulary learning.

Interviews

After taking the questionnaire, the researchers conducted interviews with the participants. The interview was semi-structured and the participants were asked five open-ended questions. A voice recorder was used during the interview to record the data. Each participant was interviewed for a set of 5-10 minutes. They were asked about their opinion on the method of integrating Twitter in the classroom and whether they find it a motivating and beneficial experience. The value of the interviews in this study is to obtain more input from the participants and fill in any gaps or unclear points/answers.

Reflections

Reflections are great tools for recording the participants' impressions and feelings about their lived experiences. The purpose of the reflections in the study is to complement the data collected in both the questionnaire and the interviews. Participants were given a prompt that asked the students to reflect on their experience during the integration of Twitter. The goal was to collect data that reflects their attitudes towards the treatment and to get an immediate description of their experiences; To describe, to judge it, and to state their opinions about whether they like it or not.

Pre- & Post tests

Despite the small number of participants in this study, researchers felt the need to implement these two tests to complement and support the qualitative findings in the other study tools, i.e. questionnaire, interviews, and reflections. The purpose of the tests is to examine whether the participants' attitude growth impacted their vocabulary gain after introducing the treatment to them. The pre-test preceded the treatment and the post-test followed the treatment.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed qualitatively, and quantitatively for confirmation. The tests and the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively by using thematic analysis suggested by Liamputtong (2009) and Gibbs (2007). We looked at main categories and subcategories and we created connections between them. The reflections and interviews were analyzed qualitatively. The reflections and interviews were coded and themes were generated with regard to the research questions. The results are presented in the following sections:

Questionnaire

The table below demonstrates data collected from the 11 participants' questionnaires. The participants in general indicated that they are familiar with Twitter as a popular social media and use it in their daily lives. However, the majority of the participants also indicated that they had no prior experience in using Twitter in studying Arabic or any other language.

Table 1. *Data gathered from the questionnaire*

Questions	Category	Number of
A1	Participants	11
A2	Ages	18-23
A3	Gender	4 males & 7 females
A4	Undergraduates	11
A5	Majors	International Studies, Political Science, Religious Studies, and Journalism.
B1	Race	9 white, 1 African American, 1 Hispanic
B2	Use of Twitter	Yes (4) No (7)

B3	How often	None Every day (4) Once a week (3) 2-3 times a week (2) 4-5 times a week (1)
B4	Using twitter in studying Arabic	Yes (2) No (9)
B5	Using twitter in studying any other language	Yes (1) No (10)
B6	Experience using Twitter in the study	Excellent (9) Very good (2) Good (0) Fair (0) Poor (0)

As seen in the table, it was apparent that the participants rarely used twitter since only four of the participants indicated that they used it every day, three used it once a week, two used 2-3 times a week, and one participant used it 4-5 times a week. Only two out of 11 had previously used Twitter in learning Arabic. This means that the majority of the participants have no prior use of Twitter in language learning. As for the participants' experience in using Twitter as a social media platform in learning Arabic, the questionnaire indicates that they had an excellent experience with the tool as a treatment in the study.

Questions B4 and B6 demonstrate that most of the participants lack experience in using Twitter as a language learning tool. This, as a result, will help set valid data for the last question of the questionnaire. Responses to question B6 show that the participants, in general, have enjoyed using Twitter in the classroom. This also indicates that the treatment had a positive effect on the students and helped them engage better in learning.

Interviews

Data from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed using Saladana's (2013) coding method. The participants in the interview voiced that the use of twitter during the study was helpful since it helped them in learning the target language. They also believed that Twitter motivated them and made learning the target language less intimidating. The following quotes from the students' interviews show their positive attitudes about the use of Twitter during learning the target language. The following demonstrates examples of the transcribed data collected from the interviews.

