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TRANSCENDING BORDERS, EMPOWERING LEARNERS: A PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF A NOVEL ONLINE LANGUAGE PROGRAM

Abstract:
This paper presents a preliminary review of the Yallah al-Quds (YAQ) virtual language and cultural exchange program, a novel online language program that offers multilingual and multidialectal learning environments for Arabic learners. In YAQ's self-directed and co-creative teaching and learning model, teams of native speakers of Arabic and English organize discussion groups around particular topics of interest (e.g., literature, music, poetry, politics, social justice, mental health, the environment). Viewed through the lens of translanguaging, YAQ's virtual classrooms become transformative spaces where plurilingual and multidialectal learners are encouraged to bring their full linguistic repertoire to use in a dynamic, equitable, and collaborative environment. YAQ's diverse participants are encouraged to use all the linguistic resources at their disposal, including all varieties of Arabic, to collaboratively negotiate meaning, build metalinguistic awareness, and connect across boundaries. Using a multi-method approach, this study focuses on the learners' perspectives by investigating the impact of this plurilingual model on learners' pre-program expectations and post-program reflections. Analysis of data collected from participant surveys presents promising trends of increased self-reported confidence in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Students also stated that they gained real-world exposure and learned about new topics through the program. Ultimately, the preliminary

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findings suggest that the novel YAQ model presents a challenge to monolingual language ideologies by highlighting the value of engaged pedagogical approaches such as translanguaging within technology-mediated learning environments. In a future study, we hope to further examine the effects of the program on teachers and use these results to improve the program, which can complement international study abroad programs and traditional university courses by empowering students and making learning more meaningful for teachers and students alike.

Keywords: Arabic ◆ dialects ◆ multidialectal pedagogies ◆ engaged pedagogies ◆ virtual exchange

Approaches to Teaching Arabic as a Multiglossic Language

Arabic is a multiglossic language, that is, one that comprises numerous varieties ranging from the spoken or colloquial dialects to the formal written language, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Native speakers often choose which linguistic variety to use according to the context and language use situation (Al-Batal, 1992). This complex linguistic situation poses a challenge to educators and learners who are faced with the perennial question of when, how, and which varieties of Arabic to teach and learn.

Traditional approaches to teaching Arabic as an additional language have focused primarily on teaching MSA, with minimal inclusion of colloquial dialects. Research shows that this approach does not adequately prepare students to engage with native Arabic speakers or with the plurilingual situation of the world in the 21st century (Trentman, 2019). Often, the expectation is that students will learn a dialect during study abroad (Trentman & Shiri, 2020). However, the fact that most students are only exposed to MSA materials and classroom activities creates a lack of linguistic competence that can be frustrating for students during study abroad (Shiri 2013, 2015a, 2015b; Trentman, 2013). MSA-only teaching models have been critiqued for not adequately preparing students for interacting with native Arabic speakers in everyday situations (Al-Batal, 2018). Yet these models continue to predominate in Arabic classrooms in the United States.

Recently, educators have begun to call for integrating dialect instruction into the curriculum (Al-Batal, 2018), and university courses now provide exposure to varieties of Arabic, such as Levantine, Egyptian, and Moroccan dialects. Programs that teach both MSA and dialect typically follow either a separated or integrated approach. In the former, MSA and dialect are taught in different classes and sometimes with separate textbooks. In the latter, they are taught alongside each other in the same class. This latter approach has long been followed at Cornell University (Younes, 2006) and is included in textbooks integrating Levantine and Egyptian

dialects such as 'Arabiyyat al-Naas (Younes, Weatherspoon, & Foster 2014) and 'Arabiyyat al-Naas fi Masr (Younes et al. 2019). The most recent (3rd) edition of the Al-Kitaab series (Brustad, Al-Batal, & Al-Tonsi 2011, 2013), dominant in the United States, has also introduced an integrated approach, including Egyptian and Levantine dialects alongside MSA, with the expectation that teachers will choose one. In both approaches, there is still a major emphasis on MSA.

Students place a great deal of value on interacting with Arabic speakers and learning multiple dialects (Al-Batal, 2018b; Al-Batal & Belnap, 2006; Shiri, 2013; Younes, 2006). However, programs face challenges when teaching regional dialects, from ideological perceptions that MSA is the "pure," "correct," or more valued form of Arabic (Alaiyed, 2018, Bassiouney, 2009; Holes, 2004) to questions about which of the regional dialects to teach. Since both the separated and integrated models tend to focus on an MSA-plus-one-dialect model, it can be difficult to know which dialect to choose, especially if a program has teachers from a variety of dialect backgrounds (Trentman & Shiri, 2020) and students plan to study abroad in more than one country.

To add to this complexity, modes of language learning are rapidly changing, with a move toward digital tools and modalities. Virtual language learning platforms have proliferated over the past several decades, offering students a wider range of mechanisms to learn and practice languages. Formerly, these tools were seen as supplemental to traditional university courses and study abroad programs. However, with the cessation of in-person learning during the Coronavirus pandemic beginning in the spring of 2020, technology-mediated language learning tools became indispensable. Virtual platforms have addressed another set of challenges that were starkly highlighted by the pandemic but already existed for students around the world: asymmetrical access to education due to barriers to education and travel. Language (and dialect) immersion opportunities are unavailable to many students who cannot study abroad for a variety of reasons, including social, financial, programmatic, or political barriers.

Plurilingual and Translanguaging Ideologies

Despite persistent language attitudes that consider one dialect as superior to another, and MSA as superior to all Arabic dialects, the reality is that the Arabic-speaking world is multidialectal. Egyptian and Levantine dialects are the most commonly taught today, while North African dialects tend to be stigmatized as incomprehensible in spite of the fact that Morocco is currently one of the most common study abroad locations. Moreover, for students who have access to a wide range of dialects through social media, a multidialectal environment may be more useful

and comfortable than MSA-only or MSA-plus-one environments. Thus, a multidialectal model is closer to the real world than an MSA-only or even an MSA-plus-one classroom.

This reality is aligned with the theory and pedagogic practice of translanguaging. The term translanguaging is used to describe "the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages" (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 81). García (2009) discusses translanguaging as a way that bilinguals and multilinguals use language flexibly to make sense of their worlds, integrating different viewpoints into "a single, undifferentiated cognitive terrain containing complex and dynamic linguistic resources" (Yilmaz 2021, pp. 437-8).

The term was first applied to the Welsh context in the 1980s, when Cen Williams (1994) observed that English and Welsh were used alternately for receptive and productive use in Welsh revitalization programs. He developed a successful pedagogical practice based on this and coined the term "trawsieithu," which was later translated into English as "translanguaging" (Baker, 2001, 2011). More recently, the term has gained currency in discussions of multilingualism in educational contexts (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Canagarajah, 2011a; Creese & Blackledge, 2011; García, 2009; Li Wei, 2011).

