

Factors Affecting the Quality of Arabic and Hebrew Language Acquisition among Jewish students studying in a Bilingual Educational Framework



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Abstract

This study investigated the factors affecting the quality of Arabic acquisition as a second language among Jewish native Hebrew speakers in a bilingual school. It was assumed that the level of listening comprehension in spoken Arabic will be higher than the level of listening comprehension in literary Arabic and reading. We also examined whether the parents' attitudes toward the Arab society and the Arabic language influence their children's acquisition of the Arabic language. The participants included 50 Hebrew speaking Jewish fifth and sixth graders studying in bilingual schools. Their listening comprehension was tested using two texts: spoken language and literary language. Their reading was tested using two lists: vowelized and non-vowelized words. Attitudes toward Arab society and the Arabic language were tested among 39 of the students' parents. The results indicated that the diglossia is one of the factors influencing the acquisition of the Arabic language. The students succeeded in understanding the text in the spoken language better than the literary text. Most of the students did not succeed in reading the words. They can understand texts in spoken Arabic better than reading words in literary Arabic. Their listening comprehension skills are better than their reading skills. The parents' reports revealed additional factors that influence their children's success in learning and acquiring the Arabic language. Most parents do not know Arabic letters or speak Arabic, which is why they do not help their children with their Arabic homework. This affects the students' attitude toward the status of the Arabic language. The main conclusion of the study is that three areas must be addressed in order to improve the Arabic language skills among the Jewish students: the Arabic teachers' teaching methods and their role in the bilingual school, the students' skills in the language, and the status of the Arabic language in the students' families.

Keywords: education; Bilingual school; Arabic language; Listening comprehension; Israel

Introduction

The present study's objective was to determine the factors affecting the quality of Arabic acquisition as a second language among students whose first language Hebrew and who study in a bilingual educational framework. For this purpose, study focuses on the bilingual school system that provides the most pro-Arabic educational setting and, therefore, the most favorable environment for Arabic acquisition. Israeli bilingual schools constitute an institutional effort to integrate different ethnic groups in educational settings [1]. In these schools, Jewish and Arab students study together in the same class. And are co-taught by Arab and Jewish teachers, Hebrew and Arabic- a situation that constitutes a daily challenge to Israeli reality. In these schools, Jewish students encounter Arab students and Jewish and Arab teachers [2].

Israeli bilingual schools view this integrated and mixed instruction as a basis for creating an equitable bilingual educational environment for both sides, leading to relations of equality, respect, appreciation, and acceptance between the Jewish and Arabic cultures. In other words, the policy of the bilingual schools is to ensure a balance, with studies taking place in both languages (Hebrew and Arabic). The curricula, the studied texts, and the schools' day-to-day operations reflect the various religions and cultures in the schools [3]. In bilingual schools, Arab and Jewish students are exposed to two languages in class, where one of these languages is a second language for each student. The Arab students are exposed to Hebrew and use the language not only within the school setting but in family contexts as well, in all daily life activities. In contradistinction, the Jewish students do not

use Arabic concepts or words in their natural environment, nor do they speak Arabic or pronounce Arabic, despite studying Arabic, being exposed to Arabic in class, and coming into contact with Arab students in the school. They pronounce the letter sounds in Arabic as correctly and adequately as their Arab schoolmates pronounce words in Hebrew, their second language [2].

Arabic is a complex language whose spoken and literary forms differ significantly. For this reason, it is not easy to study and acquire the language. Spoken Arabic differs from literary Arabic on many levels: phonology, grammar, vocabulary, vowelization (nikud), and syntax [4,5]. However, Saiegh-Haddad (2005) argues that, despite the differences between spoken and literary Arabic, they are two forms of the same language. Abu-Rabia, Share, and Mansour [5], found that Arab students use spoken Arabic in everyday interactions, such as conversations with friends and family members, shopping, and the like. In contradistinction, they employ literary Arabic in school and institutional settings, at official events, in letter-writing, and in the use of books. Jewish students face difficulties and challenges acquiring spoken and literary Arabic as a second language. One of the main obstacles to proper speech (pronunciation) encountered by Jewish students studying in bilingual schools is that they must identify and distinguish between spoken and literary Arabic both within and outside the school setting. The complexity of Arabic challenges Jewish students in terms of language acquisition and the intelligibility of their spoken Arabic. Based on the above, the two languages are equally important, and the quality of second-language acquisition (Hebrew or Arabic) should, on average, be the same. However, greater clarity is necessary among the two populations regarding the development of second-language acquisition. Arab students learn their second language (Hebrew) much faster in bilingual schools than their Jewish counterparts (who learn Arabic as their second language).

Literature Review

The Arab Israeli conflict

The Arab Israeli conflict (the conflict with the Palestinians) has been ongoing since the founding of Israel as a Jewish state in 1948, which resulted in an Arab defeat with disastrous consequences that persist to this day (Lavi, 2016). In 1948, Israel was defined as a Jewish and democratic state, promising the Arab minority that, along with realizing the Jewish national vision and goals, the state would also ensure full equality for all its citizens, both Jewish and Arab. In reality, however, the implementation of the democratic ideal of equality has been flawed, and no balance has emerged for the Arab minority. There is a lack of equality for Arabs in areas such as education, employment, land for construction, industrial development, and more (Lavi, 2016). The conflict was caused by the fact that the Arabs and Jews have conflicting and reciprocal claims and demands for control over the region known as "Palestine" to the Arabs and as "Eretz Israel" to the Jews. The Israeli-Palestinian or Arab conflict is central to Israel's public, political, and media

discourse. The issue has ongoing negative consequences for life in Israel and both parties in the conflict. Public attitudes toward the Israeli-Palestinian or Arab conflict change in accordance with events on the political, religious, social, and other levels [6]. The conflict, and relations between Jews and Palestinian Arabs in Israel, have extended beyond the boundaries of Eretz Israel over the years and have affected both sides on both the regional as well as the national levels. That is to say, the conflict between Arabs and Jews is perceptible in many different areas of life: language, history, religion, culture, and nationality [7].

