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ARABIC DIGLOSSIA AND ARABIC AS A FOREGN LANGUAG: THE PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS IN WORLD LEARNING OMAN CENTER

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PIM 69

A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in International Education at the SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

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Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES ..... **iv**

LIST OF ACRONYMS ANDABBREVIATIONS ..... **v**

GLOSSARY OF ARABIC WORDS ..... **vi**

ABSTRACT **1**

1. Introduction: **2**

2. Literature Review: **4**

2.1. What is Diglossia? 4

2.2. Arabic as a Foreign Language: 6

2.3 Pedagogical Implications: 7

2.4. Impact on the learners' experience 13

3. Research Methodology: **14**

3.1 The site 14

3.2 The participants 16

3.3. Data Collection: 17

3.4 Subjectivity and limitations: 20

3.5 Data Processing: 21

4. **Data Analysis and Discussion**: **22**

4.1. A look at the survey results: 23

4.2. Awareness of the issue of diglossia: 25

4.3. Impact on motivation: 29

4.4. Impact on learning (confusion): 33

4.5 Impact on interaction with native speakers: 38

4.6 Attitude toward the issue of diglossia and the language: 42

4.7. Discussion 48

5. Conclusion: **50**

Bibliography **52**

Appendix A: Survey Questions and answers (from website) 54

Appendix B1: Focus Group 1 questions 64

Appendix B2: Focus Group 2 questions 65

Appendix B3: Focus Group 3 questions 66

Appendix C: Interview 1 questions 67

Appendix D: Data coding example 71

LIST OF TABLES

Page **Table**

1. Participants' breakdown according to program and participation…….. 17

LIST OF ACRONYMS ANDABBREVIATIONS

ACTFL:	American Association on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
ALAM:	Arabic Language around Muscat
CA:	Classical Arabic
MGM:	Master of Global Management
MLA:	Modern Language Association
MSA:	Modern Standard Arabic
NMERLC:	National Middle East Resource Center
SITSA:	SIT Study Abroad program in Oman
TAFL:	Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language
WLOC:	World Learning Oman Center

GLOSSARY OF ARABIC WORDS

(Appear italicized in text)

fuSHa: the Standard Arabic, it means the most eloquent speech.

‘*amiya*: vernacular/ colloquial

souq: market (usually traditional market)

Khaliji: Gulf Arabic

ABSTRACT

The principle objective of this independent inquiry is to address the research question: *what are the impacts of Arabic Diglossia, if any, on the experience of learners of Arabic as a foreign language?* The study attempts to answer this question through the perception of a sample group of 23 learners studying Arabic as a foreign language in World Learning Oman Center in semester of Spring 2011.

Diglossia is defined by linguists as a sociolinguistic phenomenon in which a particular language has two varieties, one of which is considered High and more standard and used in exclusive domains, while the other is considered Low and used for communicative purposes and may differ geographically. Arabic is seen to be one of the strongest examples of world languages that show this phenomenon operating in one written variety, Modern Standard Arabic, that is used all over the Arabic-speaking world, while multiple spoken dialects are used for communication in different Arab countries. This phenomenon is very relevant to learning Arabic as a foreign language. In the World Learning Oman center, the participants are first surveyed online. This is followed by three separate focus groups that involve all the participants partaking in the survey. Further investigation is done through three individual interviews with alumni of World Learning programs currently living in Oman. The inquiry methodology is semi-structured in a way that is focused but leaves room for themes to emerge to capture the perception of the learner.

It is concluded that Arabic diglossia is indeed an impactful factor in learning Arabic as a foreign language. It is especially impactful while learning Arabic in a native country. The data proves that students of Arabic in Oman are aware of Arabic diglossia and its impact on their learning. The awareness level varies according to the language level, with awareness level going higher as the student moves up in the language level. Similar correlation is found to be true with confusion with Arabic diglossia; the higher level students coped better with this reality while lower level students tended to be confused about it. Similarly, the level of interaction with the speech community increases as the learner became more confident in handling the diglossic reality. Higher level students were more comfortable with their personal goals and focuses in learning Arabic and start to appropriately use both MSA and the dialect in different settings. Most participants agree on the value of learning both MSA and spoken dialect for the learner.

1. Introduction:

Arabic is a diglossic language. This means that it consists of two different varieties; one High variety that is formal and is mainly written while the other Low variety is spoken and is used in daily life. This Low variety differs from an Arabic country to another making the wide array of Arabic dialects. There has been much literature written in description of the different Arabic Dialects or colloquials. Most of these divisions tend to group the dialects geographically, as in Levantine Arabic, Gulf Arabic, Egyptian Arabic and Maghrib (North African) Arabic. Some argue for a distinctive Arabic for each Arab country, e.g. Moroccan Arabic, Tunisian Arabic, Omani Arabic etc. Even the terms are contested between Egyptian Dialect or Egyptian colloquial or Egyptian Arabic. This scholarly debate is well beyond the boundaries of sociolinguistics. It is indeed cultural and political in the academic circles in the Arab world and elsewhere.

This phenomenon clearly poses huge challenges and many questions arise. Are we teaching one language or two at the same time? What variety do we teach, Modern Standard Arabic or dialects? And if a dialect is to be taught, which dialect is most useful to the learner? Which dialect is more "learnable" and why? And above all, how do we introduce the learner to this linguistic reality of Arabic as a diglossic language? These questions become more valid while teaching Arabic in a native environment where it is apparent not only that two verities exist but also many intermediate forms of the language in between the two. Would that demotivate the learner at all? There has been literature and studies in the issue since the 1960s especially in teaching Arabic as a foreign language in the United States. Different approaches developed to teaching Arabic as a foreign language in the US; the classical Arabic approach, the Modern

Standard Arabic (MSA) approach, the colloquial approach, the Middle Language approach, and the simultaneous approach.

Thus, this paper poses the question; ***what is the perception of Arabic diglossia in the mind of students of Arabic as a foreign language in World Learning Center in Oman? And how did this phenomenon impact their experience with learning Arabic?***

Recognizing the width of the topic, this paper reviews the relevant literature in the fields of sociolinguistics and teaching Arabic as a foreign language as far as it takes to set the wider context and theoretical framework in which this study takes place. More focus is given to the context of studying Arabic in a native environment, since this study takes place in Oman, an Arabic speaking country.

This study hopes to provide first-hand qualitative and descriptive data on the experience of learning Arabic in a native environment in relation to the issue of diglossia. The researcher, based on the relevant literature reviewed personal experience and observation, held a presumption that there is an impact on the learner's experience with Arabic, and that diglossia is a relevant variable in teaching Arabic as a foreign language.

This research will limit its scope to the experience of learners of Arabic while they are in a native environment namely in World Learning Oman Center in Muscat, Oman. Setting its context, this research will study a small group of learners of Arabic in a native environment in an attempt of providing rich empirical data to describe the relation between Arabic diglossia and learning Arabic.

2. Literature Review:

This issue of diglossia in Arabic could be understood best as an interdisciplinary issue of inquiry. Diglossia is the sociolinguistic phenomenon that exists when a language has two different varieties that are used in different domains of language use. Arabic is one of the typical examples of this phenomenon in world languages today. Thus, this study attempts to look at the issue from different angles. First, a review of the relevant literature will provide a better understanding and definition of the phenomenon from a linguistic, mostly sociolinguistic, point of view. Next, a brief overview of the field of teaching Arabic as a foreign language will be provided. A brief introduction into this field will suffice to situate the academic position of this study since it emerged from the practical experience of the researcher as a teacher in the field. A more lengthy discussion is then given to the pedagogical implications of diglossia in the field of language teaching. The literature review ends with a look at the experience of the learners of Arabic with diglossia. Given the stated research question, a more extensive discussion of this specific dimension is very relevant and essential to the question at hand.

2.1. What is Diglossia?

Some discussion on the terminology is important for non-specialized readers. Diglossia is a term introduced by the American linguist Charles Ferguson in a landmark study in 1959 and he defines it as

> "a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety- the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature either of an earlier period or in another speech community- that is learned largely by means of formal education and used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversations (….). The superposed variety is the High (H) variety and the regional dialect is the Low (L) variety"

(Ferguson 1959: 336)

Ferguson argued that Arabic is one of few languages that exhibited this reality and that it is the most classic example of the coexistence, side by side, of a high variety that is mainly written, literary and formal language that displays a high degree of uniformity around the Arab countries, and low varieties which are mainly spoken dialects that are seldom codified and are used for daily life communication and vary widely around the geography and communities of the Arab world. "Each regional variety of spoken Arabic represents a unique culture and people." (Palmer 2007:113). This makes each one unique and also "each spoken variety differ more and more significantly from each other the further away one goes from one's place of origin." (Palmer 2007:113). The argument is that this is not a case of different registers that are different in the level of formality between formal and informal, but rather two different varieties.

This view had been contested as oversimplified (Al Batal, 1992), so another model of explanation was proposed that views Arabic variation in terms of a continuum of language varieties (Fakhri, 1995). A number or scholars after Ferguson such as Blanc 1960; Badawi; 1973; el-Hassan 1977 Mitchell 1978 Meisels 1980 (all cited in Al Batal, 1992) and (Younes, 2006) attempted to define these complex levels of Arabic beyond the simplified High and Low dichotomy. The current study echoes the Al Batal study that "it does not aim to define these different levels [but rather] recognize the existence of these levels and the complexities they pose for the linguistic situation in Arabic." (Al Batal 1992: 285) Thus, the terms diglossia and diglossic in this paper refer to the multileveled and complex situation of Arabic language as described by the studies cited above.

This complexity could be seen in the "proliferation of terminology of reference in the levels or varieties of Arabic, as well as the inconsistency of their use and the lack of definition of each

terminology." (Fakhri 1995: 140). The higher variety is referred to by different terms, most often as *fuSHa* (the only term for it in Arabic) or modern standard Arabic (MSA) but also sometimes as standard Arabic, formal or written Arabic. Many of these terms attempt to distinguish it from the Classical Arabic of the Quran and classical Arabic literature, though considered related and a modern descendent from it (Palmer 2008: 83). The low variety (L) is referred to as '*amiya* (in Arabic) or spoken Arabic, vernacular or colloquial or dialect(s). Since these are not one but rather different varieties in different countries many academics refer to them as per their region or country (Omani Arabic, Egyptian Arabic, Levantine Arabic or sometimes Omani dialect, Egyptian dialect etc.). For the purpose of this study and for the sake of consistency, the High variety will be referred to as MSA, while the Low variety as dialect(s) or Omani Arabic depending on each case.

