

Teaching of Arabic in UK schools research

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1. To build a picture of Arabic-teaching provision in the UK



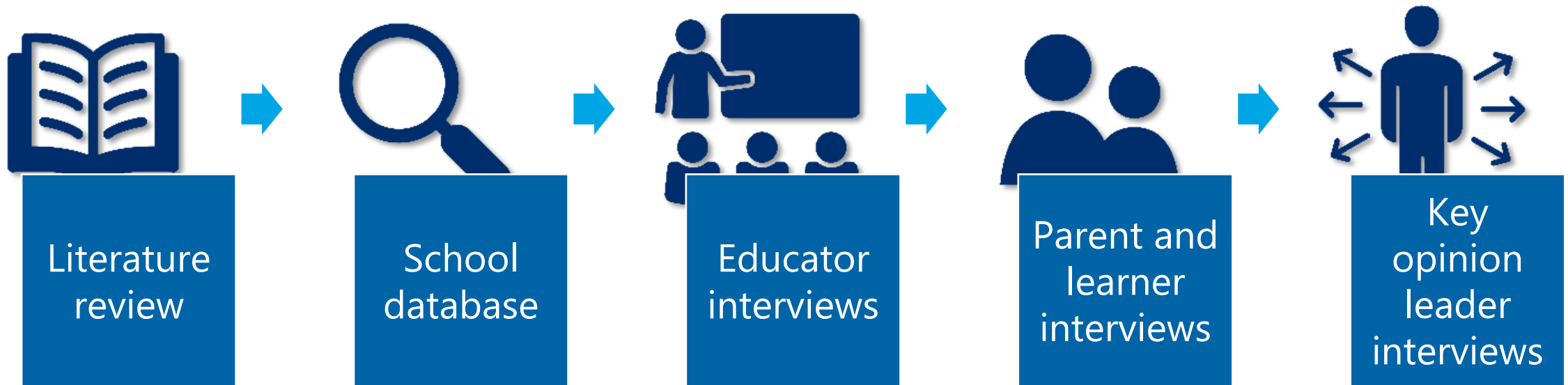
2. To determine the drivers and barriers to offering Arabic in the UK