As a theoretical lens, translanguaging offers a critical and inclusive view on bilingualism and multilingualism, positing that rather than possessing two or more autonomous language systems, bilinguals and multilinguals select and deploy features from a unitary linguistic repertoire to make meaning and negotiate particular communicative contexts (Vogel & García, 2017). Translanguaging as a theory emerged as a challenge to colonial and modernist-era language ideologies that privileged Western European notions of "one language one people," thereby creating and maintaining linguistic, cultural, and racial hierarchies in society (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). "Translanguaging theory grapples with this tension, at once aiming to dismantle socially constructed linguistic categories while also recognizing these categories' real material effects" (Vogel & García, 2017, p. 7). In this sense, as García and Li Wei (2014) have said, translanguaging is "part of a moral and political act that links that production of alternative meanings to transformative social action" (p. 57).

A translanguaging approach is highly relevant to the multiglossic situation of Arabic. Translanguaging disrupts traditional conceptualizations about language purity, creating a "third space" in which to challenge the hegemony of standard varieties by equalizing the status of all language varieties (Yilmaz, 2021, p. 448). This space centers the learner as the agent, empowering them to use their idiolect – that is, their particular linguistic resources – to expand

their linguistic knowledge (Gutierrez et al, 1999; Martin-Beltran, 2014; Yilmaz, 2021). Translanguaging is thus "a way of working in the gap between, on the one hand, the global designs of nation-states and their monoglossic education systems, and on the other, the local histories of peoples who language differently" (García and Li Wei 2015, p. 227). As such, translanguaging as pedagogy has the potential to liberate the voices of language-minoritized students, immigrants, and refugees but also could be used in traditional classrooms with students learning additional languages (García, 2014).

In doing so, translanguaging pedagogies alter "the power relations to establish social justice for marginalized students" (Yilmaz, 2021, p. 448). Proponents of this approach view all students as having valuable funds of linguistic and cultural knowledge (Gort & Sambiante, 2015; Martin-Beltran, 2014; Sayer, 2013) that they bring to classrooms. Classrooms, in turn, become spaces for students to discuss and counteract linguistic inequities (García, 2014; García & Leiva, 2014: Palmer, 2008), which allows all participants to display their unique identities (Canagarajah, 2011a; Flores & García, 2017 García & Leiva, 2014; Sayer, 2013.)

Furthermore, code-switching between Arabic and English is the norm in language learning environments, even though it is looked down upon by some educators, who fear that use of other language varieties would dilute the pure MSA (Younes, 2009). As Azaz and Abourehab have shown (2021), many educators are reluctant to embrace a translanguaging approach, fearing it would confuse students. The privileging of MSA, which Ryding (2009) has referred to as "reverse privileging," means that MSA, "the secondary discourse, is taught first, and the primary discourse, which is the dialect, is taught inadequately second, if it is taught at all" (Azaz & Abourehab, p. 91). However, the reality is that translanguaging practices more closely reflect practical language use in real life, particularly given the predominance of English language media. Furthermore, multidialectal communication is the norm rather than the exception among Arabic speakers from different backgrounds (Al Masaeed 2020; Shiri 2002; Soliman 2014a; Trentman & Shiri 2020).

Reimagining Education

Acknowledging translanguaging as the most relevant framework for language teaching, especially for Arabic, gives us an opportunity to reimagine education. In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom,* bell hooks (2014) proposed a radical, transformative model of education that explicitly counteracts racist, sexist, and classist policies and practices in educational settings to promote the well-being and self-actualization of students and teachers alike. By decentering Western civilization and embracing multiculturalism and

reciprocal, democratic participation in the classroom, hook's approach empowers students to think critically and engage with passion, which makes learning more engaging and meaningful.

University students studying Arabic in a traditional classroom can only get so far in four years. Educators used to think that linguistic and cultural gains could only be made via study abroad (Shiri, 2013), but now students have become accustomed to virtual education through the pandemic, and educators can begin to think more creatively and innovatively. In this context, Arabic educators are asking: How can we teach Arabic in a way that honors the variety of dialects and language use situations? How can we teach Arabic in a way that is engaging, more fun, and increases competency and confidence? How can we employ progressive pedagogical practices that empower our students and help them to build greater critical awareness?

To answer these questions, the founders of the Yallah al-Quds (YAQ) virtual language and culture exchange program envisioned an innovative solution that employs technological tools for learning across boundaries. First, the program uses a digital platform that seeks to address disparities in educational access and bring greater equity to the field of language learning. Second, it embraces an inclusive multilingual and multidialectal pedagogical approach, responding to the enduring challenge of which Arabic dialect(s) to teach and how. Third, it gives students agency, allowing them to create lessons and working with teachers and other students to set the learning agenda, thus increasing engagement.

This paper explores this new and exciting pedagogical approach by analyzing preliminary data in order to understand and contextualize the self-reported impact of transnational, multilingual, and multidialectal learning spaces on students. The following pages are an attempt to answer the following research question: What is the impact of Yallah al-Quds – a transnational, multilingual, and multidialectal learning space – on students' learning outcomes and experiences?

Yallah al-Quds: A Novel Online Language Program

Before elaborating further upon the Yallah al-Quds pedagogical model, it is important to mention that the authors are founding members of the program (www.yallahalquds.com). Two are co-founders who conceptualized the model and brought it into reality, while a third served as senior data analyst for the program during the first two years of its existence. This being the case, the authors had a close working relationship with many of the program facilitators and participants and were invested in their personal, professional, and linguistic growth, just as they were invested in the program's success overall. Due to their proximity to

the research subject, the authors sought to be as objective and impartial as possible in measuring program impact through quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The following pages should be seen as an attempt to do just that.

YAQ is a student-facilitated, faculty-mentored initiative that aims to provide accessible and intercultural education and professional development for Arabic and English learners alike. Its approach to teaching and learning is focused on promoting cultural exchange and building personal connections between students studying Arabic and English worldwide. The YAQ method is characterized by six basic components: 1) a multilingual and multidialectal model of teaching and learning; 2) crowd-sourced, cooperative, anti-hierarchical educational design; 3) free online courses that prioritize equity and accessibility; 4) ethics-based, values-driven core principles emphasizing engagement, reciprocity, and critical introspection; 5) a firm commitment to social justice; and 6) a fleshed-out Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion framework[1]. This paper focuses on the first three, examining how an online non-hierarchical and multidialectal model impacts language acquisition. Our aim is to examine the last three factors in another paper.