Using twitter assisted and encouraged the students to activate their prior knowledge and assist in memorization and comprehension

“That was actually helpful to be able to see how it's actually written by people in real life instead of sentences sort of like a textbook. That aren't necessarily something I'm ever going to say in real life. So, I'd also like. It was. Good because I sort of already knew what was going on that might be in those tweets and so it was a lot easier to pick up on what was going on”

“I guess that it does help with memorization. I was able to remember that word later as opposed to just having a ton of words tumbling around in my head. So yeah I thought that worked well”

“There isn't as much of a grammatical focus on the Twitter aspect. It's very good for vocabulary and learning phrases and kind of memorizing them but maybe I make your grammatical sense there may be different from spoken as they're more concise”

Using twitter enhanced and supports language learning since it is concise, authentic, interesting, and simple

“So, I never used Twitter before. And so, I'm not very comfortable with social media but I thought that. Twitter is very short. And it's very to the point, which in Arabic sometimes is not very to the point just in the longer sentences. And so, I thought it was a good way to introduce vocabulary because you can see the vocabulary almost immediately in one of like 10 words. And so, it's easy to pick out the words it's easy to pick them out in context and understand what those words are without having to worry about all of the grammar or extra vocab around the words”

Using twitter provided a better learning experience and engagement.

“Sometimes people don't always study when they go home because you have to pull a textbook or whatever. But people always have their phones on them so would be very easy for them to study through their phones or through Twitter”

Using twitter made learning non-traditional, less intimidating, and motivational.

“I guess that it does help with memorization. I was able to remember that word later as opposed to just having a ton of words tumbling around in my head. So yeah I thought that worked well”

“Yeah yeah I would. And again, I think it's a lot more interesting and it's a lot easier to sit down and work on stuff like current events using Twitter. But actual humans like talking and you can read responses”

Reflections

Data from the reflections were first coded then divided into categories and themes as an attempt to give the best interpretation of the given data (Creswell, 2014). Data revealed that the nine participants found using Twitter was useful for improving their Arabic media related vocabulary.

They also preferred it to the traditional method of learning vocabulary, and they shared similar opinions on how it was helpful. For instance, the tweets provided authentic materials about current events of the world around us. That would, of course, make the learning process more interesting, engaging, and fun as opposed to the long reading passages as they indicated. In this sense, one of the participants said “I thought twitter was fun and interactive way to learn, not only the new vocabulary, but also about different news articles”. Some participants believed that reading about current events through the tweets made vocabulary learning more engaging. Regarding this, a participant stated, “The fact that these events are real news stories make the learning even more engaging.”

In addition, the participants found learning Arabic media vocabulary through Twitter much easier than the traditional method. According to them, the short sentences used in the tweets made it much easier for them to digest and understand the vocabulary included, which in return, helped them understand the given piece of information in the tweets. Regarding this, one participant said “using Twitter helped to break down the sentences into smaller parts and analyze it while with the passages it was challenging to do so”. Another one stated, “The tweets were my favorite in that they broke down the material into more accessible and easily digestible pieces.” In relation to this, one participant confirmed “It was quicker to learn as opposed to passages which required more time to break down and which also seemed to be a far more intimidating task”.

To conclude, all participants had positive attitudes towards Arabic media learning vocabulary through Twitter, and they all recommended integrating it into classroom instruction to enhance students’ vocabulary learning. As noted earlier, they found learning Arabic media vocabulary using Twitter much easier, more interesting, engaging, and fun as opposed to the traditional method of learning vocabulary in the classroom.

Pre-test and Post-test

In this section, we demonstrate the participants’ pre-& post-test results and a discussion through tables.

Table 2. *Analysis of different percentages between post & pre-tests*

Participant	Pretest score out of 10	Posttest score out of 10	Different Percentages between Post & Pre-tests
1	5.7	6.75	10.5 %
2	3.4	5.5	20.1 %
3	7.3	8	0.70 %
4	1.9	3	20.1 %
5	2.6	2.5	0.10 %

6	5.3	5.25	0.05 %
7	3.8	3	0.80 %
8	4	5	10 %
9	2.3	3.25	1.05

Table two shows the grades of both the pretest and posttest scores out of ten in the first two columns, and the third column shows the difference between the two tests. From the above table, 6 participants out of 9 showed an increase in their grades after the treatment. Only 3 of the participants' grades dropped slightly in the post-tests. This indicates that the participants have performed better with the implementation of Twitter in the classroom, the differences range between 0.70 and 20.1 as seen with participant 2.

