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Arabic Applied Linguistics

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1.1 Introduction

As the term ‘applied’ implies, broadly speaking the definition ‘applied linguistics’ encompasses every field where language is *applied*. The study or application of language with respect to its use and users is far and wide and covers fields such as language learning, language testing and assessment, language processing and cognition, discourse and conversation analysis, language and law, language policy and planning, bilingualism and multilingualism, language contact, language variation and change, dialectology, language disorders and pathology, translation and interpretation, and natural language processing, to name but a few. In addition, many areas in applied linguistics draw on theoretical approaches, some of which are language related (i.e., across the different language domains including syntax, semantics, phonology, morphology, and pragmatics) and some are from other disciplines, such as psychology, anthropology, sociology, communication, and cognitive neuroscience. Indeed, the fields which fall within the confines of applied linguistics and the topics which are treated have become so many that at least two encyclopedias have so far been published in English (Chapelle 2013; Berns 2010). The present chapter focuses on applied linguistics as it relates to second language acquisition (SLA), second language pedagogy, and second language proficiency testing. The first two sub-disciplines were central to the preoccupation of applied linguists since the field’s early inception in the twentieth century (especially during the earliest formative period of second language acquisition in the 1940s–60s) and continued for the greater part of the twentieth century, for English as a second/foreign language in particular. For Arabic, second language acquisition and second language pedagogy, as well as testing, have remained to the present the central topics of Arabic applied linguistics in the USA and in the Arabic-speaking world. Other areas in theoretical linguistics and sociolinguistics are also discussed,

since they have a direct bearing on Arabic second language acquisition and second language pedagogy with respect to both their development and practice. Other related areas and sub-disciplines of Arabic applied linguistics are covered in other chapters. The remainder of the chapter is organized as follows: Section 1.2 provides an overview of the different approaches investigated within Arabic SLA, Section 1.3 deals with Arabic proficiency testing and assessment, in particular the status of testing–SLA interface; and Section 1.4 discusses Arabic second language pedagogy with respect to the ongoing debate of addressing diglossia and teaching Arabic variation. The chapter concludes with challenges and future directions.

1.2 Arabic SLA: Past and Present Approaches

Arabic SLA kept abreast, progressively more so, with the development of the general SLA field and its different approaches and models, from contrastive and error analysis to the present (for a detailed survey, see Alhawary 2009a). Thus, Arabic SLA studies started (a decade after the emergence of error analysis) with the appearance of a few error analysis studies (e.g., Al-Ani 1972–1973; Rammuny 1976), where the approach of SLA analysis relied on analysing L2 learners' competence-related errors. Despite the insights such studies (based on cross-sectional written composition data) lent about types of errors made by English-speaking learners of Arabic (e.g., orthographic/phonological, lexical, structural, and stylistic), one of the main limitations of error analysis studies in general is that they did not provide the bigger picture of what and how much the learners got right versus what and how much they got wrong.

Error analysis limitations led to the abandonment of the approach and the adoption of no fewer than seven approaches since then. One such approach sought to analyse the overall performance of the learner (i.e., the big picture) or to identify emerging patterns or developmental sequences in acquiring a given form or a set of forms (see Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991). Within this approach, Al-Buainain (1986) examined the acquisition of negation and interrogation by British English-speaking learners of Arabic (based on cross-sectional written translation and manipulation data). Al-Buainain's findings indicated that, in acquiring the target forms, participants progressed along intermediate stages from simple and deviant interlanguage forms to ones that are more acceptable and target-like. Relatedly, Alhawary (2009a) examined negation constructions and relevant mood endings (based on longitudinal production data). The findings showed the emergence of a certain order of the constructions and such order was impacted by input effects, such as amount and exposure timing.

A second post-error analysis approach considered other phenomena not previously examined, such as communication strategies (e.g., generalizations,

avoidance, circumlocution, message adjustment, prefabricated patterns, and codeswitching). Although initially thought to be peculiar to L2 learners coping with their limited knowledge of the L2, communication strategies were later problematized as not being dissimilar to adjustments made by L1 speakers to accommodate real-time processing and communication constraints (e.g., Tarone 1980; Bialystok 1990). At least one study, Fakhri (1984), examined communication strategies in Arabic L2 acquisition (based on production data from an L1 English speaker). In addition to observing similar communication strategies used by the participant, Fakhri found the strategies were constrained by the specific narrative genre components (i.e., the orientation, episodic, and evaluation parts) in that certain strategies were used more often during one part than other parts.