YAQ was first piloted in the summer of 2020 and has grown significantly since, engaging over 80 co-facilitators and 400 participants from over 20 countries. It offers four- to eight-week semester programs. While this may seem like a relatively short time span, research shows that even short-term study experiences can increase students' sociolinguistic understanding and have a positive impact on learner attitudes (Shiri, 2013). Since its inception, YAQ has brought together learners of English and Arabic who are speakers of numerous native languages, including Danish, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Korean, Norwegian, Polish, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Tamazight, and Turkish, in addition to English and various dialects of Arabic, including Egyptian, Jordanian, Moroccan, Omani, Palestinian, Saudi, Somali, Sudanese, and Tunisian dialects.

YAQ follows an unorthodox teaching and learning model where teams of native speakers of Arabic and English organize discussion groups around a particular topic of interest (e.g.,

[1] The authors would like to extend special gratitude to Joy Al-Nemri, Yallah al-Quds's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion specialist, for helping to lay the foundation for the program's radical pedagogical approach. Joy's leadership within YAQ extends to crafting its diversity statement, creating its bias response process, and providing DEI workshops for program facilitators. Her generous contributions to the program simply cannot be overstated.

literature, music, poetry, politics, social justice, mental health, the environment). The YAQ learning environment differs from traditional language learning spaces and university courses in that facilitators are not experts but are passionate about the subject and possess sufficient language skills and knowledge about it to lead the class. The formation of discussion groups is a dynamic process whereby interested facilitators share their academic and personal interests and – in discussion with program directors – settle on a course topic that is mutually interesting and beneficial. At minimum, there is one native speaker of Arabic and English on each facilitation team, and no more than four facilitators per group. Students usually become facilitators after participating in the program once or twice, which gives them sufficient insight into how the program works and how to structure discussion sessions. To ensure that facilitators are equipped with a set of tools for facilitation, they receive training in bilingual course facilitation as well as diversity, equity, and inclusion training to help prepare them for YAQ's diverse teaching and learning environment.

Within these semi-structured virtual spaces, participants are invited to switch freely between Arabic and English and to use whichever Arabic dialect they see fit. This freedom enables learners of both languages to interact fluidly and spontaneously, making it a great example of dynamic bi/plurilingual education (García and Li Wei, 2014). Such an approach uses a translanguaging framework, whereby dynamic multidialectal practices enhance students' learning experiences and cultural exposure. The crowd-sourced, collaborative ethos of YAQ disrupts traditional power dynamics that separate "teachers" and "students" because in this model, everyone is both a teacher and a learner. One of the ways this is accomplished is by adopting inclusive nomenclatures of "facilitator" and "participant." All are challenged and empowered in this anti-hierarchical learning model, where "the teacher then becomes the facilitator, creating opportunities for language use, and seeing herself not as the linguistic authority, but as another language learner" (García and Li Wei 2014, p. 229).

In YAQ's diverse classes, learners bring in the various perspectives of their cultures and communities. "In recognizing that students come to the classroom with linguistic knowledge that teachers may not have, translanguaging necessitates a co-learning space (Li Wei, 2013) where teachers and students learn from each other, and all learning practices are equally valued" (Vogel & García, 2017, p. 10). This view also "creates a social space for the multilingual user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience, and environment" (Li Wei, 2011, p. 1223).

At YAQ, all bi/plurilingual courses, discussion groups, and lectures are offered free of charge and are accessible through a smartphone, tablet, or computer. A fully volunteer organization,

YAQ provides a reciprocal exchange of knowledge, talent, time, and energy that hinges on the generosity of each contributing member. By providing free access to academic and social interactions and professional development in the target languages, YAQ seeks to transcend borders and overcome challenges posed by limiting factors, whether financial, social, or personal. Furthermore, students can participate from anywhere in the world without the external pressures of grades or tuition. YAQ disrupts traditional power dynamics that commodify education. In doing so, it follows hooks' call to challenge educational policies and practices that perpetuate what she refers to as "imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy" by rejecting traditional assumptions that associate value mainly or even only to that which requires money (hooks, 1994, p. 71). Participants and facilitators in the program often refer to the learning community they have co-created as a "family" ("'ā'ilat yallā al-quds") rather than a program.

To create positive language learning experiences for each member of its diverse community, YAQ has developed a set of core ethics and values that are consistently emphasized during facilitator training sessions and program-wide orientations. Service, engagement, reciprocity, respect, open-mindedness, equity, accessibility, and critical introspection are set forth as the core principles upon which all program activities are built. Furthermore, YAQ's transformative pedagogy promotes equity in our free virtual classes by bringing language minoritized students, i.e. Arabic speakers, together with majority language students, i.e. English speakers. This is a significant change from mainstream classes, where language-minoritized students' linguistic resources are often undervalued (Yilmaz, 2021, p. 436). García and Kano (2014) describe translanguaging as "a process by which students and teachers engage in complex discursive practices that include ALL the language practices of ALL students in a class in order to develop new language practices and sustain old ones, communicate and appropriately acknowledge, and give voice to new sociopolitical realities by interrogating linguistic inequality" (quoted in García and Li Wei, 2014, p. 225).

As mentioned, YAQ facilitators do not have to be experts in the course topic but rather need to create a safe container for exchange and dialogue in the target languages. Sometimes participants who join these online discussion groups are more well-versed in the course topic than the facilitators themselves, which can feel uncomfortable in an academic culture that emphasizes a hierarchical, unidirectional model in which language teachers are the possessors of knowledge and students are the recipients of knowledge. However, YAQ facilitators are encouraged to take a holistic and engaged pedagogical approach (hooks, 1994) by actively embracing an energy of humility and celebrating the unique skills and perspectives of each individual in the group.

The following section will further explore the defining characteristics of the YAQ program to better understand their impact on the learner experience, beginning with its multilingual and multidialectal learning environment.

Exposure Matters: The Benefits of Learning Arabic Multidialectically

The closest approximation to describing the linguistic situation in YAQ groups is receptive multilingualism, "where each speaker in the interaction uses their own language, but draws upon their knowledge and mutual understanding of the other speakers' languages to communicate" (Trentman & Shiri 2020, p. 111). This complex linguistic landscape might seem to pose too great a challenge to Arabic learners, particularly those with minimal Arabic background. However, existing research on the mutual intelligibility of Arabic dialects indicates that native Arabic speakers of different dialects are quite successful in understanding each other in cross-dialect conversations (Abu-Melhim, 2014; Al Masaeed, Čéplö et al. 2016; 2020; Shiri 2013; Soliman, 2014a, 2014b, Trentman, 2011; Trentman & Shiri, 2020). For example, Soliman found that Arabic speakers understand half of all lexical items that differed from their native dialect due to previous exposure through media or personal contacts (Soliman 2014a, 2014b). Contrary to theories suggesting that Arabic speakers of different dialects communicate with one another in MSA, research has revealed that speakers draw from a variety of MSA and dialectal resources to communicate (Abu-Melhim, 2014; S'hiri, 2002; Soliman, 2014a, 2014b). Taking this a step further, Trentman and Shiri found that this also applies to non-native speakers of Arabic, who are also quite capable of understanding unfamiliar varieties of Arabic (Trentman & Shiri 2020). Al Masaeed (2020) has demonstrated that Arabic learners who are non-native speakers use the same strategies used by Arabic speakers when speaking across dialects, such as guessing words from context or using the Arabic root and pattern system.