2.2. Arabic as a Foreign Language:

Teaching Arabic as a foreign language (TAFL) has had a long history in the United States of America. However, like many other foreign languages, the interest and demand for learning Arabic has been shaped and influenced by political, cultural and other factors in the past century or so. In the past 30 years as the American interest and involvement in the Arab-speaking world increased, the study of Arabic as a foreign language in the United States developed into an academic and professional field of its own. (McCarus, 1992) traces this development of the field in the United States citing the expansion of Arabic programs and departments in American Universities as well as the wealth of literature that has been produced. The events and aftermath of 9/11 in the United States had been regularly referenced as a landmark turn for an even greater increase in the field. The Modern Language Association (MLA) Language Report 2002-2006

ranked Arabic as the most remarkable increase in enrollment with 126% increase (Palmer 2008: 81). The past few years witnessed more and more interest in teaching and learning Arabic, and an increase in the related academic and professional activity. One important aspect of this increase is the number of programs of teaching Arabic in Arabic speaking environment in different Arab countries, which is of particular concern to this study as it focuses on learning Arabic in a native environment in Oman.

The field of Arabic as a foreign language grew within the wider field of foreign language teaching. Foreign language pedagogy in the past three decades placed more emphasis on developing the communicative competencies of the learners with a focus on the concept of proficiency of the learner, and in particularly the oral proficiency. One major impact of the proficiency movement in the 1980s foreign language teaching was the establishment of ACTFL proficiency guidelines for foreign languages. Arabic ACTFL proficiency guidelines were created, and later modified in the late 1980s to better reflect the linguistic reality of Arabic, which is strongly characterized by diglossia (Al Batal, 1992). This reality poses a distinctive challenge to teaching Arabic as a foreign language compared to other languages.

2.3 Pedagogical Implications:

It has been established that diglossia is the linguistic reality of Arabic lived by a speaking community of more than 300 million speakers. As seen thus far, a lively scholarly debate at the intersection of sociolinguistics and foreign language pedagogy has enriched our understanding of this concept and linguistic phenomenon. However, the discussion around this issue is not only linguistic but is political, social, religious and national as well, and could be charged and sensitive especially in relation to the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language (Al Batal 1992: 286). It must be noted that spoken Arabic "is often stigmatized as a less prestigious variety of

Arabic and is less worthy of study even though it is the language of choice for day to day communication for native speakers." (Palmer 2007:111).

The diglossic nature of Arabic has tremendous pedagogical implications and poses serious challenges to both the teaching and learning of the language (Al Batal 1992) which is indeed of direct relevance to this research. This diglossic reality poses three major problems in teaching and learning a language, according to Ferguson, (1971, in Al Batal 1992) which are:

1- Learning two languages in one: which is a common challenge in learning and teaching Arabic. There is more to be learned than one language. This is seen in the experience of students who learn Modern Standard Arabic then get exposed to a dialect. "Although MSA and the dialects do show a considerable amount of overlapping and the student's knowledge of MSA will greatly facilitate their learning of any Arabic dialect, this does little to alleviate the frustration and disappointment felt by the students once they face the realities of the diglossic situation in the Arab world." (Al Batal 1992: 287)
2- Choice of dialect: according to Ferguson (1971, cited in Al Batal 1992) this problem is unique to Arabic since it has no standard dialect as do other diglossic languages such as Haitian Creole and Greek. If the choice is made to teach an Arabic dialect, which one is to be chosen and why? In an Arabic speaking environment, the choice of the dialect of that country is pedagogically justifiable. However, the choice is harder in a non-Arabic native speaking environment such as the case in US academic institutions. Palmer (2007) who argues in favor of teaching spoken Arabic, quotes National Middle East Language Resources Center (NMERLC) survey that indicated the vast majority of students want to learn either Levantine or Egyptian Arabic. This, he continues, is supported by the prevalence of speakers and the existence of teaching material for these two dialects.

3- Existence of intermediate forms of language: this is seen in Arabic as many native speakers, especially the more educated ones, tend to mix elements from the High and Low varieties (MSA and spoken dialects) in certain contexts. The existence of intermediate levels of Arabic has been proposed as an alternative model to diglossia, as discussed above under what is diglossia section above. This intermediate level(s) is sometimes referred to in Arabic as *al- lughah al wusta* (the middle language) (Al-Maatouq 2005) and in English it has been termed as Educated Spoken Arabic (ESA). The newer ACTFL proficiency guidelines (1989) recognize this need of both forms by setting the guidelines for the native-speaker proficiency level in "becoming competent in both MSA and at least one dialect" (Palmer 2007:115). Al Batal argues for such proficiency guideline to include the proficiency in producing appropriate mixture of the two, depending on the context involved bearing in mind that "the appropriate mixing of the different varieties in Arabic is a skill in its own right and should be treated as such" (1992: 302).

As noted above, the field of teaching Arabic as a foreign language had benefited from the advances in foreign language teaching such as moving away from the grammar and vocabulary focused methods toward more communicative techniques and from achievement-testing toward proficiency rating. This challenged Arabic language educators to improve teaching Arabic as a medium of communication and functionality. Such a challenge brings the diglossic nature of Arabic to the forefront, since Modern Standard Arabic is not used in daily communication, and using it as such does not replicate the reality of Arabic language speakers, while most of the spoken dialects of Arabic are not written. Several approaches to teaching Arabic diglossia had developed; Al Batal (1992) summarizes the main approaches:

- The Classical Arabic Approach is the oldest approach. Instruction according to this approach is based mainly on morphological (word-level) and syntactic (sentence-level) analyses of texts using the grammar-translation method with very limited attention paid to the oral component.
- The MSA Approach is based on the exclusive use of MSA as language of instruction in Arabic classes. Most of the text materials developed for this approach used to place primary emphasis on the teaching of grammar and reading and continued to rely mainly on the grammar-translation method in the teaching of Arabic. However, due to the effects of the new developments in foreign language education in the late 1970's and early 1980's, the oral component of MSA courses began to receive increasing attention. It continues to be the dominant approach in teaching Arabic as a foreign language.
- The Colloquial Approach is based on the teaching of a specific Arabic dialect (e.g. Iraqi, Egyptian, Syrian), or a specific regional dialectal group (e.g. Levantine, Gulf, North African) for oral use. The instruction usually does not require any knowledge of MSA, nor does it require knowledge of the Arabic script, since transliteration (Arabic words written in Roman characters) is used in most colloquial textbooks. The colloquial approach is suitable for the needs of those interested in the study of Arabic in one of its spoken varieties only. The approach has shortcomings such as the inability to read Arabic alphabet and the non-transferability of language knowledge to MSA or other dialects.
- The Middle Language Approach is based on the teaching of a variety of Arabic that is believed to exist between MSA and the dialects. This variety is referred to as Educated Spoken Arabic and also as Middle Language (*al-Lugha al-Wusta)*. This approach is

criticized for the lack of foundation since the Middle language is yet to be defined and be widely accepted. (Al Batal 1992)

- The Simultaneous Approach in which students of Arabic are introduced to MSA and an Arabic dialect within the same program of instruction. One major shortcoming for this approach is the choice of which dialect, and the challenge of confusion between MSA and the spoken dialect (Al Batal 1992)

Al Batal argues that the simultaneous approach seems to provide an adequate answer to the question of how to deal with Arabic diglossia in the classroom. Thus he proposed a modified version of it to "reflect in the classroom the diglossic situation (with its different varieties) as it exists in the Arab world today through introducing MSA as a written variety alongside one spoken dialect for communication."(Al Batal 1992: 298) Fakhri (1995) also proposed integrating MSA and dialects through using MSA solely in the reading and writing skills while introducing dialect in addition to MSA in the listening and speaking skills. Younis (2006) presents the program at Cornell University as an example of a working-model for integrating the spoken dialects in the classroom. He concludes that "treating Arabic as one system of communication with a spoken side and a written side and a common core is not only an accurate reflection of the sociolinguistic realities of the language but is also pedagogically more effective" as it caters to students' needs as assessed earlier in the program (164). Also, (Wahba, 2006) proposed presenting MSA and a spoken variety of Arabic as separate entities at the early stages of learning, followed by mixed texts at the intermediate level and integration at advanced levels. Palmer (2007, 2008) also made the case for teaching spoken Arabic in the classroom based on previous voices that called for the same such as Rammuny (1978) Al Batal (1995) and Younes (1995), Al Batal & Belnap (2006).

Palmer (2008) criticizes the fact that the field of Arabic language teaching and learning "seems to be frozen in Ferguson's idealized characterization of diglossia: the higher register is emphasized – even though it is only part of the language- whereas the lower register is disrespected and ignored, even though it is widely used in many situations and circumstances." (Palmer 2008: 93) Generally, the arguments for such integration of both varieties are similar. First, the fact that MSA is no one's mother tongue, thus oral proficiency and communicative skills could not be achieved through an MSA-only curriculum. So teaching the spoken dialects helps avoid the miscommunication, embarrassment and frustration faced by the learners when they try to speak to people in the street who do not speak the MSA that a student learned in the classroom. Second, it aims at replicating the reality of speakers of Arabic who acquire a "mother dialect" before they learn MSA at a later stage in formal schooling.

However, (Alosh, 1992) argues against promoting spoken dialects, especially against using the colloquial only approach since the mission of most of the Arabic language programs is to achieve the level of educated (i.e. literate) speaker. In addition, knowledge of MSA opens access to the literature and language of the Arab past that is unavailable in the colloquial. He also argues that a foreign learner of Arabic is not supposed to become a native speaker, thus the initial confusion about using MSA in the street is natural learning process since the learner is not a native speaker, as well as that learner's comprehension of others' output is determined by many factors other than their use of dialects. Also, foreign learners of Arabic come to the classroom with no prior knowledge of one particular dialect, thus it is unnatural to try and replicate the first language acquisition process that a native speaker goes through. Other issues that pertain to integrating MSA and dialects were noted by Fakhri (1995) as possible consequences such as the interference from one variety into the other, and the problem of testing proficiency.