Arabic and Hebrew orthography

Arabic orthography is characterized by visual complexity. Some Arabic letters represent sounds that differ only in the number of diacritics within, above, or below them and are identical in their basic form (Ibrahim, 2015). For example: ز ر/ض ص/ ق ف /س ش. It should be noted that Arabic also exhibits phonological complexity in how the letters are connected according to the language's writing structure and in terms of similarity in the sounds of the letters. In other words, the way of writing the letter varies according to its place in the word: beginning, middle, or end. For example, ر, the letter representing the sound "r" in the middle and end of the word, as opposed to ر, the letter's shape at the beginning and end of the word [8,9]. In some regards, Arabic orthography is similar to Hebrew orthography, which is complex alphabetically, morphologically, and phonemically [10]. Arabic is an agglutinative language: one specific word can correspond to an entire sentence in English due to the possibility of adding time suffixes, negative suffixes, and personal prefixes to the base word. An effort is thus required on the reader's part to arrive at the precise meaning of an Arabic word [11]. Furthermore, in Arabic, there is a relationship between visual orthography and the reading process [10]. Arabic's complex orthography makes it hard to distinguish between letters and slows their processing. Thus, to read quickly and accurately, one must understand the nature of the Arabic letters and the rules for writing them. The process requires significant attentional resources for readers [5]. A study by Ibrahim, Eviatar and Aharon-Peretz [12] focused on the orthographic characteristics of Arabic, particularly the shapes of the letters, which impact letter identification. The findings showed that children whose first language is Arabic (but who also read Hebrew) are slower at processing Arabic letters than at processing Hebrew letters, which can have a negative impact on their reading development. Another finding was that the visual properties of Arabic letters might make it hard for the brain's right hemisphere to distinguish those letters while the same hemisphere works to identify Hebrew letters (Ibrahim, 2015).

Diglossia

Arabic is a diglossic language. Diglossia is a stable linguistic situation in which a literary form of a language is regarded as more complex grammatically and linguistically than its spoken dialects. It encompasses a body of literature different from, and

more distinguished than, the literature written in the dialects [13]. In the situation of diglossia, the literary form of the language is not learned naturally, but relatively formally in educational settings. Furthermore, the literary form of the language is not the language of everyday life but rather the official language of the media (Ibrahim, 2015). According to Somech [14], Arabic spans two linguistic worlds: a simple oral Arabic and an Arabic of the cultured and educated elite that is used and expressed through literature. The standardized and written literary language differs from the spoken language and is not acquired via the child's natural environment. Abu-Rabia [15] described Arabic as a dichotomic and Semitic language divided into two tongues: standard literary Arabic and spoken Arabic. [16] likewise argued that standard literary Arabic is not the mother tongue of Arabic speakers. Literary Arabic is a single language with worldwide, uniform pronunciation and grammar rules. It is the language of the Quran; ultimately it became the sole common language for all Arabic speakers. In contradistinction, spoken Arabic includes different dialects – urban, Bedouin, rural – that differ across geographical regions: There is a Palestinian-spoken Arabic, a Lebanese-spoken Arabic, and the like [17]. Moreover, in certain regions, one can distinguish and identify the existence of different phonemes and dialects that do not exist in other regions. Furthermore, the meanings of some words differ from place to place [18].

Arabic diglossia has unique characteristics, especially concerning literacy acquisition. These characteristics relate to the boundaries between the uses of the two forms of language: the standard literary language meant for formal roles, such as lecturing, writing, and reading, and the spoken language used for everyday matters. Another feature of Arabic diglossia that has a direct impact on students reading and writing acquisition is how the two language forms are learned. Arabic-speaking students acquire the spoken language naturally and everywhere – at home, in their communities, and so forth. whereas written-literary Arabic is learned mainly through formal study in educational settings. As noted, spoken Arabic is the child's mother tongue, while the Fussha – Modern Standard Arabic or MSA – is not, as the child does not use it in his/her immediate environment [19]. This complexity poses many challenges to children learning to read and write Arabic. The diglossic structure and the orthographic complexity also affect children's reading speed and retrieval. Arabic diglossia makes literacy skills harder to acquire, as they entail instruction in a writing system and vocabulary enrichment; that is in many ways like learning a new language, that the child perceives as different from Arabic. Arabic has a strong linguistic relationship with all of the spoken dialects – a uniform and shared lexicon and grammar – there are differences between MSA and each of the dialects in terms of morphology, phonology, lexicon, grammar, and syntax [16].

Basic skills: Arabic reading development

Reading is a complex learned cognitive process that starts with the visual decoding of writing symbols such as letters and

vowel signs and ends with the processing of the meaning of words in the lexicon – not in short-term memory but in long-term memory, e.g., understanding written words in sentences or texts (Ibrahim, 2015). Reading acquisition encompasses orthographic, phonological, and syntactical development, as well as the development of working memory [20]. Reading acquisition is a developmental process that can be divided into three parts: auditory, visual, and comprehension. The entire process entails progressing through the developmental stages until the individual has acquired all of the reading skills to an adequate degree [12]. When Arabic-speaking children learn literary Arabic, they acquire sound units – consonants and vowels – that do not exist in their everyday spoken language [21]. The reading process begins with the alphabet, which consists of 28 letters. Beginning readers must learn and identify long vowels – ا (aleph), و (wāw), and ي (yā) – with short vowels (fatha) that correspond to the Hebrew pataḥ, ḍammah corresponding to the Hebrew shuruk and kasra corresponding to the Hebrew hiriq. In Arabic, the direction of reading is right to left, and texts are written in two ways: vowelized for beginning readers (primary school), and non-vowelized for skilled readers who have to infer the short vowels during the reading process [22]. Readers thus bear great responsibility; They must grasp the meaning correctly from context based on their prior linguistic knowledge [8].

Acquired skills : Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension – a skill that relates to understanding the meaning and message of written words – is a complex and multidimensional process that requires strong cognitive ability. The process consists of production and construction, that is, the reader produces the meaning of the written words in a text, while also integrating these meanings with prior vocabulary and knowledge in order to construct new meanings [23]. The “simple view of reading” is a commonly accepted theory of the reading process. According to this model, reading comprehension is a product of decoding and listening comprehension (Asadi & Khateb, 2016). Moreover, reading comprehension is defined as an interactive developmental process, based on the simultaneous comprehension and extraction of meanings that arise from within the text (Asadi & Khateb, 2016; Curinga, 2014a). Vocabulary and knowledge of words significantly influence the reading process and reading comprehension. Prior knowledge of words can have a positive impact and make it easier for the reader to understand texts containing morphologically complex words (Asadi & Khateb, 2016; Curinga, 2014a). Morphological awareness can thus significantly affect the reading process as it constitutes a manifestation of the “depth” of lexical knowledge, or of the degree of knowledge of individual words [24] (Asadi & Khateb, 2016).

Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension is one of the most important language skills for language mastery and requires procedural knowledge of all language components. A person's ability to listen

and understand what he hears (spoken language), which includes several continuous speech segments, is one of the substantial component skills in the development of writing and reading [25]. Listening comprehension is critical for reading comprehension and language acquisition. It has a significant role in language learning and communication. The process of listening comprehension includes various vital components, vocabulary, syntax, including word recognition, previous knowledge, and speed of talk; all this affects listening comprehension [26]. Listening comprehension and reading comprehension share the basic requirement to process a given text and produce a mental representation of its content. There are also fundamental differences between the written language and the spoken language, for which it is appropriate to the student's ability to deal with spoken language into account in the exam and to measure this ability separately from the ability to deal with a written text [27].