Given this high degree of intelligibility between dialects – among both native and non-native Arabic speakers – a multidialectal learning environment can strengthen the understanding of the language rather than weakening it. Furthermore, research has shown that learning one dialect helps with learning others (Shiri, 2013). The ability of students to understand multiple accents rests largely on extralinguistic factors, namely exposure and attitude (Gooskens, 2006, 2007, 2018). In a study on Germanic languages, Gooskens and Swarte (2017) found that the greatest predictor of mutual intelligibility was exposure. Thus, the exposure to different Arabic dialects that YAQ participants receive is transformative. For example, it allows them to hear words and sounds in different contexts (Gooskens et al., 2018), such as various pronunciations of the Arabic letter qaaf.

Learning multidialectically can also provide rich opportunities for cultural knowledge building through the negotiation of lexical knowledge and morphological content. Cross-dialect conversations in YAQ's language and culture exchange groups build intercultural understanding among participants, whether they are non-native speakers, heritage students, or native Arabic speakers. For example, participants in "Exploring Human Comedy" watched a Jordanian comedy sketch, which ended with the punchline "maramiyya," which means "sage" in Shaami dialect. Because the Shaami word for "sage" was unfamiliar to speakers of Moroccan dialect in the group, participants had to come together to negotiate the meaning of the word, eventually determining that the word for "sage" in darija was "silmiyya." Though the word for "sage" differed between dialects, there was consensus among the Jordanian, Palestinian, and Moroccan participants that the herb is steeped and drunk as tea when someone is sick. By zeroing in on questions of language, all participants were able to gain something, whether lexical items from another dialect or cultural knowledge about the topic at hand. "In these translanguaging spaces, linguistically diverse students are able to co-construct their languages expertise, recognize each other as resources, and act on their knowing, doing, and languaging" (García and Li Wei, 2015, p. 228)."

There are also advantages to a multilingual and multidialectal approach that have to do with learners' emotional states. YAQ discussion groups are attended by students of Arabic and English at varying levels of proficiency, and all spoken variants of these languages are welcomed. This situation diverges tremendously from traditional language classrooms, where students are expected to communicate in the target language exclusively. While there are benefits to an L2-exclusive classroom, it can impede students from being able to communicate their ideas fully or at all. When student communication in the target language breaks down, they can feel frustrated and stop speaking altogether. Students may judge themselves or feel shame for reverting to their native language. However, in a YAQ group, if a participant lapses into their native language, rather than feeling ashamed, they can feel good knowing that they are serving their fellow group members by giving them the opportunity to listen to a native speaker in their target language. When a native Arabic speaker's speech in the target language breaks down, they may revert to MSA or their dialect, which gives Arabic learners valuable opportunities for listening practice in multiple varieties and registers of Arabic. In short, this multilingual and multidialectal space challenges what Masaeed called a "top-down linguistic policy" (Al Masaeed, 2020, p. 262). As Wiley and García (2016) note, "a translanguaging policy would go a long way in bringing down the barriers between foreign language education and bilingual education because it gives equal footing to all language practices and considers their complex interrelationship" (p. 59).

Most first-time YAQ participants are not accustomed to learning within a multilingual space and getting used to this approach necessitates active discussion between group members. During the first meeting of the "Customs and Traditions Across Cultures" group, a participant from Saudi Arabia who spoke in Saudi dialect expressed trepidation about what language to use in the group. In response, one of the co-facilitators, a native Arabic speaker from Palestine, said the following: "Akeed, huwa bilingual program, fa-you can speak, ya3ni, you can choose 'arabi aw English, al-muhimm we are communicating." In the same group, when an Arabic learner who is a native speaker of English expressed fear about when to use Arabic or English, as well as anxiety about not knowing enough about the topic to express herself in the target language, the Palestinian co-facilitator said the following:

> ...this is the target, I guess, from our program. We should use the target language. For me, I use my native tongue, which is the Arabic. I faces many, many problems in the English, especially in the grammar. Bass, I'm trying to do my best. Wa-we can make mistakes ya3ni, and it's okay. At the end, we are all learning and we're trying to be like one family.

The unique structure of this program offers students opportunities to use language in practical, real-life interactions with native speakers of the target language. Research has shown that students are disappointed by pedagogical approaches that do not adequately prepare them for tackling real-life interactions. Furthermore, a multidialectal approach can help prepare students for multilingual situations they are sure to encounter in Arabic-speaking contexts, where colonial (e.g., English, French or Spanish) or indigenous languages (e.g., Tamazight in Morocco) are frequently used (Trentman & Shiri, 2020). Dynamic multilingual and multidialectal environments such as YAQ help learners develop metalinguistic awareness, which can help them achieve their language learning goals (Al Masaeed 2020; Shiri, 2015; Trentman, 2021; Tullock and Ortega, 2017).

We believe that the YAQ methodology has lessons to offer the field about the benefits of teaching and learning in a transnational, multilingual, and multidialectal space. So, we decided to test it. The following section will explore the impact of transnational, multilingual, and multidialectal learning spaces such as Yallah al-Quds on students' learning outcomes and experiences.

Methods

Instrument

The review utilized a web-based survey before and after the completion of the program with sections dedicated to background/demographic information, program enrollment (e.g., topic, knowledge on topic, target language, etc.), self-reported language levels, self-reported confidence in the target language, program goals, and reflections. We tested four competencies (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). While YAQ's pedagogical model mainly focuses on speaking and listening, we included reading and writing because these skills were also being activated in our classes. Two terms also included a survey on multidialectalism. Responses were collected using the Qualtrics program, and the survey took less than 15 minutes for the participants to complete. The survey was available in both English and Arabic.

Participants

The surveys were constructed for each individual program term (summer, fall, and spring) and were shared by coordinators and group facilitators with participants before the program began and at its conclusion. The specific terms included for analysis were summer 2020, fall 2020, spring 2021, summer 2021, fall 2021, spring 2022, and summer 2022. A total of 331 responses from the general pre-program survey and 93 responses from the general post-program survey were recorded (Table 1). Only 50 respondents completed both the general pre- and post-program surveys for the same term, which were used for some of the analyses relating to individual language growth. Within the multidialectalism survey, there were 69 pre-program survey responses and 27 post-program survey responses, and only 9 participants completed both the pre- and post-program surveys for their attended term. For the open-ended questions relating to pre-program goals and post-program reflections, 294 pre-program responses and 53 post-program responses were included because they included substantial information for analysis.