Thus, “these views and counter views will have an enormous impact on syllabus design, for they will determine whether an Arabic syllabus should contain MSA only or MSA and colloquial variety integrated together, and if the latter, at what level and in what order.” (Al Batal 1992: 287) An added dimension to this discussion is about when and how to tackle the question of diglossia in teaching Arabic is also influenced is the place. “While the full effect of this problem and its relevance to the classroom situation is not completely felt in the Arabic classroom in a non-Arabic-speaking country, it takes on important dimensions in Arabic language institutes located in Arab countries.” (Al Batal 1992: 287). The context of this study is in an institute of teaching Arabic as a foreign language in an Arabic speaking country. The next section will focus on this specific question.

2.4. Impact on the learners’ experience

Most of the literature reviewed so far has focused on the sociolinguistic and pedagogical dimensions of the issue of diglossia. But how does issue look from the other side, from the point of view of the learner? To gauge the learners’ perception, Palmer (2007) presented the results of a survey conducted by the National Middle East Language Resources Center (NMELRC). This survey was sent to over 650 students learning Arabic at over 37 U.S. institutions of higher education between April 2003 and April 2005. A similar survey was administered to 82 teachers at over 30 institutions of higher education between May 2004 and August 2005. The results showed that the students learning Arabic in the United States want to learn spoken varieties, despite a lack of support from their teachers. The results also showed that the majority of the students wanted to study Spoken Arabic to allow them to interact with people who speak it. A good number of the students showed interest in learning both MSA and spoken Arabic, and the

majority wanting to learn spoken Arabic immediately. He concludes that teaching the Standard variety only is a disservice to the students (Palmer 2007).

In a follow up study, Palmer (2008) presented and discussed another survey that captures students' perceptions of spoken Arabic after living in the Arab world. The data was gathered of students who studied Arabic for at least two semesters before traveling to the Arabic-speaking world. Results showed that if the majority of these students could restart their study of Arabic, they would want to learn a spoken variety of Arabic before traveling abroad. The students showed they wanted to learn Arabic while learning MSA. However, there was disagreement on how the teaching of MSA and spoken Arabic should take place, whether simultaneously but separately or in an integrated fashion. Results also indicate that students who attempted to communicate in spoken Arabic in the Arabic-speaking world felt that they were more easily able to integrate into the culture (Palmer 2008).

3. Research Methodology:

3.1 The site

The selection of the research site has been determined by the researcher's internship assignment. The researcher interned at World Learning Oman Center (WLOC) in Muscat, Oman for the period of September 2010 – April 2011 for the Reflective Practice Phase requirement of SIT Graduate Institute Master in International Education.

The hosting organization, World Learning Oman Center hosts a variety of programs every academic year. The most established and continuous of which is the SIT Study Abroad program; Oman: Political Culture and Economy and Energy in the Gulf which started in 2005. The center

was formally established in 2008, and more programs have been added to its portfolio. The center hosted a graduate program offered by SIT Graduate Institute; Master of Global Management (MGM) in 2009 which was the first graduate program to be offered outside the main campus in Brattleboro, Vermont. The center also offers Arabic Language Around Muscat (ALAM) language classes to expatriates residing in Oman. The center also houses summer Arabic language programs in cooperation with Omani and US institutions. The center also organizes shorter cultural programs and different workshops and lectures regularly.

During the internship period the main responsibility of the researcher was Arabic language teaching for two of the programs hosted at the center. Other responsibilities included assistance with student affairs coordination, and general program administration. This research could be considered a 'backyard research' for the researcher having been an integral part of the already small organization that hosted him (Glesne 2006: 31). This was useful as it has helped establish a rapport between the researcher and the participants in the study. The researcher came to the internship with two years of experience teaching Arabic to non-native speakers in an American institution. Thus, the territory was not totally foreign, except for one remarkable distinction that the students in the previous teaching experience were learning Arabic as a foreign language in a non-native environment in contrast to the students in Oman who were learning Arabic as a second language in its native environment.

Arabic language is the core of most of the programs hosted and organized by the WLOC. The organization attempts to utilize the long experience of the parent organization World Learning/SIT in the field of language and cultural immersion programs. It also is located strategically in Oman that provides a safe and stable environment for learning Arabic language and culture. The researcher was directly involved with the two academic year programs; SIT

Study Abroad (undergraduate) and Master of Global Management (graduate). Thus, the research focused on the participants of these particular programs. The two programs provide an example of non-Native speakers' study of Arabic in a native Arabic environment, which is the particular focus of this paper.

3.2 The participants

By focusing on the above mentioned two long-term programs, the study community provided a small, homogenous sample. The number of the participants in the two programs is 20. The study also included three alumni of the SITSA program for individual interviewees making the total number of study participants 23.

The SIT Study Abroad (SITSA) program had 13 students. Learning the language and the culture is a core component of the program. Thus, the students take 6 credits of language study and are provided with homestay family experience during their semester in Oman. The Master in Global Management (MGM) had 7 students. The program has a language and culture requirement that manifested in Arabic classes in both fall 2010, and spring 2011 semester. Since language and culture immersion was not part of the program, there was no homestay family option. Because of this and other reasons the MGM students had considerably less opportunity to interact with the Omani society and to access regular language practice.

Arabic is taught in both of the programs mainly using an MSA approach. Heavy emphasis was placed on grammar and vocabulary. 2.5 hours of everyday 3.5-hour class was focused on using the Alkitab series of teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, which is a series geared toward US American students of Arabic. (Brustad, Al Batal, & Al-Tonsi, 2004) The last hour of everyday

class was devoted to conversational Arabic. In the fall 2010 this hour was used alternatively to speak in MSA and to introduce the students to Omani Arabic. In the spring 2011, this was less of a policy and it was left to the individual teachers to incorporate Omani Arabic as they deem useful. Table 1 shows the numbers of participants and their participation in the study.

Program	**Number of students**	**Participation in the research**
SIT Study Abroad (SITSA)	13	Survey (12 participants) 2 focus groups (7 & 5)
Master of Global Management (MGM)	**7**	Survey (7) 1 focus group (7)
SIT Study Abroad Alumni	3	Individual interviews (3)
Total	23	

Table 1: Participants breakdown

3.3. Data Collection:

The research was a qualitative case study and used mixed methods of data collection. In an attempt to deepen the understanding of the topic and capture the widest possible experience from the study community, the researcher opted to achieve triangulation (across method) collection of data by using three prefigured data collection techniques; an online survey, focus groups and individual interviews, as explained below.

Online Survey: (quantitative instrument)

The researcher used an online survey tool, Monkeysurvey.com to survey all the twenty participants in the two programs (the three interviewees were not surveyed). This tool was the

first method used to collect the basic information about the language level of the participants and some general opinions about the topic. The results of the survey were used to guide the questions of the next two tools of data collection. This tool was used for the previous familiarity of the researcher and participants with it, as well as it relevant ease of use, and free access. The survey consisted of 10 questions. The first few questions were multiple choice ranking questions asking the participants for their level of Arabic, their motivation of studying Arabic and their daily use of the language. The rest of the questions were multiple choice Likert scale questions to rate the answer from "strongly agree" to strongly disagree" with no neutral option in the middle but instead "somewhat agree" and "somewhat disagree" to avoid the non-committing answer of neutrality. This will help to elicit participants' general perception of the difference between MSA and Omani Arabic and how it made an impact, with one question leaving a comment space to describe what this impact was. The first few questions were contextual for the topic but may not be very relevant to the discussion of the data. The number of participants who took the survey was 19 out of 20, a high completion rate of 98%. The survey was anonymous. (see questions of the survey appendix A)

Focus group: *(qualitative instrument)*

The data yielded from the survey was collected and preliminarily analyzed to inform the planning and preparation of the focus groups. This tool was used in order provide an in-depth investigation of the matter through asking similar questions to a group of participants. The three focus groups that were formed were another attempt to triangulate data sources within the same instrument. Also, they helped to manage the number of participants, as the study tried to include all the 20 students in the two programs. Initially, there was an attempt to create homogenous focus groups according to the program and level of Arabic. However, due to time constraints and

difficulty of schedule arrangement for the participants toward the end of their academic semester, the two SITSA groups were based on availability at the set time of group meeting rather than level of Arabic. Seven students participated in the first focus group meeting, five in the second focus group and one student missed both. A third focus group was attended by all the seven students of the MGM program. This distinction between programs is significant as the researcher presumes that the difference in level of MGM class immersion in the host community, as noted above, is a variable that makes an impact. The focus groups were recorded and they took 44, 26, and 29 minutes respectively. The choice of anonymity was given to participants and two of the participants chose not to identify themselves. (See appendix B for focus group questions)

Individual interviews: *(qualitative instrument)*

A third and last data collection method was individual interviews. The researcher conducted three personal interviews with continuing learners of Arabic who had experienced learning Arabic in different non-native and native environments and had had long exposure to Arabic. The interviews were meant to provide a different perspective to the issue from people who were not studying Arabic currently within a formal program setting. It was assumed that the longer exposure to Arabic in at least two different Arabic speaking environments will provide data that is enriching to the study. The three individuals were alumni of the SIT Study Abroad (SITSA) program and are currently working in Oman in different capacities. The first is a staff member of the World Learning Oman Center, the second is currently in a Fulbright research grant in Oman, and the third is in Oman through ESL teaching program funded by Amideast. The first two interviews were pre-arranged, but the third one was arranged on the spot while the interviewee was in WLOC for an event. The three interviews were guided open-ended interviews with very similar questions (see appendix C). They were all recorded and they took 10, 15 and 13 minutes

respectively. The choice of anonymity was given and two of the three interviewees opted not to identify themselves.

3.4 Subjectivity and limitations:

The researcher's own experience with the topic provided useful insight into the subject matter. The researcher had prior experience as a teacher of Arabic to speakers of other languages in the United States, and in Oman. While this provided a useful insight to the topic, it had to be used with caution since the purpose of the study is to understand the learners' experience rather than the teachers' experience. Another subjectivity concern was the fact that the researcher had been the teacher of some of the participants. This may have possibly influenced the subjectivity and honesty of the information gathered and responses of the interviewees given the power dynamics involved in the student teacher relationship. However, this impact of this concern may have been downplayed by the fact that the questions were not about the teaching methods or techniques but about the students' personal experience. On the other hand, the fact that the researcher knew well all the participants provided a much needed rapport that was useful on the amount of data and information gathered.

