

# A Taste of Arabic

## BSC 100

American Jewish University Campus in Israel  
Young Judaea Year Course

### Introduction

Learning a language is an enriching and fascinating experience which provides a deeper understanding of a culture and the people speaking that language. During their year in Israel, students are naturally focusing on developing their knowledge and skills in Hebrew. This class, however, will open a window to the second official language in Israel – Arabic.

Arabic and Hebrew are closely related to one another. Both are Semitic languages that branch out of the Western Semitic group of tongues.

Arabic is a rich and picturesque language. It is spoken by one-fifth of Israel's population - the Arab citizens of Israel - as well as by many Jews whose origin is one of the many Arabic speaking countries. Our daily spoken Hebrew is filled with idioms and slang words that are originally from Arabic. The Arabic language, music and culture intertwine with the Hebrew culture, and Israeli high school students are obligated to study Arabic for at least 3 years.

### Course Description

In this unique course we will become familiar with the conversational Arabic dialect that is specific to our region, as well as the Modern Standard Arabic, used in literature, media, politics, and which serves as the *lingua franca* of the Arab world. Students will learn the Arabic alphabet, acquire a useful vocabulary and will be introduced to reading newspapers in Arabic. During the course of the semester, students will listen to Arabic music, watch films, hear lectures and visit unique places in Jerusalem and outside of the city, all possessing 'a taste of Arabic'.

### Course Objectives

This is an introduction course to the Arabic language within its special context in Israel. The goal of this course is for the students to acquire basic knowledge in both conversational and Classical (also known as Modern Standard) Arabic. In addition, the students will get a taste of other aspects of the Arab culture such as music, as well as getting acquainted with the Arab media in Israel and in the Middle East.

### The Course will cover the following topics:

1. Introduction to the Arabic language and its similarities to the Hebrew language.
2. Basic conversations in Spoken Arabic.
3. Introduction to Arabic music, and getting to know famous past and present musicians of the Arab world.
4. Learning of the Arabic Alphabet.
5. Learning basic grammatical forms and vocabulary of Modern Standard Arabic.
6. Introduction to today's written and visual media in the Arab world.
7. The course will also include lectures and meetings with different speakers as well as excursions to related sites:
  - the Hebrew-Arabic Bilingual elementary School in Jerusalem.
  - Jaffa - getting to know the Arab-Hebrew Theater; meeting its actors; visiting the Jewish-Arabic Coffee shop in Jaffa which became a cultural institution in the city and meeting with its founders.
  - the Oriental Music Center in Musrara, Jerusalem to hear and learn about Arabic music.
  - Tentative Speakers: Dr. Hillel Cohen (Hebrew University) on Arabic dialects in the Middle East.  
Sayed Kashua, writer and journalist.  
Rafik Halabi, a Druze from Dalyat El-Karmel - former director of Channel 1 of the Israeli TV.

### Students will be evaluated based on:

- Attendance, participation, and class preparation (20%).
- Four quizzes throughout the semester designed to evaluate their knowledge in spoken and written Arabic (30%)
- Mid term essay (25%)

Students will choose to focus on one of the subjects that was discussed in class and will write a 2-3 page essay based on their research on that topic.

Optional topics include:

- The status of the Arabic language in Israel – conflicts and challenges.
  - Linguistic similarities between Hebrew and Arabic
  - The Koran
  - Analysis of Arabic Proverbs
  - Arabic classical music
  - Umm Kulthūm - the Star of the East or a different famous Arab singer
  - The history of the Oud, a unique Arab musical instrument
  - Mass Media in the Middle East
  - Arabic newspapers in Israel
- A final exam (25%)  
The final exam will test the knowledge the students have gained in both the spoken and written language, as well as their understanding of basic theoretical concepts that were taught in class.

### Course Syllabus

#### Unit 1 (lessons 1-2)

Introduction – A Taste of the taste...

- The history of the Semitic languages and the Arabic language.
- Mapping the Globe – where is Arabic spoken today?
- Similarities between Hebrew and Arabic.
- Two official languages in Israel – is this a bilingual state?
- Arabic, a diglossic language: the differences between the spoken and the literature Arabic and its implications.