A third post-error analysis approach is the application of SLA to two major cognitive processing models. The first is that of speech processing constraints adopted by Processability Theory (PT). The theory seems attractive, as it provides a detailed framework and a strong committed stance towards foreign language pedagogy through its learnability and teachability claims. In particular, it provides a cognitive account for L2 grammatical development and posits that L2 learners create L2 language-specific processing resources or prerequisites along an implicational hierarchy of stages which cannot be skipped; i.e., structures which are from a higher stage cannot be learned before those from a lower one. This learnability prediction lends itself to another prediction to do with teachability: that instruction can be beneficial if it focuses on structures from the next stage (e.g., Pienemann 1998, 2005; Pienemann and Keßler 2011; Baten et al. 2015). However, based on longitudinal and cross-sectional production data, Arabic SLA studies produced mixed evidence on a number of morphosyntactic structures. Such studies either found evidence contrary to the hypothesized implicational processing hierarchy (e.g., Nielsen 1997; Alhawary 2003, 2009a, 2009b, 2018a) or claimed evidence in support of it (e.g., Mansouri 2000; Al Shatter 2008) (for a review of such studies, see Alhawary 2009a, 2018a). The second cognitive model which was tested by Arabic L2 studies is the Competition Model developed by Bates and MacWhinney (1987). Arabic L2 studies on sentence processing within the Competition Model produced mixed evidence. Abu Radwan (2002) found that English-speaking learners of Arabic initially relied on Arabic L2 cues of case markings, followed by gender and animacy and did not exhibit L1 transfer, though the study did not investigate word order.¹ By contrast, Al-Thawahrih (2018) found English L1 learners of Arabic initially exhibited L1 transfer by relying on L1 word-order cues and started utilizing L2 verbal agreement cues in processing Arabic L2 sentences and assigning agency with more exposure to the language.

¹ For a detailed review of the study and input factors that may explain the findings, see Alhawary 2009a: 39–41.

A fourth post-error analysis approach is that of formal (rule-based) Universal Grammar (UG)-based accounts of Principles and Parameters, especially in relation to notions of UG access and L1 transfer.² A number of hypotheses have been advanced that the L2 learner has access, to varying degrees, to UG, though indirectly through L1 (see Meisel 1983, 1991; Clahsen 1984; Clahsen and Muysken 1986, 1989; Felix 1985; Bley-Vroman 1989, 1990; Schachter 1989). The following are the most prominent hypotheses and their brief claims:

- The Minimal Tree Hypothesis posits that only lexical categories transfer (e.g., Vainikka and Young-Scholten 1996).
- The Weak Transfer Hypothesis (e.g., Eubank 1993/94, 1996) or the Local Impairment Hypothesis claims that both lexical and functional categories transfer but the feature values associated with functional categories do not (Beck 1997, 1998; Eubank et al. 1997; Eubank and Beck 1998).
- The Full Transfer/Full Access Hypothesis proposes that the entirety of L1 grammar (including lexical categories, functional categories, and abstract feature values associated with functional categories) is available to L2 learners from the onset of L2 acquisition (e.g., Schwartz and Sprouse 1996; Schwartz 1998).
- The Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis (e.g., Lardiere 1998, 2000; Prévost and White 2000; Bruhn de Garavito and White 2002; Prévost 2008) claims that the feature system is temporarily impaired at the morphophonological (surface) level due to complexity in mapping between surface forms and underlying abstract features.
- The Representational Deficit/Interpretability Hypothesis, which is a reformulation of the Failed Functional Features Hypothesis (Hawkins and Chan 1997; Hawkins 2001), claims that uninterpretable ϕ -features (e.g., agreement features of person, number, and gender) are subject to maturational constraints and therefore if such features are not instantiated in L1 prior to the critical period, they become no longer accessible later (e.g., Hawkins 2005; Hawkins and Hattori 2006; Hawkins et al. 2008; Tsimpli 2003; Tsimpli and Dimitrakopoulou 2007; Tsimpli and Mastropavlou 2008).
- The Feature Reassembly Hypothesis, which is a reformulation of the Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis, adopts a contrastive linguistic feature-based approach in which ultimate attainment of native-like L2 morphosyntactic knowledge depends on the extent to which learners are able to reconfigure the feature values in functional categories and