Respondents accurately represented the linguistic, geographic, and age diversity of the program. In the pre-program survey responses (n = 301), 54.5% of participants' target language was Arabic (n = 161) and 45.5% was English (n = 137). 325 participants identified their location: 46.4% of participants were from the United States of America (n = 151), 31.7% from Morocco (n = 103), 9.9% from Palestine (n = 32), 3.1% from Jordan (n = 10), and the remaining students were from assorted countries (n = 27). The median age was 22, with 50% of the participants falling within the 20-25 age range, with a minimum of 16 years old and a maximum of 67 years old (n = 325).

Table 1. Select participant demographic info for those who completed the self-reported pre- and post-program surveys.

Description	**Breakdown**
YAQ Terms of Study	Summer 2020 Fall 2020 Spring 2021 Summer 2021 Fall 2021 Spring 2022 Summer 2022
Total Responses (General Pre- and Post-Program Survey)	Pre-program survey participants n = 331 Post-program survey participants n = 93 Participants who completed both pre- and post-program surveys n = 50
Total Responses (Multidialectalism Pre- and Post-Program Survey)	Pre-program survey participants n = 69 Post-program survey participants n = 27

	Participants who completed both pre- and post-program surveys n = 9
Participant Target Language	Total: n = 301 Arabic: 54.5% (n = 161) English: 45.4% (n = 137)
Participant Country of Origin	Total: n = 325 United States of America: 46.4% (n = 151) Morocco: 31.7% (n = 103) Palestine: 9.9% (n = 32) Jordan: 3.1% (n = 10) Other: 8.9% (n = 27)

Analysis

To conduct a review of the novel language learning program and determine the preliminary efficacy of the program in multidialectal, multilingual, and multicultural spaces, we utilized a mixed methods approach of data analysis, uncovering basic self-reported quantitative outcomes and participants' self-reported expectations and reflections.

Data were compiled based on participants' responses to scaled questions both before (pre-program) and after (post-program) the completion of their YAQ term.

Due to the limited number of participants who completed both surveys for the term they attended, the research team decided to include both the analysis of the group as a whole pre- and post-program as well as a matched pairs design with individual participants' change in scores from pre-program to post-program. Both methods were combined to help collect preliminary findings with the data provided. All quantitative data was self-reported and therefore not indicative of the participants' true language learning growth; rather, due to limited

resources, self-reported levels were analyzed to determine program benefits from a student-centered approach.

Descriptive analysis of the data included calculating the means, standard deviations, mean difference, and standard error depending on the sample. Statistical analysis for the overall pre- and post-program analysis was conducted through a t-test and multidialectalism data was analyzed using a Wilcoxon signed-rank test (due to small sample size) with an alpha value set at 0.05 for statistical significance. Any data at or around $p \backsimeq 0.10$ was considered as trending towards statistical significance, but not statistically significant. For matched pairs, a paired t-test was used. Correlations were calculated between self-reported outcome level in the target language, confidence in the target language, and likeliness to re-enroll in the program and variables including the number of hours spent studying during the term, the number of classes attended, and the number of years of study in the target language.

Thematic analysis of the open-ended responses from the pre- and post-program surveys included a selective coding of the goals/expectations for the program in the pre-program survey and reflections from the post-program survey. These codes were selected based on the program objectives set by the YAQ leadership team and researchers. The codes for the goals/expectations in the pre-program survey included: 1) more practice and/or language growth, 2) real-life experience, global perspective, and/or native speaker interactions, 3) learning about new topics, 4) increased confidence, 5) creating interpersonal connections and/or making new friends, and 6) applying the target language in context. The codes for the reflections in the post-program survey included: 1) maintenance and/or growth in target language, 2) learning about new topics, 3) global perspective, 4) felt too challenged and/or didn't engage enough, 5) increased connections and/or made new friends, and 6) having fun. Coded responses were counted, and frequencies of specific themes were totaled throughout all of the responses. Example phrases and sentences were also selected within each theme and listed in supplemental tables (S.Table 1 & 2), to provide clarity for how these codes were applied to various English and Arabic phrases/sentences.

Results

Self-reported confidence in the target language increased after completion of the program.

Results from self-reported scores from all pre- and post-program participants showed a significant increase in self-reported confidence by almost one point ($p = 0.0041$; Table 2). All four competencies (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) in the target language of

participants trended towards an improvement of about 0.5 points ($p \simeq 0.10$). Self-reported level, based on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) language levels, did not show a significant increase.

Table 2. Overall pre- and post-program self-reported level, competencies (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), and confidence.

	Pre	Post	p-value
Self-Reported Level	5.37 (5.13 – 5.61)	5.63 (5.19 – 6.08)	0.32
Speaking	5.48 (5.22 – 5.74)	5.95 (5.46 – 6.44)	0.11
Listening	6.22 (5.94 – 6.50)	6.78 (6.29 – 7.27)	0.07
Reading	6.34 (6.06 – 6.62)	6.92 (6.40 – 7.44)	0.07
Writing	5.56 (5.30 – 5.83)	6.10 (5.57 – 6.64)	0.08
Confidence	5.64 (5.40 – 5.89)	6.45 (5.97 – 6.93)	0.0041*

Note: A total of 424 responses were collected, with 331 pre-program survey responses and 93 post-program responses. Data were analyzed for the mean of each set and a 95% confidence interval, and a single star (*) indicates significant differences between pre- and post-program means ($p < 0.05$) as determined from the t-test.

When results were blocked by individuals and reanalyzed only for those who completed both the pre- and post-program survey for the term they attended (Table 3), there were significant increases in self-reported level ($p = 0.0300$), listening ($p = 0.0175$) and reading ($p = 0.0250$) competencies, and confidence ($p = 0.0039$). Speaking competency trended towards an increase in self-reported evaluation ($p = 0.0537$).

Table 3. Individual changes pre- and post-program for self-reported level, competencies (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), and confidence.

	Mean Difference	Standard Error	P value
Self-Reported Level	0.36	0.16	0.0300*
Speaking	0.48	0.24	0.0537
Listening	0.70	0.28	0.0175*
Reading	0.50	0.22	0.0250*
Writing	0.14	0.26	0.5909
Confidence	0.72	0.24	0.0039*

Note: A total of 50 responses were collected from participants who completed both the pre- and post-survey and analyzed in a matched pair model. Data were analyzed for the mean difference of each set and standard error, and a single star (*) indicates significant differences between pre- and post-program means ($p < 0.05$) as determined from a paired t-test.

The number of years studying the target language was positively correlated with participant success, rather than engagement (attendance and hours dedicated) in the program.

No major correlations were found between the continuous variables for the number of classes participants attended from the session or how many hours per week they spent doing work outside of the course compared to the self-reported levels post-program. However, the number of years a participant had studied their target language was positively correlated with their self-reported level ($r = 0.4764$) and their confidence ($r = 0.6307$). Students were more likely to re-enroll in the program if they had studied the target language for longer ($r = -0.3824$).