The main limitation to the study was time constraints, as the researcher had full time work commitment as an intern. Because of that, the research proposal was not submitted until late April and was approved in first week of May. Also the students had very busy schedule in Oman and their programs were due to end by May 15th. Thus, the data collection basically took little about 10 days. Scheduling the focus groups and interviews proved to be slightly challenging. Also, the data coding and proved to be a laborious processes and took much more time than anticipated. The data collection produced much 'raw' data that was transcribed but is not

provided in the paper or in appendices for length purposes. This lengthy process of data transcription and coding also slowed the writing of the final research paper.

3.5 Data Processing:

After the interviews and focus groups have been done, the researcher collected and analyzed the online survey results through the website. Then, transcription of interviews and focus groups took place. Analysis of the data took place at the end of May and beginning of June. After the transcription, the researcher coded the data according to the major themes of the participant's responses. Then, selection of these coded data made its way to the analysis and discussion section of the paper, below. For example of the coding and processing of data (see Appendix A)

As noted above, the research took a descriptive lens to probe into the issue of diglossia in relation to teaching Arabic as a foreign language. For this purpose, the data collection was relatively extensive for such a small study community. The research yielded rich and thick data. However, for restrictions of both study scope and time/space the study will not be comprehensive but rather selective. The study set its scope to explore only relevant data to the issue of diglossia, not the whole experience of studying Arabic as a foreign language in Oman. But even within this scope, data was processes, coded and synthesized in a manner that captures the ideas with reasonable succinctness.

- Note on the use of terminology, and quotes by the participants and researcher:

The researcher used the terms Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and *fuSHa* interchangeably in the interviews, and focus groups. The participants seemed to have understood both and used them according to their preference. On the other hand, the researcher used Omani Arabic or Omani

dialect to refer to the Low Variety of Arabic. However, different participants used different terms in reference to the Low variety of Arabic, such as '*amiya,* colloquial, vernacular or Omani Arabic or dialect(s).

Excerpts from the participant's responses in the survey, focus groups and interviews have been selected and quoted throughout the analysis. This attempts to remain true to the descriptive nature of the inquiry.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion:

The analysis will first look briefly at the results yielded from the survey. This will serve to paint the larger picture of the study community in relation to the topic. Then, the analysis focuses on major themes related to the issue of Arabic diglossia that have been identified by the literature reviewed. Some of these major themes were targeted and the researcher asked direct questions about such topics as 1) awareness of the phenomenon of diglossia in Arabic and 2) the presumed confusion of participants between spoken Arabic and written MSA. Then the research tries to identify 3) the impact of diglossia on the participants' motivation to learn Arabic. It also tracks 4) the impact on their daily interaction in the community using Arabic. The last theme emerged from participants' responses which is 5) the participants' attitude toward Arabic as a language with its reality as a diglossic language. After the themes have been explored from the participants' responses, a final discussion and synthesis of the findings concludes this section.

4.1. A look at the survey results:

Only uncomplicated arithmetic has been employed for analysis of the survey results. Due to time and space restrictions, not all items from the survey are presented and discussed at length in this paper, for all the full results see (Appendix A). The first three questions of the survey were contextual in nature, about the participants' level of Arabic at the beginning and end of the program as well as their previous experience with studying Arabic (Appendix A). When asked about their previous experience with Arabic, 42% of the participants (n= 8 of 19) reported studying no Arabic before coming to Oman, while at the other end 15.8% have studied more than four semesters of Arabic. An extra person (n= 9, 47%) placed themselves at the beginner level of Arabic at the start of their program in Oman, only two at the advanced-mid level and no one as advanced-high. At the end of the program these numbers moved. A majority of respondents moved a level higher, however, it is interesting to note that 2 respondents placed themselves at the beginner level, and only one moved to the advanced-high level.

The respondents were asked to rank their most improved skill among six skill sets; reading, writing, speaking, listening, vocabulary and grammar. It was probably the most notable result that (10) respondents (58.8 %) ranked speaking as their most improved skill, compared to (1) respondent who ranked reading, listening and grammar, (2) who ranked writing and (3) who ranked vocabulary. It is also noteworthy that none (0) respondents ranked speaking as their least improved skill set. Grammar was ranked by 33.3% (n=6) as the least improved skill followed by listening with 26.3% (n=5).

When asked how much they used Arabic outside of the classroom, the use of Arabic tended to be to in the middle (sometimes 42% and rarely 31%). Only 25 % used it always and often. This indeed has a strong link to the fact that 42% (n=8) of the participants in the study did not live

with homestay families. These are the students of the MGM program whose program did not require a homestay. Of the remaining (11) respondents, (6) somewhat agreed that living with a homestay family was useful to their language learning, compared to (2) who strongly agreed and (1) who agreed. (1) respondent somewhat disagreed with that statement and (1) strongly disagreed.

Moving to the issue of diglossia in Arabic, which is the central research question of the study, the last three questions asked the participants about their awareness of diglossia in Arabic, its presence in the classroom and the impact it had in their learning. These three questions will be discussed with some length under the emergent themes of the data in the next section.

The survey participants were asked to respond to the statement "I was aware that Omani Arabic was different from MSA before coming to Oman". The majority reported that they were indeed aware about it. 14 respondents (about 73%) strongly agreed, agreed or somewhat agreed to that statement (7, 5 and 2 respondents respectively). 15.8% and 10.5% (3 and 2) respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement.

47.4 % (n=9) participants agreed that the amount of spoken (Omani Arabic) they were exposed to in the class was sufficient, though none strongly agreed. Total of 8 (42%) somewhat disagreed or disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement (3, 2 and 2 respectively).

The answer to the question on impact of diglossia to learning varied. However, a notable majority of 31.1% agreed to that statement (n=6). Combined with 10.5% (n=2) who strongly agreed and 21.1% (n=4) who somewhat agreed, there seems to be a majority among the respondents who believe that the difference between MSA and Omani Arabic impacted their learning. It is important to note that 35% either somewhat disagreed or disagreed or strongly

disagreed to that statement (2, 3, and 2 respectively). This question allowed the participants to comment on how they think this difference made an impact on their learning. The comments on this question will be discussed at more length in the discussion of the impact of diglossia under the themes.

4.2. Awareness of the issue of diglossia:

As mentioned above, the survey gave an overview about the students participating in the study and their Arabic learning experience, as well as their exposure to the issue of Arabic diglossia and how they see its impact on their learning. Next the paper moves to explore the main themes of this issue as they were answered by the participants. The answers presented and discussed here are drawn from all the three data sets; survey, 3 focus groups and 3 individual interviews. They are presented according to the themes with appropriate attribution of the participants; the first theme is awareness of the issue of diglossia.

Palmer comments on the high percentage of respondent to a survey that looked at students perception of diglossia that wanted to learn spoken Arabic "now", saying that this response does not "reveal which levels of Arabic are represented" and that "it is unknown how many of these responses come from novice students" (2007: 119) and suggests that "students might simply not be aware of the fundamental divide in language use in the Arabic-speaking world" (2007: 120) calling for further research in this question.

This paper asked this question directly in order to investigate this correlation between the level of Arabic and awareness of the issue of diglossia. The data show that all the participants are now aware of the phenomenon either by being taught in the class or by being exposed to it in their

living experience in Oman. However, the data show that there is less awareness of diglossia at the absolute beginner level of learning Arabic. Of the (8) survey respondents (total n=19) who indicated their level as beginner, (5) answered that they were not aware at all of this phenomenon before coming to Oman. Responses from participants at this level show this unawareness or how they came to know the phenomenon.

"I barely was aware there was a difference." Survey Respondent 3 (beginner, no prior Arabic)
"I didn't know about this whole phenomenon before coming here because I really didn't know anything about Arabic." Jenny (Focus group 2, beginner, no prior Arabic)
"I know it exists kind of I know that Mars exists, it's very faint but I can't touch it or experience it. It's like people say "ma" instead of "la", but I don't understand Arabic well enough to really see the difference between one and the other" Ethan (Focus Group 1, beginner, no prior Arabic)
"The words are different in a lot of cases! And things were pronounced different as well. I can't say exactly how they were different; my Arabic is not good enough to do that." Survey respondent 10 (beginner, no prior Arabic)

As noted above in the methodology section, the participants from the Master of Global Management (MGM) were intentionally interviewed in one focus group. Their responses to the question of awareness of diglossia also conformed to this correlation of beginner level. 4 of 5 participants at the high beginner level responded similarly.

"I Became aware of it only when it came up in the class, but not on my own." Heidi (Focus group 3, high beginner, no prior Arabic)
"I was mostly unaware of it, maybe when it came in class couple of times." Ana (Focus group 3,

high beginner, no prior Arabic)
"I became aware of it in class as well." Sugey (Focus group 3, high beginner, no prior Arabic)
"I didn't become aware of it until I came to Oman and it was pointed out." Jay (Focus group 3, high beginner, no prior Arabic)

On the other hand, participants with higher levels of Arabic and who had had some Arabic study experience and/or longer exposure to the language were more comfortable with diglossia, as they have been aware of it. Some of them reported being somehow prepared to encounter this reality.

"I was also aware of the dialect versus fuSHa phenomenon. My professors have been Syrians, so they kind of explained to me the Levantine dialect, so I knew of that." Olivia (Focus Group 1, High Intermediate, 5 semesters of Arabic in US)
"I have been aware of the differences for quite some time. My professors back in the state make it a habit of mentioning it, and we also had Arabic film festival, so we would be listening to something going on and say – why are they speaking French and Arabic at the same time in this movie." Sydney (Focsu Group 1, High Intermediate, 3 semesters of Arabic in US)

However, being aware of the phenomenon of diglossia theoretically was different from experiencing it as a living reality. The second and third interviewees remember how they became aware of diglossia and how they experienced it.