² See also Arabic L2 studies on the mechanism of structural derivation and representation of the latest modified version of Generative Grammar theory: the Minimalist Programme. These include Alhawary (2007a) on abandoning or maintaining proposals for the Split-INFL Hypothesis based on tense and agreement findings in Arabic SLA data, and Algady (2018) on the role of economy conditions (i.e., whether they are operative) in the syntactic derivation of Arabic L2 resumptive pronouns within four types of relative clause constructions.

lexical items, and the conditions under which these are realized, from those of the L1 to the L2 (Lardiere 2008, 2009; Hwang and Lardiere 2013).

With respect to the general notions of UG access and L1 transfer, a number of Arabic studies examined UG access and L1 transfer claims (Bolotin 1996; Alhawary 2007b, 2009a). Based on performance of L2 English-speaking learners of Arabic on a grammaticality judgement task, Bolotin (1996) found that whereas the beginner and intermediate groups exhibited evidence for L1 transfer by retaining their English L1 non-resumptive-pronoun [+movement] setting, the advanced group showed evidence for (indirect) access to UG as they were able to reset the parameter to a resumptive-pronoun [-movement] setting exhibited in their L2 Arabic. Similarly, based on production data of null subjects from participants whose L1s are set to [-null] (English) and [+null] (Spanish and Japanese), Alhawary (2007b, 2009a) concluded that since the three groups of L1 participants were able to set the parameter value to [+null] in their L2 learning of Arabic from early on, the data provide evidence for UG access (through the English L1 participants) and L1 transfer (through the Spanish L1 and Japanese L1 participants). In addition, a contingent relationship was found between the Spanish L1 participants' development of verbal agreement morphology and their use of null subjects (see also Alhawary 2018a, for further evidence of L1 transfer based on null-subject use by Russian-speaking learners of Arabic).

As for the specific predictions made by the above-mentioned hypotheses, a series of studies conducted by Alhawary (e.g., 2002, 2005, 2009a, 2009b, 2018a) investigated the acquisition of nominal gender and verbal gender agreement based on longitudinal and cross-sectional data from learners of different L1 backgrounds, including English, French, Japanese, Chinese, and Russian. The studies found an asymmetry in the acquisition of nominal gender and verbal gender agreement, where participants of certain L1s encountered more difficulty with the former than the latter. The data are argued to be best accounted for by the Full Transfer/Full Access Hypothesis, while the others fall short of adequately accounting for the data. Thus, due to the availability and transfer of the uninterpretable ϕ -feature gender (nominal) agreement from L1, French-speaking learners of Arabic outperformed their English and Japanese counterparts on nominal gender agreement (e.g., Alhawary 2009a). A similar finding was yielded where Russian-speaking learners of Arabic maintained an advantage over their Chinese counterparts on the same forms (Alhawary 2018a). Alhawary concludes that the data are compatible with the Full Transfer/Full Access hypothesis, and that such a difference in performance is likely due to structural proximity, in particular the presence or absence of a feature in L1, and not necessarily due to complexity in mapping between surface forms and underlying abstract features (à la the Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis) or learning difficulties involved in