Buck [28] indicated several equivalent taxonomies of sub-skills that are supposedly included in the theoretical structure of listening comprehension, some are related to success in exams in general, some are related to language comprehension, some to foreign language comprehension (the ability to process concepts of the foreign language that do not have a verbal equivalent in the native language), and some are specific. Listening comprehension is the ability to process acoustic input, sometimes combined with a visual tape, and to construct a correct mental representation of its content, a representation that can serve as a basis for a response (written or spoken). Listening comprehension is done at several linguistic levels simultaneously, and the listener uses it in different types of linguistic knowledge, starting with phonological knowledge and ending with sociolinguistic knowledge [25]. The most noticeable difference between written and spoken language is in the way they are coded and executed. The bee language is not coded in letters but in sounds, and often the performance of these sounds is non-normative or lacking. Missing sounds do not interfere with comprehension in children who speak their native language. Because a significant part of the phonological modifications is regular, and in any case the recipient only needs enough input to activate his other sources of information. On the other hand, listening comprehension in a second language for students is initially considered as impure pronunciation and causes real difficulty. An unfamiliar accent may also make it difficult for students to understand [27]. In addition, the spoken text is not like the written text, but is a linear text based only on auditory comprehension and the listener must follow it in real-time. For the most part, the listener does not have a second chance to hear the spoken text. He cannot even consult, if necessary, previous parts of the text, of which only memory remains, and therefore, must process the text at the speed chosen by the speaker, a speed that is usually quite high. Moreover, listening comprehension must be an automatic process, and not involve conscious cognitive processes. It should be noted that with listeners of a second language, the process is sometimes still not automatic enough, so that when

the speaking rate is high, they are unable to complete and focus on understanding the grammar and lexicon while giving up the broader processing of the meaning. However, even if the process is more automatic, they will not be able to absorb the grammar and the lexicon and will miss large parts of the text [27].

The role of oral language in literacy development is unquestioned in terms of theory and empirical evidence [29]. Oral language skills including listening comprehension are also important for writing development [30]. Oral language is a broad construct that includes skills. Oral language skills at the lexical level, vocabulary, has received much attention in terms of models of reading. However, recent evidence suggests that listening comprehension is a higher-order skill that requires cognitive skills and multiple languages [29,31]. As noted, Arabic is a complex language consisting of two separate languages, spoken and literary (diglossia), with different and specific grammar rules, orthography, phonology, and more. Literary Arabic has a higher linguistic level and, behaves and sounds completely different from the spoken language. The current study focused on listening comprehension of Arabic. A high command of Arabic is a basic and essential need for communication and cultural and social involvement. That is why improving students' listening skills from a young age is important. Jewish students in a bilingual school need to use spoken Arabic effectively and skillfully in various communication situations with Arab students and in diverse educational and social situations. The purpose of the current study is to explore the difficulties faced by Jewish students (students whose mother tongue is Hebrew) in speaking Arabic and the factors that give rise to these difficulties through separate examination of the listening comprehension ability due to the unique characteristics of spoken language, and the comprehension which also involves skills not related to or required for reading comprehension. This insight is backed by data from parallel tests around the world, from which it emerges that the structure evaluated in the listening comprehension chapters is related to the structures evaluated in other chapters, such as reading comprehension, but is not the same [29,31]. The comparison between the Arab and Jewish populations offers a unique potential for an abundance of findings on the acquisition of a second or foreign language, findings that are missing in the existing literature. The following questions were therefore addressed in this study:

- a. What are the factors that affect the acquisition of Arabic among native Hebrew – speaking students in a bilingual school?
- b. Why Jewish students do not incorporate Arabic into their everyday speech?

The study hypotheses were as follows:

- I. The listening comprehension level in the spoken Arabic language will be higher than the listening comprehension level in the literary Arabic language among Jewish students in a bilingual school.

II. The students will be able to listen to complex texts in spoken Arabic and understand them better than they will be able to read.

III. There will be a correlation between the Jewish parents' attitude toward Arabs and their children's success in learning the language such that:

a. Those who display a positive attitude toward Arabs society will have greater success in acquiring a second language (Arabic).

b. Those who hold a negative attitude toward Arabs society will be less successful in acquiring a second language (Arabic).

Method

This study used a mixed method. A mixed methods study combines elements of quantitative research and qualitative research in order to answer research questions. This mixed-method study aimed to help gain a more complete picture and examine two principal parts, one focusing on the students and geared to diagnose and carefully define their language skills. The other focuses on the parents, mainly geared to capture the broader socio-cultural circumstances, including motivation, familial background, and general attitude to the Arabic language and society.

Participants

The sample included 50 fifth and sixth graders who are native Hebrew speakers (females and males), with ages ranging between 11 and 13. The sample was chosen randomly from a list of bilingual elementary schools in northern Israel. Within the study population, a sample of 15 parents was used. A sample of this size helped the researcher reach clearer and more diverse vantage points in answering the study questions while helping to produce knowledge and validate data obtained from the questionnaires.

Materials

Students

The first two tests measured decoding accuracy and reading time for vowelized and non-vowelized words. The second set of tests assessed listening comprehension.

I. Word reading

Fully vowelized word naming: A list of 25 words was arranged in order of increasing length (1-4 syllables) and decreasing frequency.

non-vowelized word naming: Another list of 25 words was arranged in order of increasing length (1-4 syllables) and decreasing frequency. The words were taken from a sixth and seventh grade text, Alarabie Lo3'tna, selected from the Arabic literature curriculum of the Israeli Ministry of Education [32].

II. Listening comprehension

Listening comprehension was assessed with two texts (one in spoken Arabic and one in literary Arabic) taken from the book for 6th grade (Alarbya lo3'tna). The texts were read to the students, and they were requested to write a Hebrew translation of what they heard. Then, they were asked to write what they understood from the text.

Parents

The questionnaire that was used in the current study was developed by the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and Lucille Cohen as part of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Tel Aviv University. The sample base was representative of the adult Jewish population in Israel and included parents of students in a bilingual school aged 30 and over. The representative sample included 15 interviewees.

I. Quantitative materials

The questionnaire included 16 statements that examined the attitudes of Jews toward the Arabic language and Arab society in Israel.

II. Qualitative materials

The parents of students enrolled in a bilingual school were interviewed in a semi-structured interview that consisted of more strongly focused and finely tuned open-ended questions aimed at achieving as complete a picture as possible based on the interviewees' stories and views on the topic and its significance for their lives. Using such interviews aids in understanding the experience and its meaning for others [33]. In a semi-structured interview, the main questions are formulated in advance, with the option of adding questions during the interview depending on the context. The questions were adapted from interview questions used in the study "Attitudes and Cultural Background and Their Relationship to English in a Multicultural Social Context: the case of Male and Female Arab Immigrants in Canada" [34].