"I was aware there are two Arabics and there is more than two Arabics, but there were these two group of Arabics. I was aware of that from the point I was introduced to Arabic. Because I

knew there is Quranic and classical Arabic and this is what people speak. So the concept was never an issue for me and because my motivation was always to focus on fuSHa in the first place, it was never a problem until being here and having to actually use another variety" Interviewee 3 (High Intermediate, studied Arabic in Oman, US, and Yemen)
"Obviously in Oman when we traveled down to Salalah I noticed that the "jiim" was pronounced "giim" that was the issue of pronunciation. As for dialects, when I was in Egypt and I was trying to order shawarma chicken, and I said "dagag" because i knew they pronounced the "jiim" a "giim" and somebody laughed and said, no its "firakh", and that moment when I realized that the dialects are not only pronunciation but are completely different in some cases." Interviewee 2 (High Intermediate, studied Arabic in Oman, US)

Similarly, two participants from the high intermediate level class reported that experiencing the issue of diglossia in real life was quite different experience, despite being aware of it beforehand.

"But this is my first time in the middle east, my first time with on the ground experience with different dialects. And, it's difficult, because my family they don't speak fuSHa really." Olivia (focus group 1, high intermediate, 5 semesters of Arabic in US)
"I didn't realize that Omani dialect would be so different from fuSHa but it was really interesting when I first got here and tried to speak in fuSHa with my host mom and having her just look at me like I was speaking French. So it's been interesting realizing how much difference there is." Sydney (focus group 1, high intermediate, 5 semesters of Arabic in US)

Five of the participants reported that their exposure to more than one Arabic speaking community made them fully aware of the phenomenon more than anything else, even if they had studied Arabic before. Two of the participants in the focus groups have studied Arabic before in Egypt and/or Jordan and cited that as an important learning experience in terms of understanding diglossia. Similarly, all the three interviewees shared the fact that they studied in Oman before and they work in Oman now, and that they had lived and studied in other Arab countries. They all agreed that these experiences were very different in terms of Arabic use. Now they are much more aware of the issue and they are developing the proficiency of the appropriate use of both MSA and dialects. They all reported that their specific goals for learning Arabic became clearer once they became aware of the diglossic nature of Arabic. The first interviewee remembered how her experience in Arabic study in Egypt in summer of 2010 was the moment that unlocked Arabic for her, she had a specifically Egyptian colloquial class and it helped her understand the Arabic music and TV.

4.3. Impact on motivation:

An important area of study is the impact of diglossia on the motivation to learn the language. Previous research on Arabic language learning motivation has been conducted. Empirical data from (Schmidt, Inbar & Shohamony, 2004 – cited in Palmer 2008) demonstrated positive student feedback in relation to the learning of spoken Arabic. Research also indicated that many Arabic learners in the United States want to learn spoken Arabic (Palmer, 2007). As such, the researcher presumed a relationship between diglossia and motivation to learn Arabic. Thus, intentional focus was given to this theme in the focus groups and interviews through direct question about the impact of diglossia on motivational attitudes toward the language (see appendices B, C). The

data gathered proved such a connection and most participants agreed that diglossia has influenced their motivation to learn Arabic. However, participants' disagreed on how diglossia impacted their motivation.

A number of the participants have indeed experienced demotivation when faced by the fact that they are not going to use Arabic for daily communication. This feeling of demotivation tended to be recurrent in the answers of students with beginning level.

"The advantage of me learning Arabic is that I could communicate in the region. So, it is an incentive that MSA could help me communicate in some way or another with the educated people within this region but then the fact that I wouldn't be able to communicate with the regular people is not as fun any more. Because I know there is a whole section of the people i can't communicate with." Sugey (Focus Group 3,High Beginner, no prior Arabic)
"I believe that the communication is the point of a language, so when you can't communicate with someone after having spent the time in learning the language could be really demoralizing." Ethan (Focus Group 1, Beginner, no prior Arabic)

The majority of respondents acknowledged the challenge of diglossia and that it may be daunting and discouraging, yet they answered the question by affirming the importance of intrinsic motivation and a long commitment to learning the language. Interestingly, many of them within the same motivation theme noted that exposure to diglossia made them aware of their particular motivations and helped them change or focus their learning goals, such as focusing on a certain field of study or research they want to pursue or set certain career goals or for religious purposes. A number of the participants, mainly the participants with intermediate or advanced

levels of Arabic, noted that they decided to focus on either MSA or spoken dialect and pursued that choice. The second interviewee with intermediate high level and long exposure to Arabic remembers how the diglossic difference impacted his motivation.

Researcher: *How did that impact your motivation if you can remember?*

Interviewee*: I can remember. I shifted away from the book. When I was here in 2008 studying abroad, I realized that I have four months to try and make the most of the experience. I was in Oman, I can go back to the states and read Alkitab, but while i was here I realized it was in my best interest to sort of, you know, do the work required of me but to put most of my energy and most of my effort into learning what is spoken, figuring out how to communicate because when you are learning a language you need to practice, and this was the time I had to do it. This was the time i had to speak and I didn't want to waste it with learning the vocabulary.*

Researcher*: So that did not mean you would stop learning Arabic?*

Interviewee*: Not at all, it just shifted my own interest.* Interviewee 2 (High Intermediate, studied Arabic in Oman and USA)

The first interviewee had a similar experience studying Arabic in Oman first then being exposed to Arabic in different countries (including studying it in Egypt) and now working in Oman. She recounts how her understanding of diglossia through immersion in Egypt have helped her shape her interests. In her second time in Oman, she now has more bases in MSA and is focused on learning gulf Arabic "*khaliji amiya*".

Amina (first focus group, low intermediate, 3 semesters of Arabic in US) relates her motivation of learning MSA to her early reading of the Quran and her need to study Arabic to understand

her Muslim faith, but then being motivated to learn dialects because she could communicate with people. The third interviewee had a very similar experience. She revealed that her early awareness of the phenomenon did not impact her motivation to continue learning the language. Since she was born Muslim in the United States, her motivation to learn Arabic in the first place was religious. Thus, her motivation was to continue studying MSA which would be the only one useful for reading classical and religious texts. On the other hand, experiencing diglossia such as trying to communicate in Omani Arabic was a challenge for her because of the identity factor and language learning attitude. She was Muslim and her appearance was perceived in a way that she could pass as an Omani. So she was hesitant to speak Arabic for fear of being judged for using 'broken' Arabic or inappropriately mixing between the MSA and Omani Arabic. This in turn impacted how much speaking skills she improved.

It has to be remembered that these participants who made a choice on a certain focus have already been aware of the existence of different levels of the language. This is an important connection to draw between awareness of the diglossic situation and appreciating the diglossic reality of Arabic. Five participants in the first focus group who had intermediate low or intermediate high level of Arabic have reported that they were mentally prepared for such reality which in turn made them understand the needed effort to learn both varieties somehow separately. They also said that this fact did not necessarily set them back. They admitted that learning Arabic was indeed challenging and there were many moments when communication broke down with speakers of Arabic. However, they 'accepted the challenge' and they find it rewarding to make any progress especially being able to integrate in a community with one specific Arabic dialect. Three participants in the second focus group echoed the same connections; noticeably one of them was in the beginning level.

"I mean, no. I think it is an added dimension and it is difficult. I was really angry with the Arabic language for this for a long time. But at the same time every language has its thing that makes the learner a bit angry. Because it is not there." (Interviewee 3, High intermediate, studied Arabic in Oman)

Similar connection could be drawn between the level of awareness of diglossia, its impact on learning the language and then its impact on motivation. As was noticed earlier, the third focus group which consisted solely of the Master of Global Management (MGM) students, showed less level of awareness of the issue of diglossia and less concern about its impact in the language learning process. Interestingly, most of this group participants reported they did not feel demotivated by the issue of diglossia. Arguably, these three tendencies are related to each other. It seems reasonably evident from the data to relate this to the fact that these students had less interaction and exposure to the speaking community. The researcher intentionally designed the data collection to have the students of this program in one focus group to explore the connection of their lesser exposure to the speaking community to their language learning experience. This relation suggests the researcher's presumption of such a connection could be verified regarding the phenomenon of diglossia.

4.4. Impact on learning (confusion):

Another area of presumed impact of Arabic diglossia is the impact on the learning process. As discussed above, participants were at different levels on being aware of diglossia as an issue they will encounter when studying Arabic. However, the impacts on the learning process remain, even after becoming aware that there are different language varieties. Confusion is often expected to

occur to learners in such a situation. Ferguson (as cited by Al Batal 1992) suggested that the confusion posed by trying to learn a diglossic language seems like trying to learn two languages at once. This problem seems to be real with Arabic. The data show that there is such confusion faced by the students, especially but not exclusively, at the beginning level. But also, some of the participants at this level were not at a level of the language that they could notice this difference as earlier discussed under the theme of awareness of diglossia (4.2 above).

In his proposed 'alternative' approach to integrate more spoken dialects, Al Batal anticipates a criticism that his approach will produce confusion to the learners. He argues that the answer to this criticism "is that the confusion that will be felt by the students should be regarded as part of the total experience of learning Arabic." (1992: 302). It is a reflection of "what native speakers of Arabic experience when they start their formal study of MSA" and "a product of the diglossic situation and is experienced not only by speakers of Arabic but by speakers of all diglossic languages." (Al Batal 1992:302)

Only one of the questions of the survey allowed for a comment space about the impact of diglossia on their learning. Many of the respondents used this space to describe their feeling of confusion.

Having experienced speaking with those speaking English as a second language, it is often really awkward and the use of words seems to be at a level above what people speak in day to day life. In general, I think understanding some of the differences provides more confidence and opportunities for speaking outside of class, which increases likelihood of developing a real fluency in the language." (Survey Respondent 5, low intermediate, 1 semester of Arabic in US)
"I prefer speaking dialect Arabic, but was instructed to use MSA in class. This caused me some

trouble as I would switch back and forth frequently when speaking." (Survey Respondent 6, Mid advanced, 6 semesters of Arabic)
"Since I was using Omani Arabic at home and MSA at school, it was a bit confusing as a beginner. However, I spoke English at home more than Arabic." (Survey Respondent 7, beginner, no prior Arabic)
"In the beginning I was really confused when Omanis spoke to me in Omani Arabic and when they would correct me. However, once I understood the differences it has been a lot more simple for me to understand." (Survey Respondent 2, high beginner, 1 semester of Arabic in US)

Interestingly, all the participants at the two SITSA two focus groups who were at the beginning level have reported the same sense of confusion at the beginning of their learning.