Overall self-reported familiarity and comprehension in MSA, Levantine, and Moroccan dialects trended towards an increase after completion of the program.

No differences in overall self-reported familiarity and comprehension in MSA, Levantine, and Moroccan dialects were statistically significant; however, select competencies in each dialect trended towards significance ($p \leq 0.10$) (Table 3). For MSA, participants noted an increase in speaking comprehension of about one point from pre- to post-program ($p = 0.07$). In Levantine dialect, general familiarity ($p = 0.09$) and speaking comprehension ($p = 0.07$) trended towards an increase of almost a point for each. For the Moroccan dialect, familiarity with the dialect ($p = 0.07$) and speaking competency ($p = 0.08$) trended towards a self-reported increase of about one point.

Table 4. Overall pre- and post-program self-reported familiarity, listening, and speaking competency for various dialects.

	Pre	Post	P-value
Primary dialect spoken at home (any)			
Listening	6.26 (5.49 – 7.03)	7.19 (5.91 – 8.47)	0.12
Speaking	7.06 (6.31 – 7.80)	7.78 (6.57 – 8.99)	0.16
MSA			
Familiarity	7.09 (6.53 – 7.65)	7.59 (6.72 – 8.47)	0.17
Listening	7.29 (6.70 – 7.89)	8.22 (7.30 – 9.14)	0.0508
Speaking	6.38 (5.76 – 7.00)	7.33 (6.27 – 8.39)	0.07
Levantine			
Familiarity	5.01 (4.40 – 5.62)	5.96 (4.72 – 7.20)	0.09

Listening	5.84 (5.21 – 6.48)	6.30 (5.08 – 7.52)	0.26
Speaking	4.16 (3.58 – 4.75)	5.26 (3.99 – 6.53)	0.07
Moroccan			
Familiarity	5.23 (4.28 – 6.18)	6.44 (5.14 – 7.74)	0.07
Listening	5.30 (4.39 – 6.27)	6.48 (5.20 – 7.76)	0.08
Speaking	5.07 (4.09 – 6.05)	5.59 (4.12 – 7.06)	0.28

Note: A total of 96 responses were collected, with 69 pre-program survey responses and 27 post-program responses. Participants were asked to rate their familiarity, listening, and speaking comprehension of the primary dialect spoken in their home, as well as their familiarity, listening, and speaking comprehension of MSA, Levantine dialect, and Moroccan dialect. Data were analyzed for the mean of each set and a 95% confidence interval, and a single star (*) indicates significant differences between pre- and post-program means ($p < 0.05$) as determined from a t-test.

The preliminary data for the individual self-reported familiarity and comprehension in MSA, Levantine, and Moroccan dialects shows promise but lack a sufficient sample size (Table 5). For MSA, the self-reported listening comprehension trended towards an increase of 0.67 points ($p = 0.08$), whereas for the Levantine dialect, the listening comprehension trended towards a point decrease pre- and post-program ($p = 0.12$). For the Moroccan dialect, responses trended towards an increase of over one point and up to 1.44 points for familiarity, listening, and speaking competencies ($p = 0.12$, $p = 0.08$, $p = 0.12$, respectively). Table 5 utilized a matched pair model to analyze individual changes pre- and post-program self-reported familiarity, listening, and speaking competency for various dialects; however, there were only 9 complete responses. This data set is extremely limited, and strong statistical analysis cannot be completed; therefore, Table 5 should only serve as preliminary data to be further explored.

Table 5. Individual changes pre- and post-program self-reported familiarity, listening, and speaking competency for various dialects.

	Mean Difference	Standard Error	P value
Dialect spoken at home			
Listening Comp.	0.22	0.22	0.42
Speaking comp	0.11	0.20	0.18
MSA			
Familiarity	0.11	0.20	0.54
Listening Comp.	0.67	0.33	0.22
Speaking comp	0	0.33	0.42
Levantine			
Familiarity	-0.11	0.31	0.22
Listening Comp.	-1.0	0.58	0.68
Speaking comp	0.11	0.45	0.16
Moroccan			

Familiarity	1.44	0.83	0.96
Listening Comp.	1.11	0.56	0.95
Speaking comp	1.44	0.84	0.81

Note: A total of 9 responses were collected from participants who completed both the pre- and post-survey and analyzed in a matched pair model. Participants were asked to rate their familiarity, listening, and speaking comprehension of the primary dialect spoken in their home, as well as their familiarity, listening, and speaking comprehension of MSA, Levantine dialect, and Moroccan dialect. Data were analyzed for the mean difference of each set and standard error, and a single star (*) indicates significant differences between pre- and post-program means ($p < 0.05$) as determined from a Wilcoxon signed-rank test.

Participants in the program expected they would improve their self-reported language skills, gain real-world exposure, and learn new things, and the program met these expectations.

The frequencies of responses to the open-ended questions regarding pre-program expectations and goals in the six main thematic codes were the following (n = 294):

1. More Practice/Language Growth: 66.33% (n = 195)
2. Real Life/Global Perspectives/Native Speaker Interactions: 43.88% (n = 129)
3. Learning About New Topics: 34.69% (n = 102)
4. Increased Confidence: 27.21% (n = 80)
5. Connections/Making New Friends: 20.07% (n = 59)
6. Application of Language: 12.93% (n = 38)

The frequencies of responses to the open-ended questions regarding post-program reflections through the six main thematic codes were the following (n = 53):

1. Maintained/Grew in Language Comprehension: 54.72% (n = 29)
2. Learned About New Topics: 35.85% (n = 19)

3. Global Perspectives: 26.42% (n = 14)
4. Felt Too Challenged/Didn't Engage Enough: 22.64% (n = 12)
5. Increased Confidence: 20.75% (n = 11)
6. Had Fun: 11.32% (n = 6)

The top three themes for both pre- and post-program open-ended responses were consistent across both surveys (language growth, global perspectives, and learning new things). Examples of these phrases are in Supplemental Tables 1 and 2.

Discussion

Ultimately, the preliminary benefits of the novel multilingual/multidialectal approach of YAQ have promising implications for both teachers and learners. The following section will discuss our research results in relation to the literature and highlight various techniques and strategies for language instructors that may prove beneficial to supplementing existing language learning techniques.

