

Towards a Collaborative Vision of Language Learning and Innovative Approaches to Language Teaching in Australia

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Abstract

This paper outlines an innovative approach to the teaching of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) online using a range of sophisticated interactive media assisted delivery strategies. The course uses an outcomes-based approach to course design. This course takes the view that technology can be both tool and tutor in language education. The role of technology in language education is examined as an aspect of curriculum design, that is, the starting point is needs analysis and the resulting curriculum, rather than technology.

It deals with the exploration of the problem of taking the teaching of Arabic outside the classroom to make it more readily available to learners at more times and places than the traditional regular timetabled classroom lessons. It explores the research into suitable delivery strategies and the normal problems associated with online delivery strategies for language teaching.

The paper outlines the innovated and sophisticated methods developed to provide interactivity by linking audio to the written Arabic text and by introducing a series of matching exercises to allow practice to aid the assimilation of the language.

The success of the development of the Arabic online resources has led to a collaborative Blended Learning Model (BLM) for teaching Arabic and Italian at Deakin University in Melbourne and the University of South Australia (UniSA) in Adelaide. This collaborative trial that was launched in 2008 as part of a project which aimed to enable a wider range of languages to be taught across a wider range of universities.

Students learning Arabic through the BLM report that they thoroughly enjoy studying Arabic in this online format and find the online teaching and learning environment a welcome and integral part of their study regime that supports the development of independent learners who can manage their own learning experience at a time and a place of their choice.