Readings for this unit:

Abu-Absi, S. (1989). "The Modernization of Arabic: Problems and Prospects." *Anthropological Linguistics* 28 (3) 337-48.

Amara, M. H. (2002). "The Place of Arabic in Israel." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 158: 53-68.

Amara, M. H. (2006) The Vitality of the Arabic Language in Israel from a Sociolinguistic Perspective. *Adalah's Newsletter*, Volume 29, October 2006

Ben-Rafael, E. and Brosh, H. (1991). "A Sociological Study of Language Diffusion: The Obstacles to Arabic Teaching in the Israeli School." *Language Planning and Language Problems* 15 (1) 1-23.

Hetzron, R. (1998) *The Semitic Languages*. Edited by Robert Routledge  
1998, New York : Routledge.

Koplewitz, I. (1992). "Arabic in Israel: The Sociolinguistic Situation of Israel's Arab Minority." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 98: 29-66.

Lambert, R. D. (1999). "A Scaffolding for Language Policy." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 137: 3-26.

Landau, J. (1987). "Hebrew and Arabic in the State of Israel: Political Aspects of the Language Issue." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 67: 117-133.

Spolsky, B. and Shohamy, E. (1999). "Language in Israeli Society and Education." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 137: 93-114.

#### Unit 2 (lessons 3-7)

The Spoken Arabic dialect in our region:

- Basic Arabic introductory phrases.
- Greetings in Arabic.
- Numbers in Arabic.
- More vocabulary in Spoken Arabic: conversations and short stories.
- Arabic songs, idioms and sayings.
- Different spoken dialects within Israel and in the Middle East:  
Guest lecture by Dr. Hillel Cohen, of the Hebrew University.

#### Unit 3 (lessons 8-10)

A taste of Arabic Music:

- Become familiar with the melodies and harmonies in the Arab world.
- Get to know the special musical instruments such as the Oud or the Qanun.
- From Umm Kulthüm to Fairuz, from Abd al Wahab to Amru Diab. Classic and modern Singers.
- Visit the Oriental Music Center in Musrara, Jerusalem, to hear and learn about Arabic music.

Readings for this unit:

Danielson, Virginia. (1997) *The voice of Egypt: Umm Kulthüm, Arabic song, and Egyptian society in the twentieth century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

<http://www.oud.eclipse.co.uk/>

[Al-Oud/The Oud](#) a website by Dr David Parfitt

<http://www.classicalarabicmusic.com/instruments.htm>

the Classical Arabic Music Web Site

<http://www.maqamworld.com/instruments.html>

#### Unit 4 (lessons 11-15):

Classical and Modern Standard Arabic:

- Learn the Arabic Alphabet
- Basic grammatical forms – present tense, past tense.
- More vocabulary, more reading.
- Listening comprehension in Arabic, short stories that are a lot of fun!
- Reading the first Sura (chapter) of the Koran, and learning about the cores of Islam.

Readings for this unit:

Cook, M. A. (2000) *The Koran, a very short introduction*. Oxford ; New York : Oxford University Press.

#### Unit 5 (lessons 16-18):

The Arabic media in Israel and in the Middle East:

- Becoming familiar with the Arabic newspapers in Israel and the Middle East.
- The cinema industry in Egypt, the biggest in the Middle East.
- See the first Arabic sitcom on Israeli Television and meet with its creator Sayed

Kashua, journalist and writer.

- Guest lecture by Rafik Halabi, former director of Channel 1 of the Israeli TV.

Readings for this unit:

Ayalon, A. (1995). *The Press in the Arab Middle East – A History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Alterman, J. (1998). *New Media, New Politics? From Satellite Television to the Internet in the Arab World*. Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Hafez, K. (2000). *Islam and the West in the Mass Media: Fragmented Images in a Globalizing World*. (Ed.) Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press

Hafez, K. (2001). *Mass Media, Politics, and Society in the Middle East*. (Ed.) Cresskill 2001, N.J. Hampton Press

Kabha, M. (2004) Attitudes of Palestinian-Israelis to Arab Satellite TV. [www.tbsjournal.com/kabha.htm](http://www.tbsjournal.com/kabha.htm)

Sakr, N. (2002). "Seen and Starting to Be Heard: Women and the Arab Media in a Decade of Change". *Social Research*. 69, 3: 821-850.