3. To determine the drivers and barriers to learning Arabic

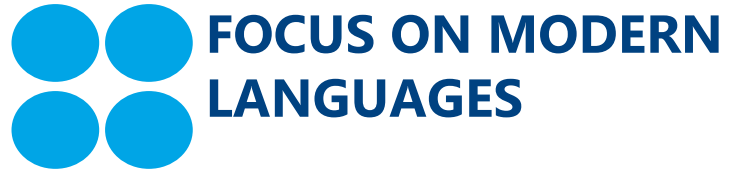


4. To determine how the British Council/QFI can encourage future uptake



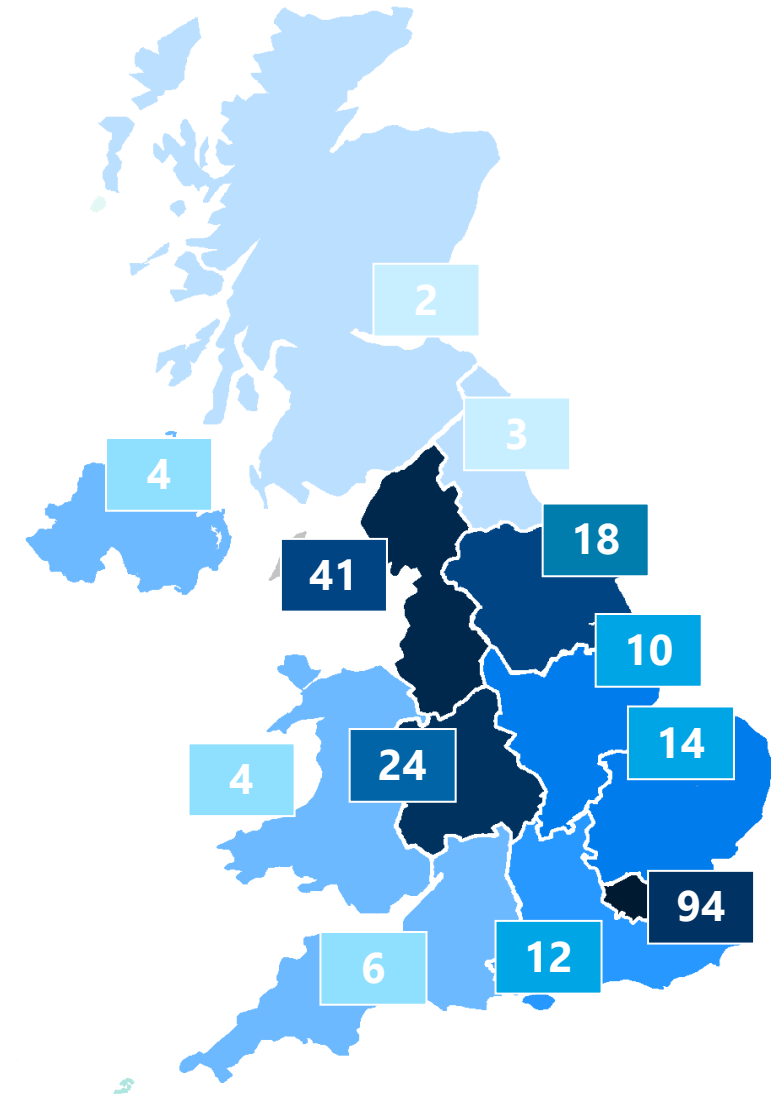


PICTURE OF PROVISION



Provision is largely within Islamic faith schools

- 5% of schools in England teach Arabic.
- 232 identified in the school database.
- 75% were Islamic faith schools.
- Nearly half were Independent schools.
- Correspond to regions with higher Muslim population.



Provision in Arabic-teaching schools

School 1:

Arabic as part of main curriculum for heritage learners. From year 8. Small cohort (4-10)

School 2:

Arabic extra-curricular club, and GCSE and A-Level coaching.

School 3:

Arabic as optional GCSE, from year 10. For beginners, semi-native speakers and native speakers. Large cohort (20-30)



DRIVERS TO TEACHING ARABIC



- Demand from the wider school community.
- Benefit to the students.
- Raising aspirations and broadening horizons of learners.

***“We are a multicultural inner-city school that takes in people who are new to the country... Our head teacher at that time was pro-community and wanted to instil a sense of pride. We wanted the children to bring in their own heritage and the language element was part of that. There is the personal pride and celebrating their heritage that we don't want them to forget. A lot of them are from Arabic communities. Obviously, if you are promoting children's cultural heritage, global ethos has an impact on how you do that.*”**

SLT, Arabic-teaching school





Large numbers of pupils from Arabic-speaking countries.

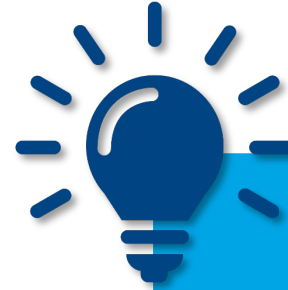
Parents' influence on child's interest.

Requests for support from school.

Drivers for Learners



Parental influence



Interest in the
language



Religious
motivation



Career
opportunities and
university
admission



BARRIERS TO TEACHING ARABIC

Overview of barriers for schools

Lack of qualified
teachers

Lack of awareness
of resources

Timetabling

Funding

The GCSE exam
suitability

Lack of other
qualification

Inclusion in the
EBacc

Negative perceptions
of Arabic and Arab
culture

Lack of student
interest in Arabic

- Experienced teachers with sufficient language skills.
- Blocked schools from offering Arabic.
- Small pool of potential candidates.
- Lack of Arabic teaching qualifications.

“ *I don't know if the Institute of Education offers a PGCE in secondary Arabic teaching. Maybe if they did, we would have a larger pool of trained staff who we knew would be of good quality.*

SLT, Non-Arabic-teaching school

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- Educators unaware of resources available.
- Pressure on Arabic teachers to self-resource.

Resources need to be:

Linked to the exam specification

Engaging for students

“ *There are some amazing textbooks and online software out there that are endorsed by exam boards for French, German and Spanish. And we don't have those kinds of things in Arabic and Urdu, so almost everything that's used in the Arabic and Urdu lessons is prepared by the teachers themselves or through a network of collaboration with other Arabic and Urdu teachers.*

Head of MFL, Arabic-teaching school

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- Time required to get students to GCSE standard.
- Competition for timetable space.
- Focus on those with prior knowledge so teaching need not be from scratch.

“ *The school cannot play a lot with the timetable. They had some difficulties this year to add Arabic. Last year Arabic had 3 hours. But this year because of their options and all sorts of things, we have to deliver it at the end of the day.*

MFL coordinator, Arabic-teaching school

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- Underpins all challenges.
- Educators having to convince SLT of need.
- Lack of Government funding for Arabic.
- Funding raises profile of the language.
- Lack of awareness of funding initiatives for Arabic.

Recruit and train new
staff members

Write the curriculum
plan

Create or purchase
resources

Provide engaging
cultural experiences for
students

Negative perceptions of Arabic and Arab culture

- Negative portrayal in the media.
- Negative perceptions would not discourage schools from offering Arabic.
- Negative perceptions did not put students off.
- Teaching of Arabic felt to instil positive perceptions of language and culture.