Procedure

After preparing the questionnaires designed to test the study question, the principal of the bilingual school was contacted to obtain consent to conduct the study with the students at the school. The principal and parents were given explanations and information about the study and its purpose and were assured them of the confidentiality of their personal data. The students were randomly chosen with the help of the teaching staff, and the names and contact information of the parents of these students were obtained. Telephone contact was made with the parents, and they were provided an explanation of the study procedure and their aims, after which they were asked for their consent (verbal/written) to participate in the study. After obtaining consent, a date and time were coordinated. The students were provided with two tasks in the Arabic language: 1) listening comprehension: 2) word reading, and then asked to fill out the questionnaire. A meeting

was arranged with consenting parents, either at their homes or at a convenient location. The meeting lasted between an hour and an hour and a half, during which the parents were asked the eight semi-structured interview questions, and notes were taken on their responses.

Results

This study aimed to examine the factors that influence the acquisition of the Arabic language among Jewish students (Hebrew speakers) in bilingual schools. In this study, an integrated method was used in order to analyze the study findings with both qualitative and quantitative measurement tools. The findings are presented and divided into qualitative and quantitative categories according to the proposed hypotheses. The results will be presented in three parts that include qualitative findings that emerged from the performance of two tasks: one of listening comprehension in both spoken and literary Arabic, and the other of reading single words with and without vowelization, and interviews with the parents. Quantitative findings are presented from an analysis of the questionnaire that examined parents' attitudes toward Arab society and the Arabic language.

Qualitative findings

First hypothesis: The listening comprehension level in the spoken Arabic language will be higher than the listening comprehension level in the literary Arabic language among Jewish students in a bilingual school.

The students were given oral instructions in the following format: "I will read the text twice. Listen carefully to the text, and the third time I will go back and read the text, and you must translate what you understood from what you heard. If it is difficult for you, then you can write the meaning of the text in a general way. You can also use the words you know and write the meaning according to the context." From the analysis of the students' listening comprehension and their comments in the lesson, it appears that they were not used to listening comprehension tasks at this stage of their studies. The task involved introducing new words in literary Arabic. Only a few of the students were able to translate a small number of words (Figure 1). Figure 1 shows that the student is more proficient in spoken Arabic than in literary Arabic. In having Arabic read aloud, the student understood what she heard and translated the complete text. However, in the second task (literary Arabic), the student understood only 11 words and translated them (Figure 2).

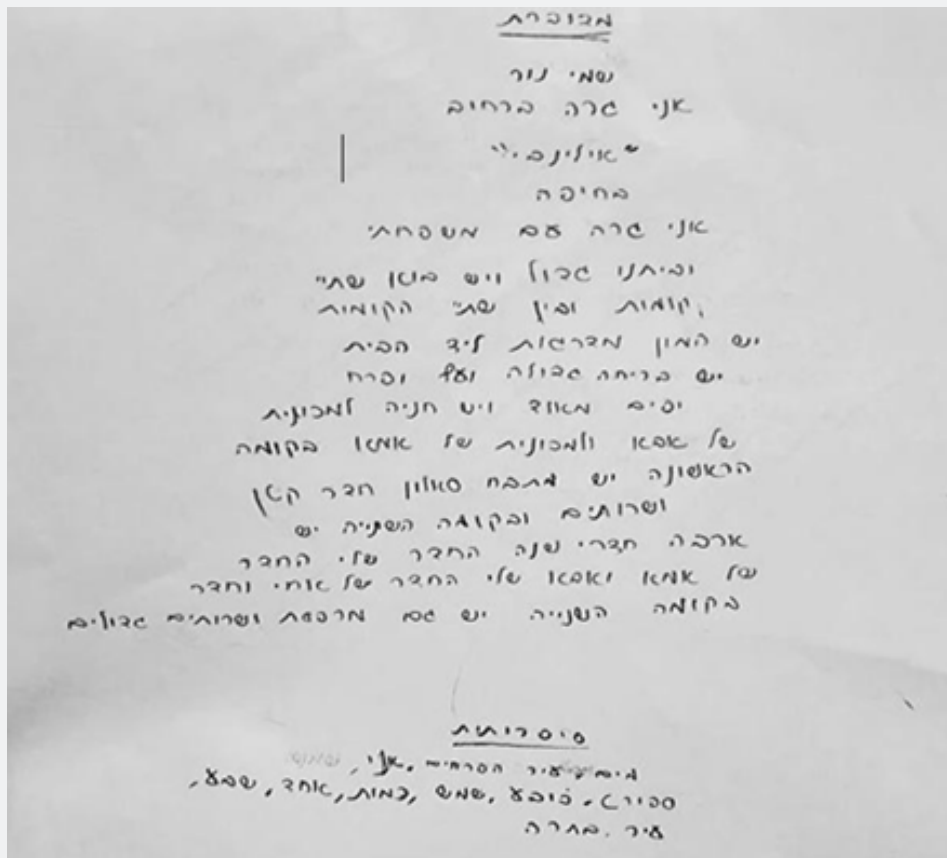


Figure 1: Spoken Arabic text and literary Arabic text.

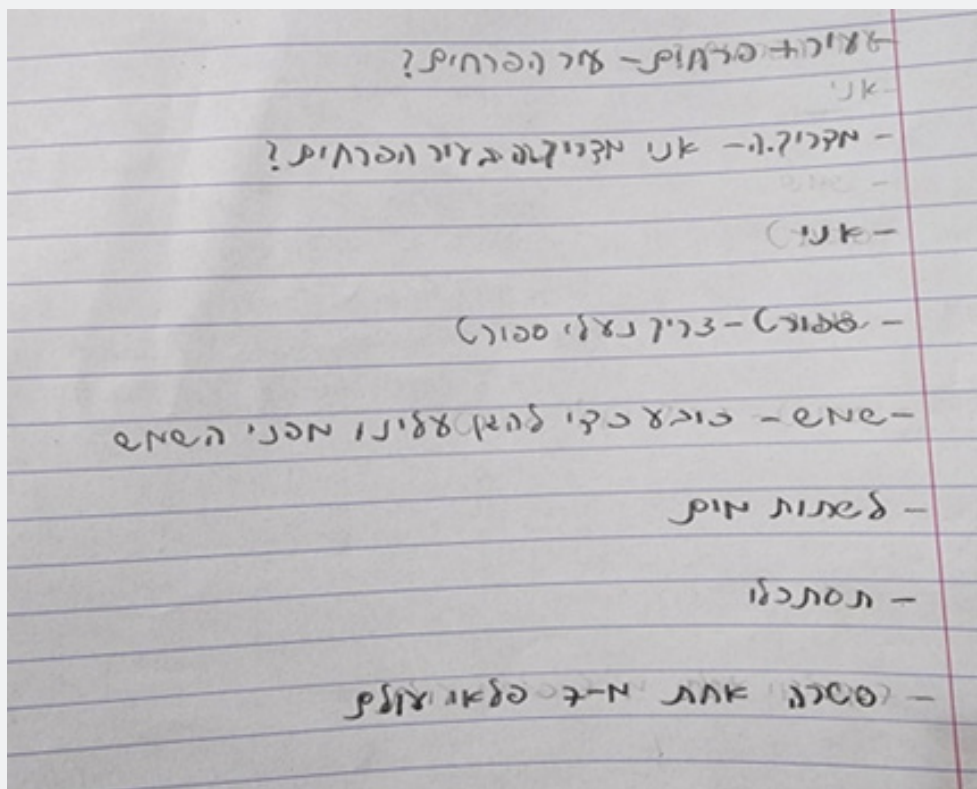


Figure 2: Literary Arabic text.