reconfiguring the nominal gender agreement features in conformity with those of the L2 (à la the Feature Reassembly Hypothesis), since there is no such complexity involved in the gender agreement between an attributive adjective and a head noun within the Arabic noun phrase. This asymmetrical performance may seem to be compatible with the Representational Deficit/Interpretability Hypothesis assuming a permanent impairment where a feature becomes no longer accessible in the UG inventory if it is not instantiated in L1. However, contrary to such a permanent impairment account, the underperformance on gender nominal agreement seems to be temporary, since it was shown it can be mitigated by extra input (most notably in the beginning stage), and ultimate attainment is possible, in principle, since some individual (L1 English and L1 Chinese) participants were able to perform at ceiling on such forms (e.g., Alhawary 2009a, 2018a).³ With respect to performance on verbal gender agreement by participants with different L1s that exhibit gender verbal agreement (such as Russian in the past tense) or do not exhibit verbal gender agreement (such as English, French, Japanese, and Chinese), it was attributed to other contributing factors such as the nature of the target forms. Thus, present-tense verbs in Arabic, in particular those inflected for third-person singular and masculine, have both the feature tense/aspect and feature (gender, number, and person) agreement conflated in the prefix. Relatedly, the different L1s of the participants involve some type of structural similarity with Arabic, whether in exhibiting a tense distinction between the past and the present (i.e., all the L1s including Chinese and Japanese), tense and verbal (person and number) agreement (i.e., English and French), or tense and verbal (gender, person, and number) agreement (i.e., Russian). It is claimed that evidence for L1 transfer through the acquisition asymmetry in nominal gender agreement though not in verbal agreement (due to the nature of the target forms) may make the role of L1 transfer appear selective in this case (e.g., Alhawary 2018a). Finally, Azaz (2016) investigated acquisition of Arabic definiteness by English-speaking learners of Arabic, using a grammaticality judgement task and a forced choice (written) task. The study found L1 negative transfer effects in low-proficiency learners, but advanced learners were able to recover from such effects and assign more target-like definite nouns (i.e., having reconfigured definiteness features from their L1 to L2). Accordingly, the data were interpreted in support of the Feature Reassembly Hypothesis.

A fifth post-error analysis strand of studies are those conducted on heritage learners, which is a relatively new area of investigation. Following Polinsky (2008) and Montrul (2008), the L1 of the heritage learner 'has not been completely acquired because of the switch to another

³ One other non-UG account proposed for the underperformance on nominal gender agreement by such L2 learners is that absence of the gender agreement feature is expectedly more entrenched (à la usage-based and frequency accounts of language learning) in participants whose L1s do not exhibit such features (e.g., English L1 and Japanese L1 speakers than those (French L1 and Russian L1 speakers) whose L1s do (Alhawary 2018a).

dominant language' at or before school age (Polinsky 2008: 149). Because of their stronger dominant L2 and some areas in their L1 that may have undergone loss or attrition over time, heritage speakers are described as 'unbalanced bilinguals' (Polinsky 2015). A series of studies on Arabic heritage learners confirmed the presence of gaps in their morphosyntactic and lexical knowledge (Albirini et al. 2011, 2013; Albirini and Benmamoun 2014, 2015), root and pattern morphological knowledge (Benmamoun et al. 2014), and sociolinguistic competence to utilize both colloquial Arabic and Standard Arabic (Albirini and Chakrani 2016).⁴ Due to L1 (positive) transfer from colloquial Arabic, Albirini (2014) further found that whereas elementary heritage learners in his study maintained an advantage over their Arabic L2 learner counterparts, such an advantage diminished in his advanced heritage participants. Albirini (2014) speculated that the lack of such an advantage in the advanced participants was due to lack of effective instructional materials which would have allowed heritage learners to benefit more significantly from formal instruction and promote their language skills more noticeably.

A sixth post-error analysis strand of studies examined Arabic L2 phonology and vocabulary as well as the different processes and skills, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking, mainly by English-speaking learners of Arabic. Arabic L2 phonology studies mainly focused on the perception and production of Arabic consonant contrasts by L2 learners at various levels of Arabic L2 development (e.g., Alesh 1987; Al Mahmoud 2013; Shehata 2015; for more recent studies on Arabic L2 phonology, see Alhawary 2018b). Two studies on Arabic L2 vocabulary examined morphological awareness of word-formation (including knowledge of root and pattern). The findings revealed that such awareness either led to robust knowledge development of Arabic L2 vocabulary (Redouane 2003) or at least facilitated guessing the meanings of unfamiliar words and producing new ones (Khoury 2008). As for Arabic L2 skills and processes, studies on Arabic L2 reading focused on word recognition in relation to Arabic phonological and orthographic systems, posing potential problems for English-speaking learners of Arabic in early stages of their language acquisition (Khaldieh 1996). Studies on Arabic L2 reading were examined in relation to comprehension and knowledge of case and mood markings (Khaldieh 2001) and the role of diacritics in reading speed and reading comprehension (Hansen 2010). At least one study, conducted by Shakir and Obeidat (1991), focused on writing and examined use of textual features, such as content-organization and cohesion devices. Similar to writing, at least one study on listening comprehension (Elkhafaifi 2005) was conducted with respect to the effectiveness of different types of advanced organizers (for a detailed discussion with pedagogical implications of

⁴ Classroom teachers and foreign language practitioners have long been aware of such knowledge gaps in heritage learners' knowledge, but thanks to heritage learning studies, such gaps are now empirically proven.

studies on Arabic L2 phonology, vocabulary, and processes and skills, see Alhawary 2018c).⁵ Processes and skills remain by far among the most under-investigated areas in Arabic SLA and also happen to be crucial for second language pedagogy and pedagogical practices in the classroom.