"I think that when you first learning the language like I am and one person tells you to do it this way, and another person told you to do it that way, it gets very confusing." Ethan (Focus group 1, Beginner, no prior Arabic)
"It confused me a lot more at the beginning of the program since I was in the beginner […] At first it was just confusing to switch on and off, in the classroom using standard Arabic and then leave the classroom and using Omani Arabic having to readjust my frame to that, trying to convert what I know from the classroom to what I know in the street." Linh (Focus group 2, beginner, no prior Arabic)
"I think it most impacted me at the time when I was taking Arabic, because I would go home and try to listen to pick up on things it was different. So it made it harder to learn, because you are trying to learn two different things." Jenny (Focus group 2, beginner, no prior Arbic)

"There is some difficulty with learning one thing in the classroom and not necessarily being able to apply it in the day to day with your family " Greg (Focus group 2, beginner, no prior Arbic)

Most of the MGM students' focus group commented on the question about the impact that it didn't have much of an impact on their learning since they were at such a basic level. They did not notice the difference or it didn't interfere with their effort with the Arabic class. Some of the students commented on the motivation level, as discussed above under impact on motivation (4.3 above). In contrast, the SIT Study Abroad students responded that they felt a certain level of frustration and confusion with this issue. As noted above, SIT Study Abroad students were required to stay in homestay families while the MGM students did not have that requirement. Thus they also neither had the structured activities nor the time to interact with Arabic speakers outside of the classroom. This suggests the relationship between the level of interaction with the speaking community and confusion.

This impact had been felt differently with the students who had already been aware of the issue of Arabic diglossia.

"The differences between Omani Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) aren't that great. Therefore, the few differences that we were faced with did not make a great impact on my learning of the language as a whole." (Survey Respondent 13, high intermediate, 3 semesters of Arabic)
"The difference between MSA and Omani Arabic did not have a noticeable impact on my learning, since I already had a foundation in MSA and the amount of Omani Arabic we were exposed to in class was significantly less than the amount of MSA." (Survey respondent 11, high

intermediate , 3 semesters of Arabic)

A number of the participants who were aware of the phenomenon reported it felt like learning two different things but it did not slow their learning. Rather, it helped their progress in a certain way. Olivia and Ellen (both from focus group 1 SITSA) describe how this added learning experience was for them.

"For me, because I was so aware of the existence of differences between fuSHa and Omani dialect, I think it hasn't slowed my learning at all. I think that I was prepared to encounter colloquial Omani so it added to my knowledge, but it's like a different kind of knowledge that I can't apply to fuSHa at all. It has helped me, I feel much more comfortable speaking now, even though I am speaking Omani colloquial half of the time. But I think, that it definitely added to the progress of my Arabic learning just in a different way. So I don't think it has been a step back at all, because I was prepared for it." Olivia (Focus group 1, high intermediate, 5 semesters of Arabic)
"I guess because I knew about it, to me it seems like two different learning experiences." Ellen (focus group 1, high intermediate, 3 semesters of Arabic)

Of the same focus group Amina (low intermediate) also agreed that it helped her learning, because what was learned in the classroom was more the input skills of grammar but not oral and communicative skills.

4.5 Impact on interaction with native speakers:

When asked about the impact of diglossia in their learning of Arabic the theme of interaction with native speakers came up in the participants' responses. The data show that this issue is important in the learner's perception and experience with Arabic and their level of integration in the speech community. Palmer concludes that "students who can produce only MSA may be subject to ridicule" (2008: 84) if they used it when it is not appropriate. This embarrassment and frustration is present in some of the responses of participants with beginner knowledge of both MSA and Omani Arabic or when they tried using MSA only.

"Speaking the modern standard with my family, I was sort of the butt of a joke few times. They sort of laughed if I say something that while technically correct isn't Omani, as you say it was more formal than usual." Greg (Focus Group 2, beginner, no prior Arabic)
"Taking taxis or talking to my family when I say things in standard Arabic they would correct me and tell me that was wrong. But then once I learned that it was only Omani Arabic they speak and for me to speak standard is a bit too formal and unusual for them." Linh (Focus Group 2, Beginner, no prior Arabic)

Commenting on this topic, the second interviewee accepted this embarrassment as a price to learning the language and that it was part of the language learning process.

"But in most places if you speak fuSHa, people would giggle, they might comment on the fact that you are speaking fuSHa but they will understand you." (Interviewee 2, studied Arabic in Oman, US)

Other students noted this also, commenting on the mutual intelligibility level and how they navigated that. Natalie, a high intermediate level student described her awareness of diglossia as something that she felt on a daily basis with her host family "which has no *fuSHa* relationship" although she was told about the issue of diglossia earlier on. But then she describes her learning strategy and effort.

"It is now at the point where I would say maybe 60 % of the time when my [host] mother is speaking directly to me I understand the vast majority of what she is saying. If she is speaking to someone else and I don't understand the context, there is no hope". Natalie (focus group 1, high intermediate, 3 semesters of Arabic)

Two other students with high intermediate and low intermediate levels shared their experience with mutual intelligibility:

"When I am looking for something I will directly translate it what I learn in the class and directly try and use that whether in the 'souq', the cafés or with the family. So of the useful, the things that we learn in class because they are fuSHa isn't directly useful in the street, but most people understand at least what you are saying, so you can get your point across but the response if they are not speaking fusha might not be picked up." Student A (focus group 1, Low Intermediate, 5 semesters of Arabic)
"*It's difficult, because my family they don't speak fusha really. And they understand me, but me understanding them is just almost impossible."* Olivia (focus group 1, high intermediate, 5 semesters of Arabic)

Another student shares his approach to dealing with the issue of diglossia and how to keep learning the two varieties together:

"These days I try to use the Omani dialect when I talk to Omani people. Say I learn an Omani colloquial word, If I don't use it I forget. So when someone uses that same word, I wouldn't be able to understand. So I try to use it so I can understand what other people say more easily. But at the same time, I try to keep my knowledge of MSA because it will be more useful let's say when I read the newspaper or read some articles written in Arabic or when I go to some other country in the Arab world. So, I always try to think of what will be equal in the MSA when I use some Omani dialect in the same context. So I always want to know in both ways." Student B (Focus Group 2, High Intermediate)

On the other hand, one important variable to note was the level of integration and reception to the speech community when the students tried to use Omani Arabic. The students reported the positive attitude they received when they attempted to use the spoken variety, Omani Arabic. This positive attitude is supported by findings of Palmer's research, according to which the majority of the respondents "felt they were more trusted and more easily able to integrate into society using spoken Arabic." (2008: 91)

"It's motivating in practice, because when you can use the local dialect with people when speaking they will reward you for it. They are kind of impressed that you know this word or that word. It draws an affinity with them." Paul (Focus Group 3, High Beginner, no prior Arabic)
"I noticed it a lot with my homestay family as well at the beginning ...and I also noticed in cabs and I noticed that when I spoke or when I used little simple phrases of Omani dialect I would get

different responses from people so I noticed that a lot." Janey, (Focus Group 2, High Intermediate,)
"The amount of Omani dialect taught in class was sufficient for this sort of strange beginning phase of learning the language. It is, however, really important to learning the language, because speaking the dialect allows one to approach and understand more people in the community, including those without extensive MSA knowledge. Subtle differences just in saying, "hello, how are you?" can through someone off who hasn't heard them before, and even deter them from practicing in the future, for fear of embarrassment or confusion." (Survey Respondent 5, High Beginner, 1 semester of Arabic).

This integration in the community and affinity with the speakers are critical for the language learner. It is not only important for the language learning process, but also for immersing in the culture. Plamer (2007) quotes Versteegh (2004) "the colloquial language as the language of family and home is associated with the in-group, with intimacy and friendship, whereas the high variety is associated with social distance and official relationship. The use of [official Arabic] may thus be a sign of respect, but also of creating a distance between speakers." (Palmer 2007:112) (words in brackets from the source). This relation of spoken dialect to social closeness was clear to the third interviewee and one of the students after their visiting an Omani family.

"But when I did, It hit me the most when I went to the interior. We did a rural homestay in Nizwa. Because in the city I was speaking mostly in English and again my teacher here was Sudanese so he didn't use very much of 'amiya but when I went to the interior I flat out could not understand my homestay family at all. My homestay dad yes but my homestay mom I couldn't

understand because I imagine she hadn't studied Modern Standard Arabic herself for a long if at all. So, that's when It hit me." (Interviewee 3, studied Arabic in Oman, Yemen)
"I became aware of it when spent some time with an Omani family for the holidays". Meredith (Focus Group 3, high beginner, few months after being in Oman and taking Arabic)

4.6 Attitude toward the issue of diglossia and the language:

It has been discussed above that the participants had different degrees of awareness of the issue of diglossia. This and dealing with it first hand, impacted their motivation to learn the language. The majority of the participants agreed that their motivation was impacted, not stopping them from learning the language, but rather to focus their learning. But how did it impact their view of the language, if at all? This is an important theme that emerged from the data collected and processed, although was not a targeted question by the researcher. The participants described how they viewed the issue of diglossia, and how they viewed the Arabic language after experiencing the phenomenon or being exposed to it.

Many of the students shared their newly gained level of understanding of the complexity of diglossia and what it really means in its native environment, such as Natalie who explained it well.

"It isn't like fuSHa is completely useless. It does make you easy to understand in most countries. You can communicate. And as I said, if you ever want to listen to media, that's as sure fuSHa as you can get, especially if you are listening to BBC, Aljazeera maybe little less Al-Arabiya but there is still very formal Arabic and anything that is that is usually written, will not be written in colloquial.[...] You just have to know that there is different contexts, Arabic in the classroom, is

not just Arabic, it is Formal Arabic, which means it is used for something. So I don't find it to be less useful, and it isn't just academic. As academics we have to read academic Arabic. It's just like when you have to read literature things in English for academia, it isn't written in "yo man.. how is it goin'" you have to understand that, and as scholars I think that's a very important thing." Natalie (Focus Group 1, High Intermediate, 3 semesters of Arabic)

Many of the participants came to view MSA as the foundation and dialects as derived from it, which is a view shared by many native speakers of Arabic The Arabic dialects have been widely considered derivatives of the standard classical Arabic that was standardized by the holy book of Islam, Quran (Ferguson, 1959).. Many modern linguists provide a similar explanation to the phenomenon of diglossia. Others have contested this view in many ways. Hence, the term Modern Standard Arabic is used mainly in the western linguistics field to describe the current written variety of Arabic which is in many ways quite different form Quranic or Classical Arabic. (Palmer, 2008)

"I feel that the colloquial expressions or words are derived of actual fuSHa so I think that will reinforce our knowledge of actual fuSHa while giving us a basis of colloquial." Olivia (Focus Group 1, High Intermediate, 5 semesters of Arabic)
"I guess I started to treat MSA as more the foundation that it is very important and you have to know it and all. But it is only sort of starting point." Greg (Focus Group 2, Beginner, no prior Arabic)

Interestingly, all the three interviewees strongly expressed their view about how necessary it is to study MSA. They all have had experienced the reality of diglossia by studying in the US and Oman, then living in Oman and at least one other Arab country. This immersion in diglossic situation may have contributed to the three of them seeing MSA as the 'core' or the 'essence'.

