MESA Annual Meeting, 2010

Defining Learning Outcomes for a ‘Core’ Arabic Curriculum

Contributors:

THIRD SEMESTER ARABIC LEARNING OUTCOMES

Speaking:

Global tasks/functions, context/content, text type

- Students are able to talk about personal and familiar topics such as family life, academic interests, future plans, travel, etc. with ease and for extended length of time
  - Students can carry on a conversation on these topics with a native-speaker who is accustomed to non-native speakers of the language
  - Students can give short (5-10 minute) presentations consisting of simple sentences on these topics, using primarily a single register
- Students can ask questions, make requests, and negotiate for needs including food in a restaurant, asking for directions or purchasing items using some colloquial expressions
- Students can make use of all grammatical tenses to narrate a story, wish, or plan
- Students have an emerging ability to state and defend opinions at the sentence level, using words such as منشن, بسبب, لأن and their associated clause types

Skill / Strategies

- Students are not always able to successfully use circumlocution to express words they do not know

Accuracy/Limitations

- Students are better able to pronounce letters not in their L1 and errors in pronunciation rarely impede comprehension
- Students still exhibit errors in usage of prepositions e.g. راج إلى
- Students still exhibit uneven usage of the “b-” prefix for present verbs when speaking in colloquial Arabic e.g. بدك بتروح
- Students have occasional interference from English semantics and syntax, e.g. الغرفة عندها، الصف مفضل
- Students still produce simple grammatical errors in their narratives like agreement, verb conjugations and in particular, past verb conjugations, e.g. النساء بتصبح، الشباب العربي، هي رُحْت
Students are able to distinguish between appropriate times to use MSA and dialects, however, they are not always able to negotiate freely and correctly between the two.

Students can speak at the level of the sentence with connectors sometimes contributing to speech at the level of basic paragraphs.

Students have a passive understanding of conversational idioms, especially Allah-phrases, and occasionally produce them when appropriate.

**Listening:**

Global tasks/functions, context/content, text type

- Students can understand classroom instructions and explanations of grammatical material in Arabic.
- Students are able to do the following with short (2-5 min) listening texts with clear speech, normal delivery speed (as in a documentary rather than news reading) and mostly familiar words:
  - Find and extract specific biographical and historical details, such as dates, places of residence, degrees obtained and in which subjects, given structured prompts.
  - Extract highly salient details, especially those pertaining to academic activities or family and personal life, even without specific prompts.

Accuracy/Limitations

- Students find even somewhat rapid speech speed a major difficulty.
- Students still have difficulty distinguishing long and short vowels, and emphatics from non-emphatics.

**Reading:**

Global tasks/functions, context/content, text type

- Students are able to understand both general and some specific details in approximately page-long texts such as biographies, histories, help-wanted ads, and advice columns, and are better able to handle texts for which they have some background already.
- Where organization is clear (headings, titles, etc) students are able to handle more complex or unfamiliar texts.
- Students are able to read informal texts which display a mixture of registers.

Skill / Strategies
• Students have emerging ability to guess new words from context, but tend to do better when they are from known roots such as /ک، خ، ب/، /ج، م، ع/، /ق، ر، ب/، /ق، ب، ه/.

Accuracy/Limitations

• Students still need multiple readings of many texts for optimum understanding
• Students are able to read modern handwritten texts and are better able to handle different fonts

Writing:

Global tasks/functions, context/content, text type
• Students are able to request information in writing and express their request clearly but with some grammatical and spelling errors
• Students can write about the following topics in a concrete manner, to a length of 150-200 words, with a limited ability to defend and develop opinions or stances:
  o decisions they have made
  o dwellings they have lived in
  o social life
  o films, events and lectures that they have attended
  o formal letters on academic matters, as in inquiring about a study abroad program
  o informal letters, as to a pen pal
  o holidays and celebrations
• Students can describe the locations of objects relative to one another, the layout of rooms and houses, and a limited number of physical details such as color and size

Accuracy/Limitations
• Students are able to use past, present and future with relative ease, however are inconsistent at times
• Students make effective use of لم and ما for negation of the past, but have difficulty with لن
• Students are able to use both dual and plural forms of verbs and nouns as needed, but with some errors
• Students have occasional interference from English semantics and syntax in their Arabic writing ex. بعيد من
• Students are beginning to be able to use verbal nouns in construct phrases instead of finite verbs, such as لم أريد أن أترك أسرتي vs. لم أريد أن أترك أسرتي
• Students have expanded their ability to express ideas in coherent paragraphs, with primarily paragraph rather than text-level cohesion, i.e. they are proficient in the use of
connectors between sentences, but each paragraph forms something of an island with no explicit connection to other paragraphs in the text

- Students still make some errors in spelling that indicate difficulties distinguishing long/short, emphatic/non-emphatic distinctions, such as سرعه   ممديرة، سرعه   ممديرة, etc.
- Students are able to use a small number of common idiomatic expressions in writing such as صديقي العزيز، سلامتك، مبروك, etc.
- Students still use colloquial expressions such as مش  وكوبس even in formal writing
- Students’ writing still exhibits errors, but native speakers, even those not used to the writing of non-native speakers, are able to understand students’ texts on topics familiar to the students

**Grammar:**

- Students can mark the following with correct case markings in a multi-clause constructed sentence:
  - object of preposition,
  - 2nd term in ’iDaafa,
  - subject of nominal sentence,
  - predicate of nominal sentence,
  - subject of verbal sentence,
  - object of verb.
  - Students have difficulty with adjuncts/adverbials.
- Students can identify the following in a multi-clause constructed sentence:
  - subject and object of verbal sentences,
  - objects of prepositions,
  - final and non-final members of ’iDaafa constructions,
  - subjects and predicates of nominal sentences
- Students can determine the *wazn* of unfamiliar words with sound roots
- Students show emerging ability to correctly produce أن and أنُ in their proper contexts
- Students show emerging ability to correctly use the past tense with the protasis (الشرط) of conditional clauses

**Vocabulary:**

- Total new vocabulary: Approximately 200, ¼ are colloquial, giving a total cumulative vocabulary of approximately 800 words