Finally, a seventh, current, approach, which has received recent but little attention, although already well established in psychology and language learning, is that which investigates language learning based on usage-based accounts. Usage-based or frequency (aka ‘statistical learning’) accounts hold that target forms emerge from usage and exposure to input, in that the learner tracks and extracts structural regularities and idiosyncrasies from the frequency distribution of target forms in the input, and, upon repeated exposure and extraction, begins to approximate the target forms (e.g., Bybee and Hopper 2001; Ellis 2012). Recently, one Arabic L2 study investigated usage-based claims by examining the acquisition of lexical stress by L1 English and L1 Chinese learners of Arabic as an L2 (Lin and Alhawary 2018). The study found partial support for frequency effects in particular with study participants exhibiting higher fluency and accuracy in their production of stress when the stimuli had a relatively more frequent stress patterns than others. In addition, the study found L1 transfer effects, as study participants’ performance seemed to have been conditioned by perception of acoustic cues and prosodic characteristics of their L1.

1.3 Arabic Proficiency Testing: The Status of Arabic Testing–SLA Interface

Hand in hand with SLA research goes second language learning assessment and proficiency testing (e.g., Bachman and Cohen 1998; Alderson 2005). In particular, a strong interface connects between second language acquisition data and proficiency tests such as the American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) oral proficiency interview (OPI), which relies on the elicitation and rating of unrehearsed speech. Because of this reliance on unplanned and impromptu speech, the SLA–testing interface is at its strongest when SLA data are based on the spontaneous output production of L2 learners rather than on certain conscious measures, such as grammaticality judgement and writing tasks, which are metalinguistic in nature and do not necessarily reflect the underlying often unconscious knowledge of the L2 learner’s interlanguage. However, despite the fact that ACTFL OPI guidelines have gone through at least two revisions since they were first formulated in 1989 (the latest

⁵ As for studies on speaking, previous studies in Arabic L2 were conducted primarily in relation to the production or processing of Arabic morphosyntactic features in order to test PT claims (discussed above in connection with Arabic SLA approaches dealing with cognitive processing models).

version of which having been published in 2012) and that certain ‘annotations’ or updates were introduced to the latest version (ACTFL 2012), such guidelines have a number of limitations due to lack of reliance on actual SLA data.⁶

One major limitation of current ACTFL guidelines is inclusion of vague descriptors such as ‘syntax may be strongly influenced by the first language’ (in the Novice High level rubrics), ‘limitations in grammar and/or syntax’ (in the Intermediate Mid level rubrics), presence of ‘a certain grammatical roughness’ (in the Advanced Low level rubrics), ‘an imperfect grasp of some forms’ (in the Advanced High level rubrics), and ‘virtually no pattern of error in the use of basic structures’ (in the Superior level rubrics). Despite the introduction of ‘specific annotations’ in ACTFL (2012), such annotations remain too few and too vague and do not benefit from Arabic SLA data and findings. For example, we are not told what forms are included in the ‘grammatical roughness’ category, nor are we informed how L1 transfer effects are manifested at different levels based on test takers’ L1s. Accordingly, testers are left to figure out on their own, for example, what constitutes ‘grammatical roughness’ and which structures are ‘basic’ and which are not. Hence placing primary emphasis on rubrics related to meaning and functions, to the exclusion of forms, may not sufficiently aid in identifying the exact proficiency level of test takers.⁷

Bringing a closer alignment between proficiency testing and second language acquisition research can potentially address ACTFL guidelines’ current limitations, as SLA findings can make a significant difference. Findings relevant to acquisition tendencies and patterns of emergence and acquisition by speakers of similar and different L1s can inform proficiency testing and mitigate the confusion and ambiguity entailed by current descriptors and annotations and help guide testers away from misidentifying the proper proficiency levels of test takers. The challenge is that we need far more research and replication studies to enrich Arabic SLA findings both in depth and in breadth.