"Modern standard will get you very far, around the Arabic speaking world. I don't think 'amiya makes sense without it, for me." (Interviewee 3, High intermediate, studied Arabic in Oman, US and Yemen)
"I think it is the root of everybody's mother tongue. I guess it is the mother tongue and everything else are the children or the derivatives from it." (Interviewee 1, high intermediate, studied Arabic in Oman, US and Egypt)
" Yeah, of course I was loving studying the language which I think is necessary. It is necessary to learn the correct, the fuSHa just to have that backing. And you wouldn't learn the 'amyia - the dialects without understanding the original Arabic in my opinion. So i felt i needed it." (Interviewee 2, high intermediate, studied Arabic in US and Oman)

It was noticeable how many of the students with more experience with diglossia used the Arabic word or term (*fuSHa*) while participants with less exposure mainly used Modern Standard Arabic. Also, it is noticeable that people with belief in the usefulness of MSA described it as "actual *fuSHa*", or "the correct" or "original". They referred to dialects as derivatives or branches.

Other participants acknowledged this linguistic reality but went on to explain their individual experience with it, such as the challenges, concerns and preferences. Greg shared his worry of mixing different dialects, and Olivia her ability to learn the two simultaneously.

"I think it's challenging, but that is not a necessarily a bad thing in itself. It shows you the phenomenon in action. So it takes this lofty concept of theories of how people learn and makes it real. So even if you are struggling with making connections between what you have learned in the classroom and the taxi driver, I think understanding that tension exists is useful for if you are in another country that speaks that language, Arabic, Spanish or whatever. Knowing that there is gonna be that tension, I think prepares you better to adapt to it." Greg (Focus Group 2, Beginner, no prior Arabic)
"The Omani dialect was extremely useful for the day to day but that's only useful in Oman if you go anywhere else, then everything in Omani dialect probably won't apply and so as long as I have that foundation of Modern Standard then it's easier to adapt. I guess my biggest worry because I want to spend more time in the Arab world, is not being able to distinguish what was dialect and what was standard. And having trouble communicating that with people in other Arab countries." Greg (Focus Group 2, Beginner, no prior Arabic)
"I am fine with learning both classes simultaneously. I think colloquial is great for communicating things to people in the street but you still have to express yourself in both. They are interchangeable. The only thing is when you speak fuSHa to people, if I only knew fuSHa, they understand me but I need colloquial to understand them, that's the main part of it." Olivia (Focus Group 1, High Intermediate, 5 semesters of Arabic)

Nonetheless, this was not the experience of all the students. There was a different point of view about diglossia and the usefulness of leaning both varieties. Interestingly this opposing view was coupled with a preference of learning one variety, namely spoken dialect. It is also interesting to note that this view was expressed by participants with a beginning level of Arabic.

"I think that language is first and foremost a tool of getting ideas across, making friendships and my opinion is whatever language gets you the most through the day with the people you are with is the language you should use. And if the differences between Omani Colloquial and fuSHa are so different, If I were learning it here I would appreciate just learning colloquial. Although I understand if you are a student of Arabic you have a wider study of Arabic then you might wanna focus on fuSHa. But I feel at the end of the day you can settle in one dialect of Arabic. Like I am just gonna speak like an Egyptian because I can't go to Oman and just change the way I speak. […] At some point you just settle. At certain point you can almost pick but at another point you almost can't pick. " Ethan (Focus Group 1, Beginner, no prior Arabic)
"I became more concerned with learning the Omani version rather than learning the Modern Standard version, probably because I have never taken Arabic, I am not gonna take Arabic when I leave. To me, learning Standard Arabic was kind of.. I wish it was only Omani but I know for everyone else here- the time I was here- it is to learn MSA." Jenny (Focus Group 2, Beginner, no prior Arabic)
"I think for me the thing about learning a language is the communicative aspect of it, so, you know learning Modern Standard was motivating in so far as reading and writing were concerned, you can do that a lot with this environment by seeing the environmental print around you. But I felt I would have preferred to have material that I could take directly from the class and apply wherever I was within the community because doing that for me would have been

more motivating I think. You feel a little more like you are making progress." Paul (Focus Group 3, High Beginner, no prior Arabic)

MGM students who were interviewed in the third focus group all agreed that they didn't use Arabic in Oman to any substantial percentage because of reasons they well identified. The reasons were related to the structure of their program where they left on their own outside of Arabic class time with no required immersion component in the community. Also, their accommodation and life in Muscat as being independently living together denied them the opportunity to speak to people in Arabic. Another important reason related to being in Muscat was the fact that there were few people they could meet who did not speak English and preferred to use it. They had to make a conscious effort to go to the local markets where English is less spoken to be able to use Arabic. But even then, the majority of such places as small shops and restaurants were most often run by migrant south Asian labor who spoke a pidgin Arabic (commonly referred to as Indian Arabic), which made it useless for practice.

Matt, an MGM student, spent some time in Jordan and came to Oman with an advanced level of Arabic. He was probably the most comfortable speaking in Arabic of all the participants in the study, as was seen in the World Learning Oman Center and witnessed personally by the researcher. He commented on this very point.

"It's definitely been difficult. Having lived in the Levant for a while for couple of months, while here there is really no opportunity to use it in everyday life. While in the Levant where I used it the most; just in getting taxis and restaurants and things like that. I guess the taxis here, the few times I had to use a taxi I spoken Arabic with them but honestly other than that it would be in a

restaurant or something like that but the guy will be speaking Indian Arabic which is different. We didn't really have a conversation." Matt (Focus Group 3, Mid Advanced, 6 semesters of Arabic)

4.7. Discussion

After the relevant data have been drawn from the three collected data sets, the paper attempted to organize and process them into the main themes about the students experience in Oman with the issue of Arabic diglossia. Five major themes were identified and analyzed in the above five points. The student experiences ranged and varied, however, there were some noticeable trends and tendencies regarding their experience with diglossia.

1- The first notable finding was the relationship between the students' level and their awareness of Arabic diglossia. There is a striking correlation between the lower levels and the minimum awareness of Arabic diglossia. Most of beginners' level participants who didn't study Arabic before the programs were not aware of the phenomenon before coming to Oman. Many of these students were barely aware of it and only because of its mention in the classroom. Students of higher levels reported being aware of and somehow "prepared for" diglossia.

2- This noticeable correlation continues between the lower levels and impact of diglossia. Majority of the beginners' level students reported their sense of confusion when trying to apply what they learned in the classroom elsewhere. This led to some sense of frustration and demotivation as the participants found out they can't use Arabic for daily communication, which for them is the main goal and use of the language. The correlation

continued with the lower level students' levels of interaction with the community being limited. This follows naturally, as they lack the appropriate skills of using spoken Arabic within the community as their classes focused more on MSA.

3- Another significant correlation was found between exposure to the speech community and level of awareness and use of Arabic diglossia. The MGM students generally showed lower levels of awareness of diglossia and less use of the language in daily interactions. This seemed to be directly linked to the program focus that did not put a high emphasis on Arabic language and culture immersion. The students lived on their own and did not enjoy the access to the language and culture that was available to the SIT Study Abroad students.

4- Regarding motivation, it was noteworthy that the higher level students were motivated to continue learning Arabic because of their on-the-ground grasp of Arabic diglossia. Many of them had become more aware of their personal goals in learning Arabic. They also reported making deliberate decisions on their focus, learning strategies and how to engage with diglossia as a linguistic and cultural reality.

5- Motivation to continue learning the language seemed to be linked to these higher level students regard of Arabic. They all seemed to have settled in appreciating the linguistic reality of Arabic as a diglossic language. The majority reported their belief in MSA as the root or basic Arabic from which dialects are derived. This meant they were firm believers in the usefulness of MSA and its basic introduction to the learner, while most of them acknowledged the importance of learning the dialect of the country where the learner is or is going to.

5. Conclusion:

This paper looked at the relevant data drawn from the research on perceptions of learners of Arabic in Oman on the issue of Arabic diglossia while they were studying Arabic as a foreign language in World Learning Oman Center. The data was drawn from a survey, three focus groups, and three individual interviews that involved 23 participants in World Learning Oman Center programs in May2011. The research provided rich qualitative data that this paper did not cover extensively.

To answer the research question, the data proved that students of Arabic in Oman were aware of Arabic diglossia and its impact on their learning. The awareness level varied according the language level, with awareness level going higher as the student moved up in language level. Similar correlation was found to be true with confusion with Arabic diglossia; the higher level students coped better with this reality while the lower level students tended to be more confused about it. It was also evident from the data that the level of interaction with the speech community increased as the learner became more confident in handling the diglossic reality. Most higher level students were more comfortable with their personal goals and focuses in learning Arabic. They also seemed to start to appropriately use both MSA and the dialect in different settings. This skill is noted as a skill of higher level proficiency in the language. Almost all the participants seem to agree on the value of learning both MSA and spoken dialect for the learner.

The study remains limited in scope, for reasons of time and size limit of the capstone research paper. Thus, the scope of the study was set to cover a very specific population in a very specific setting which it achieved. The number of participants covered was high. At the end, 19 of the 20 participants of the two programs took the online survey and 19 took part in one focus group. The three interviews was also the number intended by the researcher.

Another challenge of the research was the researcher's limited experience with field research. The topic is very wide and the data collection provided much more data than anticipated by the researcher. Thus forcing the researcher to cover only parts of the data and ignoring others. This in turn became a very useful academic and research exercise for the researcher and brought many great experience for a novice field researcher, such as the value of taking time and pre-planning, establishing rapport with the research community, making use of all resources available such as colleagues, friends and teachers/ advisors.