Arabic is better than the listening comprehension in literary Arabic. The student could translate the entire text verbatim but translated a few of the words in literary Arabic. Therefore, it can be seen that this student has a greater vocabulary in spoken Arabic than in literary Arabic. The words that the student understood are presented below: Ana (I), sba'a (seven), madena (city), murshid (guide), aonthoro (Take a look), ryad'a (sport), ahda a'ja'b aldonia (on of Seven Wonders of the World), maa' llshorb (to drink water). It is worth noting that among the students who performed the task, statements were heard such as: "We don't understand at all", "Are you asking us to understand a literary text?!", "I can only write the words I know", "We hardly understand what we read so how will we understand what we hear!!" Another claim repeated by several students was: "Spoken Arabic is easier than literary, and it is easier for us to hear and understand it." Some students wrote only three words: ana (I), shams (sun), madena (city) and could not understand more words in literary Arabic. They also stated that they do not understand what were heard in literary Arabic. It is worth noting that only one student out of 50 could understand the literary text and translate it in full. It is evident that most students found it challenging to understand the literary Arabic text and needed help in listening to and understanding this type of text. This is in contrast to the first task that tested listening comprehension in spoken Arabic, where most students succeeded

in performing the task and showed higher listening comprehension skills. The words that the students knew in the literary text are the same words in spoken Arabic. There are words in spoken Arabic that are similar to literary Arabic, so it is easier for the students to learn them. For example, the meaning of: shams (sun), ana (I), madena (town), morshed (guide), saba'a (seven). These words are similar in literary and spoken Arabic. The figures indicated that when testing the listening comprehension among Jewish students (Hebrew speakers), it was found that listening comprehension of the spoken Arabic text is better than listening comprehension of the literary Arabic text. Similarly, a significant positive relationship was found when examining the relationship between the level of understanding and the type of text. Therefore, the first hypothesis that the listening comprehension level in the spoken Arabic language will be higher than the listening comprehension level in the literary Arabic language among Jewish students in a bilingual school was supported.

Testing the students reading level

According to the hypothesis: The students will be able to listen to complex texts in spoken Arabic and understand them better than they will be able to read. Most students could understand the listening comprehension task that tested their language skills in spoken Arabic. However, in the second task that

tested the skills in reading single words with vowelization and words without vowelization in literary Arabic, most students had difficulty reading and fully understanding the words. Only a few of the students were able to read the presented words. It can be seen that most students do not know the presented words and cannot read words in literary Arabic. During the task, the students claimed that they were unable to read a text in Arabic, were not even able to read individual words, and their vocabulary in the Arabic language was minimal. According to the hypothesis: The students will be able to listen to complex texts in spoken Arabic and understand them better than they will be able to read. The findings supported the hypothesis. The analysis of the interviews conducted with the parents revealed that the parents have positive attitudes towards the Arabic language and Arab society. In conjunction with these attitudes, the parents described various cases that affect the acquisition of Arabic among their children. The findings that emerged from the interviews are presented below, according to themes.

Reasons why the parents chose the bilingual school

When the parents were asked: Why did you decide to send your child to a bilingual school? They mentioned that they chose a bilingual school because they believe in different values such as coexistence, equality, inclusiveness, and multiculturalism, between Arabs and Jews. This is evident from the parents' responses:

A mother said: "I decided to send my son to study in a bilingual school for coexistence, bilingualism."

Another mother stated: "I believe in coexistence and multiculturalism in a multicultural society and getting to know each other, I don't believe in blurring boundaries... and I would also be happy if my children could speak Arabic and understand that it is not a threatening language or that it communicates something fearful, but is a language that is a cultural bridge based on equality and respect..."

Another example is an interviewee who stated: "I decided to send my children to a bilingual school because of multiculturalism. We live here in the Galilee, in this country, and there is no reason why we should not study together and get to know the other and get to know people we normally do not know but only hear about or see in the villages...I have friends and close acquaintances who are Arabs, so this is the first reason. The second reason is that this kind of school is a little different and special from other schools. The studies there are more advanced, there are other things I like about it that I connect with pedagogically, and they give their students significant values such as respect and coexistence."

On the other hand, three parents stated that their choice was based on the school's geographic location. That is, because they live near the school, they chose the bilingual school, and it has nothing to do with multiculturalism or learning Arabic.

One of the mothers: "The truth is, I chose the bilingual school

not because of the bilingualism or because my son will study with Arabs....But because the

school is close to our home in the same area."

Another mother said: "When I wanted to enroll my son in school, I asked several people about a good school close to our home, and they mentioned this one."

Parents' attitudes towards Arab Society

Positive attitudes toward the Arabic language and society emerged from the interviews. Most parents consider it essential for them and their children to learn Arabic because they are interested in coexistence and creating a society that knows how to accept one another through their children in a bilingual school. They noted that this could only happen if they started learning and using Arabic with Arabs.

One mother said: "I am interested in coexistence, and it is important that my son speak Arabic because I see the Arab society as rich in culture and values. Moreover, despite the conflict in the country between Arabs and Jews, I always meet good Arab people at work and in the neighborhood, and they reflect Arab society in a positive and good way."

Another mother said: "We live together, and it is clear that we must understand each other. In my opinion, there are many things in common between us, and we need to address this...We can communicate and create good relations with Arab society only if we start learning the Arabic language in order to communicate and break the ice between us..."

On the other hand, a few of the parents demonstrated that what is essential and exciting to them is learning another language, like Arabic, unrelated to Arab society. These attitudes come from the words of two mothers whose children are in sixth Grade:

One mother said: "I see bilingualism as important, and I like that my son will learn languages. Arabic is a third language for my son. He speaks Hebrew and two second languages, Russian and Arabic. Language learning is a way for my son to develop important skills for later in life."

Another mother added: "It is important to learn the Arabic language in order to communicate and talk with others from the Arab society, but it is less important for us than for the Arabs who need to speak Hebrew because the official language of the country is Hebrew..."

When the parents were asked, do your children have Arab friends? They mentioned that they have friends in the school and also have visits and contact them by phone and travel abroad together.

One of the mothers said: "My son has Arab friends from school and outside of school. They visit us and share my son's birthday and various celebrations."

Another mother said: "We have Arab neighbors who are also at school with my children. They visit us and my children too... I like it and encourage them to establish a positive relationship with them, get to know their culture, and get closer to them."

She continues: "Also, a few months ago, we flew abroad with my son's friend's family, and we enjoyed the trip and learned a lot from them."