1.4 Arabic Second Language Pedagogy: One Path or Multiple Paths for Teaching Variation

Although there have been significant advances in Arabic second language pedagogy over the past half century, especially in the USA (for detailed reviews, see McCarus 1992; Abboud 1993; Ryding 2006), the current status is far from being rosy, and much remains to be done, such as the need to

⁶ The problems are compounded by the fact that the ACTFL guidelines were initially articulated while taking into account languages which are not as diglossic as Arabic (i.e., where the distance between the spoken and written/standard codes are not as wide) and primarily catered to the commonly (Western European) taught languages.

⁷ For a detailed discussion of the problematic nature of the vague descriptors as well as the newly introduced annotations of the ACTFL Guidelines (2012), see Alhawary (2018a).

develop more textbooks beyond the few ones available and to clarify the status of integrating dialectal varieties with *fuṣḥā* 'Modern Standard Arabic' (MSA) in the teaching of Arabic as a second/foreign language. With respect to the latter, teaching Arabic language variation or addressing the diglossic character of Arabic in foreign language teaching has taken at least three different approaches. All three approaches aim at developing proficiency, with knowledge of MSA and at least one dialect, but they follow different routes. The standard approach has been to introduce MSA in the first one to three years and then introduce courses in the dialects later, followed possibly by further study abroad where learners get more intensive dialectal linguistic input, and (pragmatic) language use as well as additional cultural components of the language. Serious programmes adopting this route introduce one dialect or more at home and do not simply relegate the learning of a dialect to study abroad. A second approach is to start with teaching a dialect during the first one to two years, then to transition to integrate the teaching of MSA. A third approach, which has gained more momentum recently, especially with the publication of two textbooks (Brustad et al. 2011, 2014; Younes et al. 2013 and Younes and Al-Masri 2013), attempts to integrate the teaching of dialects with MSA from early on. Of note, authors of the two textbooks also produced two books to advocate for the approach: Younes (2015) and Al-Batal (2018). The remainder of this section deals with the rationale of the third teaching approach integrating the teaching of dialects with MSA together with its limitations, both theoretical and methodological.

There is no doubt that integrating a dialect and MSA in Arabic language teaching from early on would be quite advantageous, since it would reflect authentic language input and use and would respond to the growing needs of learners to interact with native speakers (particularly in the USA), as indicated in some questionnaire surveys (e.g., Kuntz and Belnap 2001; Belnap 2006; Husseinali 2006; Palmer 2007). Advocates of such integration believe the advantages outweigh all other considerations. In an exceptionally short monograph of fifty-eight pages, Younes (2015) provides an overview of well-known sociolinguistic accounts of Arabic diglossia and describes his personal experience integrating his own Palestinian dialect in a form of educated spoken Arabic in which he seems to believe that integration (versus MSA first or colloquial first) is the only correct pedagogical way to deal with diglossia and language variation.⁸ Although providing a sociolinguistic account is a necessary component for advocating for a particular pedagogical approach, three other components, which are at least equally necessary, are completely absent from Younes' treatment. No discussion is provided about the theoretical language-learning underpinnings or how variation is assumed to be learned, given the variability or

⁸ For a detailed critique and counterarguments of Younes' arguments for one correct path for dealing with Arabic diglossia versus multiple possible paths each of which being subject to specific considerations, see Eisele (2018).

entailed optionality of language use (i.e., with such optionality a given code is not guaranteed to be learned or produced), timing of acquisition, and other input effect considerations.⁹ A second absent component which would be expected but is completely missing is any discussion of a methodological rationale for how to test and assess learning using the new approach. A third missing component is an explicit account of the linguistic input (i.e., where criteria for what, when, where, and how MSA is integrated with a colloquial variety or varieties are explicitly articulated), which is a pedagogical prerequisite for contents for drill and practice by the learner in the classroom and for language input modelling and error correction (by means of recast or other methods) by the teacher.¹⁰ Instead of providing a rigorous and reliable account of such an input for learning, Younes (2015: 53) goes as far as saying that even in the event a teacher has no knowledge of a target dialect, the alternative of teaching MSA in conversation is not an option, suggesting perhaps that a teacher can teach what they want and how they want.¹¹