Arabic/Language instructors should consider judicious incorporation of multiple languages and dialects into their classrooms

Following a translanguaging perspective, the authors advocate for an inclusive Arabic classroom where all students' linguistic repertoires are welcomed, including multiple Arabic dialects. As the literature shows, such a classroom environment mirrors the multidialectical nature of the Arabic-speaking world. Non-native speakers of Arabic thrive in a multilingual and multidialectal environment that emphasizes and necessitates collaboration, co-creation, and mutual respect. Furthermore, a multilingual and multidialectal model enhances learners' social, emotional, cognitive, and linguistic development both inside and outside the classroom (see Tables 4 and 5). Therefore, Arabic language educators should not be afraid of incorporating multiple dialects into their classrooms, especially early on in students' Arabic language learning journey. Translanguaging can help to "increase bilingual students' metalinguistic awareness and to create a comfortable learning environment which builds on students' funds of linguistic and cultural knowledge" (Yilmaz, 2021, p. 442). The exposure that Arabic learners receive in a multidialectal environment is highly beneficial to their learning and will benefit them in the long term.

Arabic/Language instructors could benefit from adopting a democratic, cooperative, peer-to-peer model of education

A collaborative, peer-to-peer model of education is empowering for learners because it fosters empathy, reciprocity, and mutual understanding between participants. By cultivating a collaborative ethos in the classroom, where students help and support one another, teachers can create a positive atmosphere. Not only does this help students feel more at ease, but it also increases engagement. Because YAQ courses are the result of team members' personal vision and collaborative design, they reflect the current, evolving, and diverse interests and perspectives of its team members. In these translanguaging spaces, "linguistically diverse students are able to co-construct their language expertise, recognize each other as resources, and act on their knowing, doing, and languaging" (García and Li Wei, 2014, p. 228). When learners themselves play an active part in selecting topics of study, they are more invested and motivated, which has a positive impact on language acquisition (see Tables 2 and 3). As hooks states, "Making the classroom a democratic setting where everyone feels a responsibility to contribute is a central goal of transformational pedagogy" (hooks 1994, p. 39). Not only are students challenged cognitively in these dynamic learning spaces, but they are able to develop a more sophisticated metalinguistic awareness (García and Li Wei, 2014).

Arabic/Language instructors should strive to create safe and inclusive educational environments

Instructors should adopt pedagogical approaches that create a safe learning atmosphere where all students feel more at ease to collaborate and be creative. One way to do this it to allow all learners to bring their full linguistic repertoire into the language learning space. This opens up "third spaces" where "bilinguals can construct their unique identities collaboratively" (Yilmaz, 2021, p. 446). In some cases, this requires a full-scale transformation of our teaching styles. To quote hooks, "…if the effort to respect and honor the social reality and experiences of groups in this society who are nonwhite is to be reflected in a pedagogical process, then as teachers–on all levels, from elementary to university settings–we must acknowledge that our styles of teaching may need to change" (hooks 1994, p. 35). Through translanguaging, YAQ courses become transformative spaces for critical and creative learning (Garcia and Li Wei, 2014), where multilingual and multidialectal speakers engage in dynamic multilingualism, relish moments of metalinguistic commentary, and build metalinguistic awareness. This translanguaing approach also has the potential to build socio-emotional bonds between participants and facilitators, transforming the relations of power between teachers and students by providing opportunities for students to challenge language hierarchies and inequalities in the

wider world. Translanguaging pedagogies open up space for students to engage in sensitive and important topics and take risks to express themselves in developing languages.

Conclusion

This study has shown that a multilingual and multidialectal approach to language teaching and learning shows promise through this novel online language program, and we believe it could be a model for teaching Arabic in innovative and supplemental ways. A multilingual and multidialectal program can offer students of Arabic many benefits: 1) opportunities to meaningfully connect with native speakers and learners of Arabic; 2) exposure to different Arabic dialects without having to study abroad; 3) awareness of the multiglossic nature of communication in Arabic, and 4) building of metalinguistic awareness.

The mission of the YAQ model is to bring new experiences to language learners in a low barrier, high accessibility framework. As the self-reported outcomes and reflections from the program show, the YAQ model achieved this aim. This pedagogy is student-centered, as reflected in the data, and the students who completed this program acknowledged their self-reported growth and benefit of the program, demonstrating that the program was successful with the limited resources available to it.

The success of the YAQ model demonstrates the value of technology-mediated learning environments, which can complement international study abroad programs and traditional university courses by creating opportunities for continued education within a multidialectal space. YAQ's unique pedagogic model offers learners a platform to connect and co-create learning environments that promote language learning, self-discovery, and a global perspective. By sharing information and experiences, facilitators can build friendships and professional networks and support one another in achieving their academic, professional, and personal goals.

As this was a preliminary review of a novel program, there are many limitations from the data collected that do not allow for analysis of program efficacy in all aspects of regular program review. First, all data collected was self-reported from students who completed the program. Although this data gives perspective on how students felt before and after completing a YAQ course, it does not provide any conclusions on the program's efficacy in terms of language acquisition. The open responses were a preliminary exploration of themes from student reflections and leave more room for in depth analysis in future evaluations and research. In the future, with more resources, a complete review of the program including oral proficiency interviews (OPIs) and written examinations pre- and post-program would help in determining

the efficacy of the program from a language learning perspective. Nevertheless, this was a preliminary review of a novel program, and the data collected gives basic insight into a new pedagogical model that prompts continued investigation to determine if it could be a practical language learning model. Second, the paper did not fully address another important element of translanguaging, namely its ability to address power imbalances and thereby promote social justice by treating all forms of language equally. A suggestion for future research is to examine how language models such as YAQ can promote social justice within academic settings.

Ultimately, this research demonstrates the effectiveness of this open, peer-to-peer pedagogic method. Unlike language programs that adopt unidirectional models, YAQ prioritizes reciprocity and mutual engagement, and every member is afforded the opportunity to contribute, create, and thrive. With this set of values, YAQ program participants and facilitators can learn from one another in a respectful and cooperative manner while improving their Arabic or English language proficiency, gaining new perspectives, and forging meaningful connections. If we are to truly recognize and celebrate cultural diversity, educators must radically reimagine and deconstruct old epistemologies. By laying bare the intersections of systemic formations that hinder the forward progress of peace and justice, we can transform our students and, in the process, be transformed ourselves.

"The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom" (hooks 1994, p. 207).

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Appendices

Appendix A: Supplemental Tables

Supplemental Table 1. Examples of pre-program survey open-ended responses for the six different coding themes.

Code	**Example Statements/Phrases**
More Practice/Language Growth	"...improve my English language…" "Bring regular Arabic practice back into my life." "Advancing my Arabic speaking skills…" "...gain exposure to Arabic" "...supplement my full time Arabic class." "...get back into practicing." "... improving my conversational Arabic…" "تطوير مهارة التحدث." "تطوير اللغة الانجليزية..." "تفعيل لغتي الإنجليزية..."
Real Life/Global Perspective/Native Interactions	"...speaking to native speakers." "...increase my knowledge of other Arabic dialects…" "...learning about media from perspectives that aren't solely western." "...hearing from students in other places & cultural contexts about their communities' understanding of mental health & how they think it can be better addressed." "Exchanging ideas about identity and culture…" "...participate in a cross-cultural exchange."