Parents' attitudes toward learning Arabic in a bilingual school

Most parents stated that teaching in a bilingual school is relevant and encourages student's involvement in Arabic language studies. They also stated that the teachers in a bilingual school encourage the children to perform various activities in Arabic, such as taking videos of them speaking in Arabic or watching a video, or reading a story in Arabic and explaining to the children what they understood in Arabic. Despite this, the parents are not satisfied with the results and feel that their children do not have enough skills in reading and writing Arabic:

"I like the method used by the Arabic teacher at a bilingual school... For example, a few days ago, she asked my son to prepare a salad, say the names of the fruits and vegetables in Arabic, take a picture, and present it to the class."

Another mother said: "What I like about the bilingual school is that projects are often done by dividing the children into Arab and Jewish pairs. It is beneficial as there are many groups, and so you can say that there is progress in the Arabic language and friendships. My children also sing in Arabic and listen to music in Arabic..."

One of the mothers noted that she is not satisfied with the bilingual school regarding Arabic language learning: "I am quite frustrated because I have one child who already graduated a few years ago from a bilingual school, and two children will soon graduate, and as far as I am concerned, they do not know what the Arabic language is. They do not speak fluently; they cannot even construct a complete sentence in Arabic..."

She continues: "Something good that I can say, if we were in a restaurant or in the market, for example, my children could understand Arabic, but unfortunately, they cannot speak Arabic except for the linking words like "and- wa" "in- fe" ... "or- aw"..."

Another mother said: "The result was different from my expectations. I wanted my children to be proficient in Arabic as their mother tongue, but unfortunately, my children cannot speak Arabic." When the parents responded that their children are not good in the Arabic language, they were asked if the situation also exists in other languages, such as English.

Most of the answers were no, their children are fluent in English because it is a second language at home and in their lives.

One of the mothers said: " that English is her children's

second language, and they speak Hebrew and English with him at home." Therefore my son's achievements are better than his achievements in Arabic." Another parent said: "My son's English is better than Western, and we always encourage him to learn and speak English."

When the parent asked why, she answered: "He should know that because I believe it is a significant international language. It is not like the Arabic language, which is a local language."

The parents claimed that their expectations of the bilingual school regarding the Arabic language were high, but the results differed. One of the reasons is that the parents cannot help their children with homework in Arabic. The students are independent and do not solve the questions effectively and correctly. One of the mothers said: "I do not know Arabic, and I cannot help my children with their Arabic homework, and they do their lessons alone."

Another parent: "... something is missing in the Arabic studies curriculum at school, but I also think that the main problem is that my husband and I do not know Arabic, which prevents our daughter from progressing in the language because she always tries to do her Arabic homework alone and it is difficult for her."

The findings of the interviews revealed similar positive attitudes of the parents toward Arab society and learning the Arabic language. Most of the parents believe in the values of equality, coexistence, and respect. They chose a bilingual school where their children would acquire and learn Arabic and integrate more into Arab society.

Quantitative findings

Parents' background characteristics

Thirty-nine parents participated the study. The age of the parents ranged from 22 to 53. The average age was 40.9 (Tables1-6).

Table 1: The participating parent' ages.

Age	Frequency	Percentage
22-35	4	10.30%
36-40	13	33.30%
41-44	13	33.30%
45-53	9	23.10%

Table 2: The participating parents' education level.

Education	Frequency	Percentage
Elementary or less	4	10.30%
High school + courses/certificate	5	12.80%
Partial academic degree	8	20.50%
Full academic degree	22	56.40%

Table 3: The participating parents' country of birth.

Country of Birth	Frequency	Percentage
Israel	4	10.30%
Other	35	89.70%

Table 4: The participating parents' mother tongue.

Mother tongue	Frequency	Percentage
Hebrew	27	71.10%
	4	10.50%
Arabic	6	15.80%
Russian	1	2.60%
English		

Table 5: The participating parents' familiarity with Arabic language.

Has the parent ever studied Arabic	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	27	69.20%
No	12	30.80%

Table 6: Extent of the participating parents' understanding of Arabic.

To what extent does the parent understand spoken Arabic?	Frequency	Percentage
1	12	30.80%
2	18	46.20%
3	5	12.80%
4	2	5.10%
5	2	5.10%

Table 6 shows that 46.2% of the parents claimed that they understand Arabic to a very small extent. Only 5.1% stated that they understand Arabic to a high extent, similarly to the number of to parents who stated that they understand it to a very high extent (Table 7).

Table 7 shows that 23.1% of the parents claim that they do not know the Arabic letters, 48.7% know the Arabic letters to a very small extent, and none reported that they know the Arabic letters to a great extent. In contradistinction, only 10.3% reported that they knew the letters in Arabic to a very large extent.

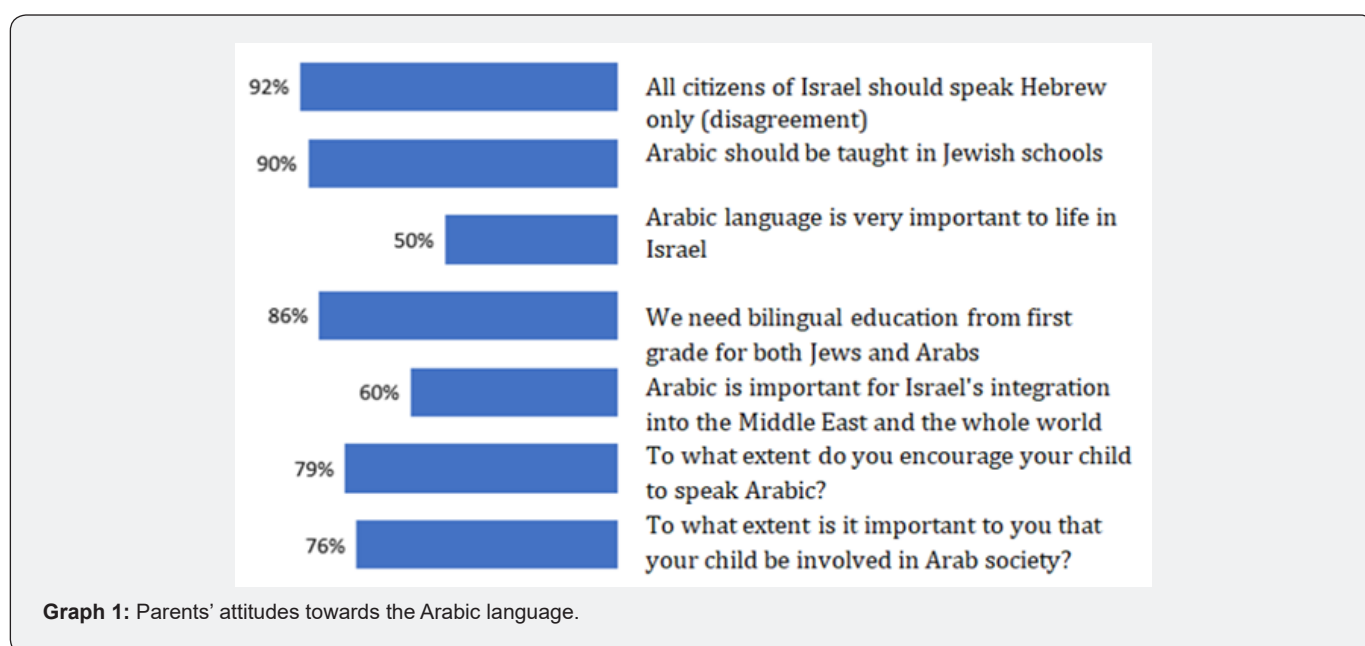
Table 7: The participating parents' level of familiarity with Arabic letters.