For example, a participant was unable to translate a verbal phrase in the pretest, i.e. matching a verb with the right noun: وجه دعوة *sent an invitation*, however, translated another verbal phrase in the post-test correctly الحق اضرارا *cause damages* in news context after the Twitter treatment, another example, a participant misused a word in context in the writing question in the pre-test i.e. تبادل القمة *exchanged summit* instead of تبادل الآراء *exchange ideas* but succeeded in using the correct word choice in a similar question the post-test, i.e. استهدف الانفجار *the explosion targeted*.

In addition, a non-parametric method, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, was used to analyze the data due to the small size of participants. We set the Alpha level to be .10. The results indicate that the difference between the pre-test and the post-test is statistically significant ($p = 0.066$). It suggests that participants' post-test scores are significantly higher than their pre-test scores. See the below table.

Table 3. *Descriptive statistics*

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Pretest	9	4.0333	1.77200	1.90	7.30
Posttest	9	4.6944	1.89892	2.50	8.00

Table 4. *Ranks*

Ranks

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Posttest - Pretest	Negative Ranks	3a	2.33	7.00
	Positive Ranks	6b	6.33	38.00
	Ties	0c		
	Total	9		

a. Posttest < Pretest

b. Posttest > Pretest

c. Posttest = Pretest

Table 5. *Test statistics*

Test Statistics

	Posttest - Pretest
Z	-1.836b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.066

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

Discussion and Findings

The data analysis collected from the study's questionnaire, interviews, reflections and pre/posttests demonstrated that using Twitter in the Arabic language learning classroom is positively effective. Based on the coding of the data analysis, the study has found that most of the scores in the post-test were higher than the pre-test after the implementation of Twitter in the classroom. This indicates, and in accordance with Junco, Hebergert, and Loken's, (2010) findings, that Twitter can help students increase their grades and learning outcome. Collected data from the

questionnaire also agree with Junco, Hebergert, and Loken's (2010) findings that Twitter helped learners engage in class and gain a positive learning experience. Based on data collected from the interviews, the participants found that using Twitter assisted them with their language learning, especially with word comprehension and memorization. They also expressed how using this tool created an interesting experience and helped them engage more in the language through a more communicative venue, it also exposed them to the culture through reading tweets of native speakers. This finding is parallel to Barau, Ullrich, Fenf, and Shen's (2009) study results regarding Twitter helping learners with their communicative and cultural competence. Data from participants' reflections also support the use of Twitter in language learning as a great tool for enhancing learners' motivation and classroom engagement, it also supports Drewelow's (2012) study findings that Twitter can lower students' anxiety by being a less intimidating learning tool and easy to use.

Within the framework of creating a communicative community in SL/FL classroom, findings in the data collected from this study show that Twitter, being an effective tool in promoting learners' motivation in language learning, also motivates learning vocabulary related to specific contexts, in this case, media/political context. As language classrooms encourage the implementation of technology, the use of cyber communities has become a demand in language learning (Baron, 2015). Twitter, through several studies, has proven to be a motivational language-learning tool due to its accessibility, authenticity, and effectiveness.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be said that using Twitter in the classroom has helped to create a motivational atmosphere for the learners, which assisted them in recognizing the new vocabulary and comprehend them through their contexts in the tweets. Implementing Twitter in class also helped the learners engage in a more interactive learning setting; their access to Arabic news feeds on Twitter made learning Arabic media related vocabulary a more authentic and interesting activity. This study, thus, and as a humble addition to the field of foreign language learning in higher education, concludes that using Twitter in foreign or second language classrooms is effective for vocabulary learning for specific contexts, such as vocabulary of political contexts. The study's findings can be applied to any foreign language and can have important implications and recommendations for language teachers and educators in the field. More research related to social media are needed in the field of language teaching. Students nowadays are more into technology and they use different social media and technology tools for information, school research, etc.

Recommendations

Twitter as a social media should be integrated into the teaching of vocabulary very often since it proved to be engaging and motivating for language learning. However, students should have some background in vocabulary and have taken at least two semesters of the target language. It is recommended that teachers practice Twitter in class with their students before using it since the participants' responses to the use of Twitter indicated that Twitter was a new experience in studying Arabic and as a result of that more studies related to this are needed. Teachers also should spend enough time finding tweets that are relevant to the vocabulary taught. It would be challenging to use Twitter without knowing the subject matter. In fact, Tweets can be assigned as an after-school activity to increase students' time during the learning of the target language.