	"...let people know about Arabic (and Moroccan) culture." "...gaining cross-cultural competency." "I want to become more aware of Arab cultures…" "Learning about topics from a global perspective." "...broaden my horizon…" "...التعرف على ثقافات أخرى." "...والتعرف على ثقافات العالم." "...وأفكار من منظور عالمي."
Learning About New Topics	"...enjoy learning new things." "Acquire new knowledge…" "...interested to learn about how to speak about the topic in Arabic." "I will learn more about a subject I'm interested in…" "I especially want to learn the vocabulary to be able to discuss such an important topic in Arabic." "I am also eager to learn about anti-blackness in the MENA region because I've never learned about this before. It will be good to learn the vocabulary necessary to discuss this in Arabic." "... learn more about cinema in a way related to other similar passions of mine." "...أريد التعرف على الموضوعات المطروحة وأن أعرف أكثر فيما يخص الصحة النفسية." "...التعرف على الموضوعات …"
Increase Confidence	"Feeling more confident…"

	"Becoming more confident speaking Arabic…" "Feel more comfortable speaking…" "I aim to build my confidence in speaking Arabic…" "I want to gain confidence in my Arabic again and prepare for a Fall internship in Morocco." "...regain some of the confidence in Arabic that I have lost over the last few months." "Feeling more comfortable argumenting in my non-native languages…" "الثقة للتكلم أمام الحضور بالإنجليزية." "... التحدث بثقة..." "...كسر حاجز الخوف..." "تقوية المهارة في التحدث..."
Connections/Make New Friends	"...connecting with others…" "...getting to know new people and cultures." "...get to know people from different cultures." "...I look forward to the integration!" "I enrolled in this program because I want to know and discover new people." "I want to get involved with community outreach…" "...form relationships with others around the country and world…" "My goal for this program is to connect with others who are interested in learning the same things that I am." "I also want to widen my range of social connections to include international friends."

	"I would love to meet and connect with people around the world and learn more [about] spirituality." "...meeting new people from around the world." "...meet new people and volunteer to help people." "التعرف على ناس جدد..." "التعرف على أصديقاء جدد ..." "...التعرف على أشخاص جدد..." "...التعرف على الأشخاص من بلد آخر وتقوية العلاقات حتى نصبح أصدقاء حتى بعد انتهاء البرنامج ..."
Application of Language	"...use English in real life." "Activating my Arabic…" "...also to express my ideas and thoughts in English when I need to." "...which deals with more complex socio-political topics." "I am also excited to learn to utilize and strengthen my Arabic skills outside of classroom activities!" "...be able to utilize [the target language] with varying engaging topics." "I want to get more experience speaking about political and social topics…" "...simulate immersion as much as possible." "I'm excited for this opportunity to develop my language skills for more specific professional contexts…" "...learn some vocabulary about what's been going on so I can have informed discussions with my Palestinian and Jordanian friends about Israeli apartheid."

	"...increased skill/competency navigating emotionally & intellectually challenging topics in Arabic." "تفعيل التواصل باللغة الإنجليزية." "نعم اريد تفعيل اللغة الهدف ..."

Supplemental Table 2. Examples of post-program survey open-ended responses for the six different coding themes.

Code	**Example Statements/Phrases**
Maintained/Grew in Language	"Continuing my educational, professional, and volunteering journey was the goal of this opportunity." "I definitely feel like I grew more competent with activating professional vocabulary/phraseology and professional interpersonal communication." "It was a success to keep me engaged in Arabic and communicating at least once a week." "... to continue to practice my Arabic and I felt that I accomplished this goal." "Yes, I got lots of practice speaking, listening, and learning from others…" "...this program really helped me keep hold of my Arabic and even improve it in ways I didn't think I would in only a month of classes." "إني استفدت من هذا البرنامج دروس كثيرة في الإنجليزية [...] وهدفي من هذا البرنامج هو تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية." "... تمكنت من تنمية مهارة الاستماع والتحدث باللغة الانجليزية..."

Learned About New Topics	"I believe my goal was to increase my Arabic vocabulary…" "I have learnt a lot of interesting information…" "I'm very happy with the general knowledge about food and cultures I learned…" "...while learning in general about the topic." "I learned a lot about the inclusion of music in social movements…" "I even got to learn/practice typing in Arabic on a keyboard which I have never done before." "I wanted to learn more about anxiety and panic disorder and I was able to do that and learn even more than I expected." "...وتعلمت مهارات جديدة..."
Global Perspective	"More importantly, I opened my eyes to the diversity that we have, so I learned to embrace this fact and build on it for better interpersonal communication skills." "...and to learn more about how others are approaching the issue in their own cultural context." "...I discovered a lot of things about American culture." "...getting to know new people and [integrating] their insights and experiences with my own." "...meet new people with different backgrounds…" "...I got to practice Arabic with both native and non-native speakers." "...وهو التواصل بالانجليزية مع متحدثين أصليين..." "تعرفت على ثقافات أخرى [...] سعيدة كيف أن الفن جمعنا جميعا رغم اختلاف لغتنا وثقافتنا."

	"هدفي كان عدم الخوف من التحدث مع المتحدثين الأصليين والآن حققت هذا الهدف."
Felt Too Challenged/Didn't Engage Enough	"I did speak, but maybe not as much as I would have [liked]. [...] the temptation to speak in English when stuck is strong and sometimes I failed to overcome it." "I felt I could have made more progress, I felt I was a bit in over my head sometimes and it was almost too challenging [and] it was difficult to improve." "Maybe my English level [hasn't improved] so much because I wasn't [concentrating] on that…" "...but I wish I was able to learn more. It was my fault that I did not complete several homework assignments. Had I done them, I would have gotten even more out of the class." "... ولكن المدة الزمنية لم تكن كافية بالنسبة لي." "لا نظرا لانشغالي وتكاسلي نوعا ما." "لم احقق هدفي كليا لكن كنت محظوظة ايضا بصنع صداقات من نفس بلدي."
Increased Confidence	"I am now more comfortable in front of my computer thanks to the virtual nature of the program." "[...] to get more confident in listening and speaking, which I did." "I am more confident speaking and I didn't get very rusty. I was very happy with the program." "I achieved more confidence in my speaking abilities, particularly in formal settings." "هدفي كان عدم الخوف من التحدث مع المتحدثين الأصليين والآن حققت هذا الهدف."

Had Fun	"I signed up as a participant to unleash my humorous side, and I did. I discovered so many things about myself." "...was enrolled in "Art & Creativity" program, [...] many brave members and creatives, and also directors were so humble and creative too." "...I loved the discussions in the class." "It was a great experience ! Can't wait for the next program's season!!" "...سعيدة كيف أن الفن جمعنا جميعا رغم اختلاف لغتنا وثقافتنا."