Unit 6 (lessons 19-20):

Sikkum:

- Visit the Bilingual Hebrew-Arabic School in Jerusalem, for a joint activity with its students.
- Final tasty activity – making our own hummus and experience cooking some of the famous Middle Eastern cuisine.

Readings for this unit:

Halevi, Y. (2006). *Hand In Hand – Jewish and Arab Families Israel*. Hand In Hand, Center of Jewish and Arab Education

### **Bibliography:**

Abu-Absi, S. (1989). "The Modernization of Arabic: Problems and Prospects." *Anthropological Linguistics* 28 (3) 337-48.

Alterman, J. (1998). *New Media, New Politics? From Satellite Television to the Internet in the Arab World*. Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Amara, M. H. (2002). "The Place of Arabic in Israel." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 158: 53-68.

Amara, M. H. (2006) *The Vitality of the Arabic Language in Israel from a Sociolinguistic Perspective*. Adalah's Newsletter, Volume 29, October 2006

Ayalon, A. (1995). *The Press in the Arab Middle East – A History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ben-Rafael, E. and Brosh, H. (1991). "A Sociological Study of Language Diffusion: The Obstacles to Arabic Teaching in the Israeli School." *Language Planning and Language Problems* 15 (1) 1-23.

Cook, M. A. (2000) *The Koran, a very short introduction*. Oxford ; New York : Oxford University

Press.

Danielson, Virginia. (1997) *The voice of Egypt: Umm Kulthüm, Arabic song, and Egyptian society in the twentieth century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Giles, H., Bourhis, R.Y. and Taylor, D.M. (1977). "Towards a Theory of Language in Ethnic Group Relations." In H. Giles, (ed.) *Language, Ethnicity and Inter-group Relations* (pp. 307-343). New York: Academic Press.

Hafez, K, (2000). *Islam and the West in the Mass Media: Fragmented Images in a Globalizing World*. (Ed.) Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press

Hafez, K, (2001). *Mass Media, Politics, and Society in the Middle East*. (Ed.) Cresskill, N.J. Hampton .2001 ,Press

Halevi, Y. (2006). *Hand In Hand – Jewish and Arab Families Israel*. Hand In Hand, Center of Jewish .and Arab Education

Hetzron, R. (1998) *The Semitic Languages*. Edited by Robert Routledge  
1998 ,New York : Routledge.

Kabha, M. (2004) *Attitudes of Palestinian-Israelis to Arab Satellite TV*. [www.tbsjournal.com/kabha.htm](http://www.tbsjournal.com/kabha.htm). Tbs is published by the Adham Center for Television Journalism, the American University, Cairo.

Koplewitz, I. (1992). "Arabic in Israel: The Sociolinguistic Situation of Israel's Arab Minority." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 98: 29-66.

Lambert, R. D. (1999). "A Scaffolding for Language Policy." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 137: 3-26.

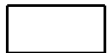
Landau, J. (1987). "Hebrew and Arabic in the State of Israel: Political Aspects of the Language Issue." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 67: 117-133.

Qashua, Sayed, (2004) *Dancing Arabs* .New York: Grove Press.

Saban, I. and Amara, M. H. (2002). "The Status of Arabic in Israel: Reflections on the Power of Law to Produce Social Change." *Israel Law Review* 36 (2): 5-39.

Sakr, N. (2002). "Seen and Starting to Be Heard: Women and the Arab Media in a Decade of Change". *Social Research*. 69, 3: 821-850.

Shohami, E. (2006). *Language Policy: Hidden Agendas and New Approaches*. London: Routledge, 2006.



Spolsky, B. and Shohamy, E. (1999). "Language in Israeli Society and Education." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 137: 93-114.

Wardaugh, R. (1993). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Oxford UK and Cambridge USA: Blackwell.

#### **Websites of Arabic Music and instruments:**

<http://www.oud.eclipse.co.uk/>  
[Al-Oud/The Oud](#) a website by Dr David Parfitt

<http://www.classicalarabicmusic.com/instruments.htm>  
the Classical Arabic Music Web Site

<http://www.maqamworld.com/instruments.html>