Al-Batal's (2018) is a more substantial attempt to advocate for integrating MSA and colloquial varieties or teaching Arabic variation within a one-language approach from early on. Notwithstanding the inclusion of seventeen chapters by different authors, Al-Batal's (2018) treatment, similar to that of Younes, lacks three necessary components: theoretical language-learning underpinnings of how variation is assumed to be learned, given the variability or entailed optionality of language use; a methodological rationale for how to test and assess student learning using an Arabic-as-one-language approach; and an explicit account of the linguistic input with criteria for what, when, where, and how MSA is integrated with a colloquial variety, despite inclusion of some general proposals. Of all the chapters, three chapters dealt with L2 acquisition and spoken output production. However, the three studies suffer from methodological limitations. One study (Shiri and Joukhadar 2018) relied on classroom observations and end-of-semester skits. Another study (Nassif 2018) used end-of-

⁹ Alhawary (2013) suggests that such an approach would require more learning time as well as for forms and functions belonging to different codes to be drilled and practised in different contexts, at least on par with synonym learning (p. 31). In addition, a recent study on Arabic L2 lexical stress by L1 English and L1 Chinese learners of Arabic (Lin and Alhawary 2018) did not reveal proficiency effects (i.e., learning gains) from first to second year learning even for frequent stress patterns and even though the participants were exposed to one variety (MSA). The authors concluded that the task of the participants would have been further compounded had they been exposed to other varieties, especially those which exhibit different stress patterns, and cautioned (following Alhawary 2013) that at the very least 'incorporating more items in the instructional input should translate into more instruction time in the classroom and more input related to such items available, which, in turn, should be subsequently sufficiently recycled' (Lin and Alhawary 2018: 32).

¹⁰ Cf. Ryding's approach and explicit description of formal spoken Arabic (1990, 1991).

¹¹ Cf. Alhawary (2013: 30) who suggests that 'even in contexts where MSA does not fall in complementary distribution with a given dialect, one can argue for the notion of authentic language use not at the level of product but rather at the level of process, where in instructed second language learning receptive skills are reinforced by productive skills and vice versa' at least in the early stages of language learning (see also Alish 2000). In addition, recent approaches for teaching dead languages such as Greek and Latin have advocated for incorporating productive skills.

semester skits and presentations in addition to end-of-semester interviews. Aside from lack of any specificity as to how classroom observations were analysed,¹² relying on end-of-semester skits and presentations is far from being reliable to examine the underlying interlanguage systems of the learners, since such tasks are heavily rehearsed and students receive academic credit for them. The third study (Leddy-Cecere 2018), similarly used classroom observations and additionally oral interviews. Leddy-Cecere (2018) claimed to have found four codeswitching patterns along four stages (based on four groups of four participants belonging to one to four years of language exposure) and that no evidence of fossilization or mixing of codes was found. However, aside from lack of information of how classroom observations were analysed, the study seems to have focused on codeswitching use, but did not provide any frequency for the codeswitching patterns nor any focus on a specific feature throughout the output productions of the participants. The latter is essential to prove or disprove existence of fossilization (of specific features) or pidginized forms. Finally, of all three studies, only Leddy-Cecere (2018) provides samples of L2 learners' output production. Many of the examples provided are neither natural nor authentic native-like speech, e.g., *minšān huwwē lā yurīd 'an ya 'kul* 'Because he doesn't want to eat,' *yatakallam 'al- 'arabiyy ma 'a 'ā 'ilathu bzzāf* 'He speaks Arabic with his family a lot,' and *huwa yarūh fī 'irāq* 'He goes to Iraq' (Leddy-Cecere 2018: 204–5).