- Expected interest primarily from those with existing connection to Arabic.
- Lack of capital in pop culture.
- Lack of relevance a challenge across all MFLs.
- Lack of understanding of opportunities Arabic can offer.

Perceived Difficulty of Arabic

- Arabic seen as particularly difficult to learn.
- Off-putting to those without prior knowledge.
- One interviewee had stopped learning Arabic due to finding it too challenging.
- GCSE exam difficulty for native and non-native speakers.

Detailed and complicated grammatical rules

Different alphabet to English/most other MFLs taught in school

Difficulty with pronunciation

Different dialects

- Existence of GCSE is a driver.
- Lack of Scottish National Qualification in Arabic.
- Inclusion of languages in English Baccalaureate influences languages taught.

“The L3 is slightly different and that's probably going to be where the opportunity arises for Arabic, so the L2 is kind of tied down to those 8 languages that are available as national qualifications, so the equivalent of your GCSE.

**MFL lead, Education
Scotland**

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ENCOURAGING UPTAKE

- Introduction of Arabic seen as a financial risk.
- Funding for an Arabic teacher on a long-term basis.

“*Funding will be helpful if we can train teachers and to increase the staffing, because I’m on my own teaching these lessons, yet we want to expand Arabic.*”

MFL coordinator, Arabic-teaching school

- Support in increasing number of qualified teachers available.
- Work with local universities to support teacher training.
- Host a job board or database of Arabic teachers.

“ *Some kind of one-stop shop where you have a pool of staff who are trained, and who you’ve done some quality control with.*
SLT, Non-Arabic-teaching school

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- Work with exam boards and publishers to create resources that are:

Aligned to exam
specification

5-year curriculum
plan

Speaking and
listening resources

Digital resources

Digital tools with
teacher platforms

- Demonstrate how other schools have integrated Arabic into their curriculum.

A background of the school's profile

Initial drivers for the school offering Arabic

The roadmap to embedding Arabic within the school

Detail of the Arabic curriculum plan

Resources used

Outcomes & student reaction

Start small and target initial efforts

- Need to understand each school's unique circumstances.
- Target initial efforts on schools in areas with community need.
- Start with native speakers.
- Build interest among non-native speakers.

- Awareness of Arabic culture
- Workshops and activity days in school.
- Opportunities for trips and cultural activities as a motivator.
- Promoting the benefits of learning Arabic

“

We know an organisation that comes out and brings Chinese teachers over... they put a lesson together on Chinese culture. It was absolutely fascinating, and the children loved it. Learning new words, learning about Chinese culture, learning how to do things like Origami, little things like that .

SLT, Non-Arabic-teaching school

”

- Explore Modern Languages for Life and Work qualifications.
- Expanding L3 efforts
- Success of QFI in this area.
- Promote Arabic in primary schools.

“SCILT worked with the Qatar Foundation [sic] on the promotion of Arabic and they were able to facilitate the teaching online of Arabic over lockdown. What we saw in terms of the L3 during lockdown was that it flourished a bit more because of the nature of it being a more drop-in experience of language learning.”

MFL lead Education Scotland



CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

DRIVERS



Arabic provision highly driven by demographics of student body and community demand



Arabic as a way of raising student aspirations

BARRIERS



Arabic seen as high risk financially and time-wise



Lack of teachers, resources, awareness of funding and timetable pressures

Raising awareness of the British Council and QFI

- Reach out to schools on the Arabic teaching database, and schools in areas known to have large Arabic-speaking communities.

Resources

- Raise awareness of the existing classroom materials available from QFI.
- Partner with publishers or help to facilitate development of resources for GCSE.

Helping train and retain teachers

- Continue to offer grants to teachers for ongoing CPD.
- Promote the existence of the Arabic Teacher Councils.
- Work with universities to encourage and increase Arabic teacher training.
- Continue to offer long-term funding to support an Arabic teacher.

Qualifications

- Explore the possibility of creating new qualifications and smaller milestones for learners.
- Continue to work with Education Scotland and SCILT to increase teaching of Arabic as an L3 language.
- Explore Arabic through a Modern Languages for Life and Work qualification.

Case studies for schools

- Create case studies of schools that have successfully introduced Arabic.
- Detail how they overcame barriers, benefits to students, and successes for the school.
- Explore option of creating an ambassador school programme, to allow other schools to seek advice and guidance.

Engaging students

- Produce communication and information pieces on the benefits of studying Arabic and the Arabic-speaking world.
- Continue offering workshops/activity days and taster sessions.
- Expand the Arabic Speaking Competition, and explore other competitions and cultural events.

Any Questions?

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