Level of familiarity with Arabic letters	Frequency	Percentage
1	9	23.10%
2	19	48.70%
3	7	17.90%
4	0	0.00%
5	4	10.30%

Parents' positive attitudes of toward the Arabic language

Positive attitudes towards the Arabic language were demonstrated when parents agreed with various statements "to a great extent" or "to a very great extent," except for the first statement, which, due to its content, expresses a negative position towards the Arabic language – the analysis referred to disagreement (answers "very little" or "not at all").

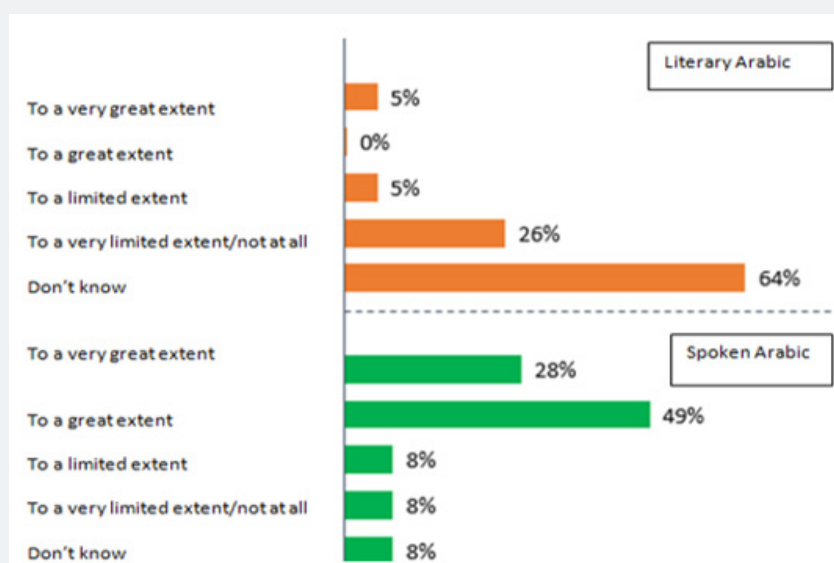
The following graph describes the percentage of positive attitudes expressed by the parents concerning each of the presented statements. (Graph 1)



Ninety-two percent of the parents disagreed with the statement that all citizens of the State of Israel should speak only Hebrew, and only 8% claimed that all citizens should speak Hebrew only. This is compared to 79% who stated that they encourage their children to speak Arabic to a great extent and 76% who stated that it is essential to them that their children be involved in Arab society. Furthermore, 60% stated that Arabic is essential for Israel's integration in the Middle East and worldwide. Although the parents chose a bilingual school as a suitable educational setting for their children, in this context it is worth noting that knowledge of Arabic among the parents themselves is

very low (as seen in Tables 5 & 6).

Student's achievements were tested only subjectively by a question addressed to the parents in the following format: "To what extent is your child fluent in spoken Arabic?" and "To what extent is your child fluent in literary Arabic?". The relationship between the parents' attitudes regarding Arabic and the students' achievements in the spoken language was examined using the Spearman correlation due to the nature of the variables (4-level rating scale; Significant correlations are highlighted in yellow) (Table 8 Graph 2).



Graph 2: Comparison between the children fluency in literary Arabic language and spoken Arabic according to their parents.

Table 8: Relationship between parents' attitudes towards Arabic and students' achievements in the Arabic language.

Parents' Attitudes	Students' fluency in spoken Arabic
All citizens of the State of Israel should speak Hebrew only	-0.1822352 0.4045
The Arabic language should be taught in Jewish schools	0.53519 0.0008 36
The Arabic language is very important to life in Israel	0.48193 0.0029 36
In the State of Israel there should be bilingual education in Hebrew and Arabic from first grade, for both Jews and Arabs	0.20918 0.2278 35
The Arabic language is very important for Israel's integration in the Middle East and even all over the world	0.19244 0.2833 33
To what extent do you encourage your child to speak Arabic?	0.65031 <.0001 35
To what extent do you encourage your child to be involved in Arab society (socially and linguistically)?	0.83024 <.0001 36
Value / N-Legend: Correlation / P	

When the parents were asked about the extent of their children's fluency in spoken and literary Arabic, 49% claimed that their children are fluent in spoken Arabic to a great extent, and 28% claimed that their children are fluent in spoken Arabic to a very great extent. On the other hand, 5% of parents reported that their children are fluent in literary Arabic to a great extent, and more than 50% of parents claimed that their children are not fluent in literary Arabic. In conclusion, most students understood the text in spoken Arabic but needed help understanding the literary text. In addition, not only did the students need help understanding the literary text, they did not understand the words and could not translate a single word. Therefore, some students needed help understanding what was stated in the literary text. They could not recognize words and submitted only the first listening comprehension task in spoken Arabic. Ten of the students still need to submit the second task. Another component of listening comprehension in Arabic concerns the performance on the two tasks. The students in the study repeatedly emphasized throughout the task that they cannot speak literary Arabic and do not use literary Arabic in conversations with Arabs. It is therefore difficult for them to listen to a text in literary Arabic and understand it. Regarding the findings received from the parents, it can be seen that most of the parents do not know the Arabic language and are unable to speak Arabic. Moreover, although they have positive attitudes toward the Arabic language and Arab society, they do not know enough Arabic and do not acquire it properly.

Discussion

The current study aimed to understand factors affecting the quality of Arabic acquisition as a second language among students in a bilingual school whose mother language is Hebrew through the two skills of reading and listening and the parents' attitudes toward the Arabic language and society. The novel aspect of this study is in the examination of listening in spoken Arabic and literary Arabic and reading words among Jewish learners of Arabic, and their parents' attitude toward the Arabic language and Arab society in a single study. The current study showed various effects of listening to Arabic literature and reading vowelized and non-vowelized words in Arabic as the second language.