In sum, the approach of teaching dialectal varieties with MSA in tandem requires far more explicit articulation in terms of the nature of language learning involved, testing and assessing such learning, and the nature of the linguistic input to be taught and learned. Alhawary (2013) suggests that the optimal route to teaching Arabic variation seems to be one starting with MSA first to develop a working knowledge of the language and introducing a dialect one to two years later, since introducing two or more codes at the same time 'would increase the learning burden for the learner who would be faced with too much input to comprehend and proceduralize' (30).¹³ The latter would amount to making the instructional input difficult to comprehend or understand. In fact, a common observation of the reaction of the majority of learners exposed to the integrated or mixed language approach is that it is confusing to them and they often do

¹² Shiri and Joukhadar (2018) seem to have used coarse-grained criteria to distinguish between MSA and a dialectal variety: 'Words that were close in both varieties but did not share all the consonants were counted as different. The word "mixing" is used to describe the use, by students, of a dialectal feature or lexical item in a class or activity where MSA is the designated variety and vice versa' (Shiri and Joukhadar 2018: fn 163). Moreover and oddly enough, the authors seem to consider *only* 'random mixing' as part of the interlanguage systems of the participants: "Random mixing" is used to describe switching between MSA and dialect that is *not intentional* and is *merely* considered as interlanguage' (163; emphasis added).

¹³ Following Nation (2001), Redouane (2003), and Webb (2007), Alhawary explains that '[a]t the early stage of learning an L2, even learning vocabulary is less efficient than at a later stage, since the learner has not acquired sufficient basic working knowledge' (Alhawary 2013: 30). Of course, this does not preclude teaching basic functions such as greetings and similar functions. For other reasons to do with delaying the introduction of a dialect, see Alhawary (2013: 29–31).

not know what code they are using and in which context. This is even confirmed by a questionnaire survey conducted by Al-Batal and Glakes (2018), published in Al-Batal (2018) advocating for the integrated or mixed approach. The survey reveals that about two-thirds of the respondents who were exposed to the mixed-language curriculum stated that 'learning a dialect simultaneously with MSA is confusing' (268). With the current cognitive constructionist paradigm of language learning, including the adoption of the communicative approach, adult L2 learners do not learn that which they do not understand. As is widely known by second language practitioners, this was one of the main causes for the abandonment of the audio-lingual approach and the adoption of the communicative approach.

1.5 Conclusion: Challenges and Future Directions

Despite the fact that the three main sub-disciplines of Arabic applied linguistics – second language acquisition, second language proficiency testing and assessment, and second language pedagogy – have seen significant advances, much remains to be done and many challenges lie ahead, as Arabic remains understudied and underexamined, compared to other languages. More studies in second language acquisition are needed to cover (in depth and breadth) the different linguistic subdomains as well as the different processes and skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). More structural specificity is required to be introduced to Arabic ACTFL proficiency testing rubrics and annotations as well as more reliance on second language acquisition data (in order to help the tester identify the exact proficiency level of the test taker) and taking into account acquisition variations exhibited by test takers of different L1 backgrounds. More reflective and explicit articulation of the pedagogical route of helping the L2 learner of Arabic achieve proficiency in Arabic, including its variation, is needed. While the debate of which teaching/learning route most effectively leads to proficiency in Arabic variation, the field will need to look beyond this debate and consider other more sophisticated issues relevant to the learners, such as the socio-psychological or socio-affective factors of attitude and identity. We all know too well that negative anecdotal accounts of encounters between Arabic L2 learners and native speakers due to speaking in MSA (see Younes 2015) or a dialect (see Eisele 2018) abound. Since Arabic is a global language,¹⁴ it may be important to consider whether or not the Arabic L2 learner tends to index the variety they adopt (whether a dialect or the standard) to position, preserve, or negotiate an (im)personal or (non) religious identity on par with studies on English as a second language (e.g., Dalton and Seidlhofer 1994; Lippi-Green 1997; Bent and Bradlow 2003). Finally, due to advances in technology and its impact on technology-

¹⁴ In this case, English is, of course, a super-global language.

mediated learning and teaching, and if the objectives include catering to learners' needs such as those reported in surveys (e.g., Kuntz and Belnap 2001; Belnap 2006; Husseinali 2006; Palmer 2007), the quest for a method of how best to teach language variation may be a mirage. It may be the case that the future will favour the implementation of modules or capsules from different instructional materials rather than using one single curriculum, since technology-mediated learning and teaching can quite flexibly reflect different prioritization and foci of language modalities and registers. By the same token, insisting on one curriculum so that one size fits all may end up being counterproductive and contrary to students' needs. Clearer articulation from institutions, programme administrators, and stakeholders about their programmatic missions and objectives pertaining to language teaching and learning would be paramount and would help alleviate, if not solve, many of the existing problems.

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