Teachers should implement Twitter with other languages. It is motivating, easy to read, and interesting.

In addition, course designers should analyze the language used in social media and include the most frequently used structures. Some structures are more frequently used than others in social media, for instance, the passive is used more frequently; therefore, it is recommended that the students know the passive beforehand. Course designers should think of interactive ways to integrate Twitter into new textbooks. A Twitter account should be created and students need to follow it and participate. It is apparent that more studies are needed in the effect of social media on Arabic language learning.

For the study design, students with no experience with Twitter should be eliminated since their data will not be informative. A Large sample is recommended to have more data for analysis and a focus group would facilitate in-depth information about Twitter. Quantitative analysis with a large sample would help and make the data rich and sound.

About the Authors:

Dr. Saad Bushaala is a faculty member at the Modern Languages and Classics at the University of Alabama. He obtained his Ph.D. from the Instruction and Teacher Education Department at University of South Carolina. His research interests are Bilingual Education, Culturally Relevant Teaching and Pedagogies, Multicultural Education, Assessment, Qualitative research, Integration of Technology in Teaching, and Teacher Training and Development.
ORCID: 0000-0002-9675-2332

Dr. Safa Elnaili is an Assistant Professor of Arabic at the University of Alabama. She holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics and Translation from Louisiana State University. She has over ten years experience of SL/FL teaching in higher education. Her research interest are Arabic language, literary translation, Libyan literature, and Myths. She is currently working on her MFA in literary translation and creative writing at Vermont College of Fine Arts.
ORCID: 0000-0002-9371-3418

Dr. Maysoun Ali holds a Ph.D. in Teaching and Learning from the College of Education at Washington State University. Her research interest is enhancing language learning with the use of technology. She has experience teaching English as a second language at the University of Idaho and currently teaches at the Headstart/ECEAP, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program for preschool aged kids.
ORCID: 0000-0001-8825-6649

References

- Abu-Melhim, A. (2014). The status of Arabic in the United States of America post 9/11 and the impact on foreign language teaching programs. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 5(3), 70-81. Doi: 10.7575/aiac.all.v.5n.3p.70

- Al-Batal, M. (2006). Facing the crisis: Teaching and learning Arabic in the U.S in the post September 11th Era. *Association of Departments of Foreign Languages Bulletin*, 37(2-3), 39-46.
- Baron, N. S. (2015). *Words Onscreen: The fate of reading in a digital world*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Bista, K. (2015). Is twitter an effective pedagogical tool in higher education? Perspectives of education graduate students. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 15 (2), 83-102.
- Brosh, H. (2013). Motivation of American college students to study Arabic. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(19), 27-38.
- Borau, K, Ullrich, C., Feng, J., & Shen, R. (2009). Microblogging for language learning: Using twitter to train communicative and cultural competence. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Advances in Web Based Learning*, 78-87. Germany: Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Drewelow, I. (2012). Twitter in the teaching methods course: Foreign language graduate teaching assistants` perspectives. *The Jalt Call Journal*, 8 (2), 129-143.
- Elgibali, A., & Korica, N. (2007). *Media Arabic: A Course-book for Reading Arabic News*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.
- Gibbs, G. (2007). *Analyzing Qualitative Data*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Junco, R, Heiberger, G., & Loken, E. (2010). The Effect of twitter on college student engagement and grades. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 27 (2), 119-132. DOI: 10.1111/j.1365-2729.2010.00387.x
- Liamputtong, P. (2009). Qualitative data analysis: Conceptual and practical considerations. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, 20 (2), 133-139.
- Lomika, L., and Lord, G.. (2012). A Tale of tweets: Analyzing microblogging among language learners. *System*, 40, 48-63.
- Lomika, L., and Lord, G. (2016). Social networking and language learning. In F. Farr, & L. Marry (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language Learning and Technology* (pp. 255-237). New York: Routledge.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Saldana, J. (2011). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Sekiguchi, S. (2012). Investigating the effects of twitter on developing a social learning environment to support Japanese EFL students` self-regulated learning.-*International Conference: ICT for Language Learning* 5. Italy, 2012.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.