Previous studies showed mixed results concerning the role of spoken literature language orthography in listening and reading words. This study analyzed significant differences between spoken and literary Arabic and the attitude of parents that affect language. According to the research findings, the first hypothesis was confirmed, that the listening comprehension level in the spoken Arabic language will be higher than the listening comprehension level in the literary Arabic language among Jewish students in a bilingual school. According to the study finding, the Jewish students' mastery of listening comprehension skills in the spoken Arabic language is higher than their mastery of literary Arabic. Students can also listen to complex texts in spoken

Arabic more than those they can read independently. This aligns with the previous studies that showed that the diglossia causes a gap in learning the Arabic language and constitutes difficulty in learning it, as it is composed of a spoken and literary language [15,19]. In addition, Arabic diglossia directly impacts students reading and how the two language forms are learned. Therefore, the results of the current study prove that diglossia influences the use of language skills in listening comprehension and reading in the Arabic language. Studies indicate that the duality in the Arabic language (diglossia) poses a challenge to students' ability to understand listening, reading comprehension, and reading due to the gap between the standard formal written language and the spoken language, as well as because of the linguistic morphological, grammatical, and semantic distance between the two languages. For example, in the vocal structures, there are diglossic letters, which represent sounds that do not exist in the language of the student reader in some dialects, such as the letter (ض, ذ, ق, ث).

Furthermore, use of literary language in textbooks in schools is limited and far from the student's hearing, as it is limited to the areas of official life. The similarity of some letters in terms of shape and image, which are separated by the number of dots, such as the letter "ت" and the letter "ث", and the location of the dots, such as "ب", is at the bottom of the letter [4]. This confirms that acquisition of reading and listening comprehension requires a great effort on the part of the students. According to the educational curriculum of the Ministry of Education, at the end of the second grade, the student must reach the stage of understanding the meaning and the purpose in the audible text, as well as understanding the meanings of unfamiliar words depending on the tone of voice and context. However, we noticed limited knowledge of letters, vowels, and distinguishing words among students in fifth and sixth grades. The students claimed that the words presented in the task were unfamiliar and that their linguistic knowledge through the context needed improvement. This constitutes an obstacle in developing listening and reading comprehension later on. Reading comprehension results from two basic abilities: listening comprehension and reading words with and without diacritics. Understanding the language in its audible form thus contributes to its written understanding, which is reading comprehension, and enables students to read accurately and quickly to reach reading comprehension [27]. According to Saiegh-Haddad [19], the Arabic language has features with a simple syllable structure and transparent orthography, so that the ability to read words is supposed to be relatively easy to reach high levels of speed and accuracy, meaning that fluency is achieved at the end of the first grade. However, according to the present study's results, reading the words for the Jewish students was very difficult even though they were at the end of the primary school. Other studies support the results. Arabic's complex orthography makes it difficult to distinguish between letters and slows their processing. Thus, to read quickly and accurately, one must understand the nature of

the Arabic letters and the rules for writing them.

The process requires significant attentional resources for readers [5]. It should be noted that the morphological structure of Arabic is non-linear; words are built from a single root appearing in different configurations or forms. Moreover, in orthographic terms, written Arabic is defined as transparent when vowelized and deep when non-vowelized [18,35]. According to the research findings, the second research hypothesis was confirmed, meaning that listening comprehension skill is better than reading skill. By examining reading vowelized words and non-vowelized words, it was found that the students had difficulties in reading. These findings are in line with previous studies that showed that writing texts in Arabic takes place in two ways: the vowelized word and words without vowels have to infer vowels during the reading process. This process requires great responsibility and effort, as students must know how to read the word correctly within a context or based on their previous linguistic knowledge [8, 22]. The study results show that most students did not succeed in reading the words. It can be concluded that acquiring the reading skill is complex and that the students do not have sufficient previous language knowledge. Additional reasons related to the status and low place of the Arabic language in Israel, especially in bilingual schools, affect the acquisition of the language among Jewish students, such as the parents' attitudes toward Arab society, the Arabic language and the curriculum of the bilingual school and the complexity of the Arabic language. Prof. Ruth Gavizon's research (1999), "Does equality require integration? The case of the state education system in Jaffa", found that Jewish schools have no obligation to study the Arabic language. There is almost no reference to the history of the religion of the Arab society and the Arabic language, and this situation still exists. In this context, the situation also exists in bilingual schools. During the research, most students would talk in Hebrew during breaks and in classes, and the Arab teachers spoke Hebrew with all the students. Furthermore, the Arabic language textbook does not include texts on reading comprehension or grammar, but only study units that include words and exercises with short, varied sentences. The lack of recognition of the uniqueness of Arab education is still evident even in bilingual schools. The goals and objectives of bilingual schools are only in Jewish terms and for Jewish students. Arabs and Jews indeed study in such schools, but there is no equal treatment between the contents.

Agbaria and Jabareen [36] showed that the Jewish-Arab conflict is still violent and ongoing and has a decisive influence on all fields of life in the State of Israel and especially in the education system. They claim that the picture depicted in the education system is not just a politics of not recognizing the cultural needs of Arab education. It is also a politics of disdain that harms the status, self-respect, and the meaning of the language of the Arabs in Israel. It can be seen that this is also valid in bilingual schools that do not give justified and significant value to learning the

Arabic language, like the Hebrew language. This harms not only the status of the Arabic language but also the right of the Jewish student to learn the Arabic language. This is one factor that prevents Jewish students from optimally acquiring the Arabic language. Bilingual schools can be seen as a striking example of this contradiction, in the studies of the Arabic language versus the studies of the Hebrew language. In these schools, they naturally invest a lot of attention and time to learning the Hebrew language for the Jews and the Arabs. However, the goals are to learn two languages in bilingual schools and impart skills in two languages. It can be concluded that Arabic is not learned to communicate or as a significant neighbor language that enables understanding a rich culture, but as an enemy language. The perception of Arabic as the language of the enemy stems from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the students' lives. The findings of the present study indicate that even in bilingual schools, the perception of the Arabic language is still widespread and indicates the marginalization of the Arabic language in schools. Most of the parents reported that they do not speak Arabic and do not know the language, nor can they help with the homework in Arabic. This shows that the Arabic language is still unattractive and has a negative cultural image. The schools should use Arabic language studies as a tool in the struggle against discrimination and racism and for encouraging the Jewish students to have an empathetic view of the challenges and hardships of the Arab society in Israel and identify with them. Curricula should be developed that reshape the study materials' goals for the benefit of all students [37-45].

Study limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the study refers to only two cases, and it seems challenging to generalize it to other bilingual contexts. Second, the study did not examine other significant questions, such as how Jewish students learn Arabic, the curriculum in Arabic for Hebrew speakers, and the program's main goals and objectives. Moreover, what support do the students receive in the curriculum from the teachers and the school principal? Third, it is impossible to generalize the results because of the small number of participants. During the statistical analysis, we had to increase the number of participants to more than 30 parents (to include all the students' parents) to examine the relationship between the parents' positions and the student findings in the tasks at greater depth. This study reflects the need for active monitoring with the help of a competent team in bilingual schools to test the method by which the curriculum is implemented and to compare the achievements of Arab students in the Hebrew language and the achievements of Jewish students in the Arabic language [46-49].

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