The main contribution and value of the study comes from the generalizability of the findings in the same field with similar population. The population and setting is replicable in other environments as there are many non –native speakers of Arabic who come to the Arab countries every year to study the language, and some may live within a local community. Trying to cover the wide spectrum of this population was outside the limits of this study, but is clearly an area for further research and exploration. Another relevant use of this study is for pedagogical purposes. Most of the findings as well as the data produced from the study could well be incorporated to improve the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language in World Learning Oman Center and other similar institutions. Learning material producers, curriculum writers and teachers alike will find this study useful for their work.

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Appendix A: Survey Questions and answers (from website)

Dear participant

This research aims at finding out your experience as a learner of Arabic as a foreign language in relation to diglossia and what impact it has on learning the language. Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary and you may decide to cease your participation before submission. The data collected in this survey will be used solely for research purposes, they will be analyzed and summarized and anonymously presented in reporting the findings of this research.

Please take few minutes to answer the following questions, some of the questions require factual information, please answer them to the best of your knowledge. Other questions ask for your opinion. The last question answer is open-ended statement.

1. How long have you studied Arabic BEFORE starting the program in Oman?

	answered question	**19**
	skipped question	**0**
	Response Percent	**Response Count**
None	**42.1%**	**8**
1 semester	10.5%	2
2 semesters	10.5%	2
3 semesters	15.8%	3
4 semesters	5.3%	1
Mroe than 4 semesters	15.8%	3

2. What was your level of Arabic at the beginning of the program?

answered question	**19**
skipped question	**0**

	Response Percent	Response Count
Beginner	**47.4%**	**9**
Beginner High	5.3%	1
Intermediate Low	10.5%	2
Intermediate Mid	10.5%	2
Intermediate High	15.8%	3
Advanced Low	0.0%	0
Advanced Mid	10.5%	2
Advanced High	0.0%	0

3. What is your level of Arabic now?

answered question	**19**
skipped question	**0**

	Response Percent	Response Count
Beginner	10.5%	2
Beginner High	**21.1%**	**4**
Intermediate Low	**21.1%**	**4**
Intermediate Mid	5.3%	1
Intermediate High	**21.1%**	**4**
Advanced Low	10.5%	2
Advanced Mid	5.3%	1
Advanced High	5.3%	1

4. Rank the skills you improved during your Arabic learning in Oman

	answered question							**19**
	skipped question							**0**
	1 (Most Improved)	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6 (least Improved)**	**Rating Average**	**Response Count**
Reading	6.3% (1)	18.8% (3)	6.3% (1)	**31.3% (5)**	25.0% (4)	12.5% (2)	3.88	16
Writing	12.5% (2)	0.0% (0)	**37.5% (6)**	25.0% (4)	12.5% (2)	12.5% (2)	3.63	16
Speaking	**58.8% (10)**	5.9% (1)	11.8% (2)	11.8% (2)	11.8% (2)	0.0% (0)	2.12	17
Listening	5.3% (1)	**31.6% (6)**	21.1% (4)	10.5% (2)	5.3% (1)	26.3% (5)	3.58	19
Grammar	5.6% (1)	16.7% (3)	22.2% (4)	16.7% (3)	5.6% (1)	**33.3% (6)**	4.00	18
Vocabulary	16.7% (3)	22.2% (4)	11.1% (2)	5.6% (1)	**38.9% (7)**	5.6% (1)	3.44	18

5. Arabic language requirement is the main reason I applied for this program.

	answered question	**19**
	skipped question	**0**

	Response Percent	**Response Count**
Strongly Agree	**26.3%**	**5**
Agree	5.3%	1
Somewhat agree	**26.3%**	**5**
Somewhat disagree	21.1%	4
Disagree	10.5%	2
Strongly disagree	10.5%	2

6. I used Arabic in my daily life (outside the classroom)

	answered question	**19**
	skipped question	**0**

	Response Percent	**Response Count**
Always	15.8%	3
Usually	10.5%	2
Sometimes	**42.1%**	**8**
Rarely	31.6%	6
Never	0.0%	0

7. Homestay experience was useful to my language learning.

	answered question	**19**
	skipped question	**0**

	Response Percent	**Response Count**
Strongly Agree	10.5%	2
Agree	5.3%	1
Somewhat agree	31.6%	6
Somewhat disagree	5.3%	1
Disagree	0.0%	0
Strongly disagree	5.3%	1
Not Applicable	**42.1%**	**8**

8. I was aware that Omani Arabic differed from Modern Standard Arabic before coming to Oman.

	answered question	**19**
	skipped question	**0**

	Response Percent	**Response Count**
Strongly agree	**36.8%**	**7**
Agree	26.3%	5
Somewhat agree	10.5%	2
Somewhat disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree	15.8%	3
Strongly disagree	10.5%	2

9. The amount of Spoken (Omani Arabic) I was exposed to in the class was sufficient

	answered question	**19**
	skipped question	**0**

	Response Percent	**Response Count**
Strongly Agree	0.0%	0
Agree	**47.4%**	**9**
Somewhat agree	15.8%	3
Somewhat disagree	15.8%	3
Disagree	10.5%	2
Strongly disagree	10.5%	2

10. The difference between Omani Arabic and modern standard Arabic impacted my learning.

	answered question	**19**
	skipped question	**0**

	Response Percent	**Response Count**
Strongly Agree	10.5%	2
Agree	**31.6%**	**6**
Somewhat agree	21.1%	4
Somewhat disagree	10.5%	2
Disagree	15.8%	3
Strongly disagree	10.5%	2
Can you say how? Show Responses		14

Appendix B1: Focus Group 1 questions

7 Participants from SIT Study Abroad: Student A (low intermediate), Natalie (high intermediate), Ethan (beginner), Sydney(high intermediate), Olivia (high intermediate), Ellen (high intermediate), Amina (low intermediate)

Q1: Thank you very much. So my first question is, how are aware are you right now of the difference between Arabic and dialects. I am using the term diglossia all the time because I am used to it, I have studied it. But the concept itself, the phenomenon of Arabic having two verities, how did you come to be or how aware are you of it right now?

Q2: Now we will move to talk about your learning experience. You said that you have come to know that there is a difference at different stages of your learning Arabic. So, how does it impact your learning? In what ways did it impact your learning, in Oman specifically, because for most of you this is the first time you are learning Arabic while at the same time you are using it outside of the classroom?

Q3: So, this question leads me to the integration of the two in the classroom. So I am going to ask you two questions – how did you like the integration of the two in the classroom? Did you like it and do you like more of it? and how did you use both, meaning mutually reinforcing what you learn in the classroom and what you learn outside.

Q4: Actually you talked about something I wanted to ask about, how useful it is. So that is one parameter for which one likes to learn a language for: usefulness. But also, what you learn in the class you are going to be tested on at some point in your life, if not for this class, for some other reason. Most of the tests you will be doing are in MSA, especially if it is written. SO how do these two things pull when you thinking about learning Arabic? Being useful outside of the classroom or learn for the test?

Q5: My next question is about motivation to learn Arabic. From what I heard, I didn't sense any demotivation to learn the language either at the beginning to start learning Arabic when you realized that Arabic has this difference, or even after you started and making you think to stop learning Arabic. So how did this factor of diglossia or differences impact your motivation to learn Arabic?

Q6: So actually that would be my last question. What is next for you with Arabic having experienced the difference between *fuSHa* and *'amyia*?

Appendix B2: Focus Group 2 questions

5 Participants from SIT Study Abroad: Student B (high intermediate), Linh (beginner), Jenny (beginner), Janey (High intermediate), Greg (beginner)

Q1: So the first question is how aware are you of the phenomenon of diglossia, which is the difference between Standard Arabic and dialects, in your experience in Oman? How aware are you of that difference now?

Q2: so about this difference, once you were aware of it, how did it impact your learning inside and outside the classroom?

Q3: did that difference when you were aware of it, did it impact your motivation to start learning Arabic, in some of your cases, or continue after you have started?

Q4: So those two both of them being present together in your daily life and in the classroom how did you like how it was presented in the classroom?

Q5: Would you like more dialect if you have to do this again, if you are starting again?

Q6: so what is your plan with Arabic next? How is this experience going to be useful for you?

Q7: Any more thoughts on the issue?

Appendix B3: Focus Group 3 questions

7 Participants from MGM: Heidi (high beginner), Ana (high beginner), Meredith (low intermediate), Sugey (high beginner), Paul (high beginner), Jay (high beginner), Matt (low advanced)

Q1: How did you become aware of the difference between MSA and OA, do you remember?

Q2: How would you say this impacted your learning since most of the respondents here said they didn't have much exposure to the difference beforehand?

Q3: Thanks for bringing up motivation because that was my next question. Could you say more about that?

Q4: Let's now shift to your instruction of Arabic. How did it integrate both MSA and Omani Arabic and how did you like that, especially the exposure to Omani Arabic?

Q5: So, knowing what you know right now, what you would you like to do to learn the language? What approach?

Q6: Some of you have already answered this question? How much Arabic you think you have used in your daily life?

Q7: Any more thoughts on the issue, the difference and how it impacted your interaction with Arabic

Appendix C: Interview 1 questions

(Interviewee 1, Robyn, High Intermediate, studied Arabic in Oman, USA and Egypt and works in Oman)

RESARCHER: Would you please first tell me about yourself and how long have you studied Arabic and how are studying right now?

Robyn: OK my name is Robyn right now I am a US Fulbright scholar here in Oman on a ten-month grant, before that i was an SIT undergraduate student, and I have studied Arabic for almost 3 years first in Oman and then in the US then in Egypt and then back in Oman.

RESARCHER: And how aware are you of the phenomenon of diglossia (the difference between '*amyia* Arabic and *fuSHa* Arabic)?

Robyn: I guess I mean that became clear right at the beginning because I knew that Arabic I was listening was not the Arabic people were speaking. But it wasn't until probably my 2nd year that I had enough grammar and enough basics to start to learn colloquial, to learn *'amyia*.

RESARCHER: How would you rate your level right now?

Robyn: Like- higher intermediate

RESARCHER: what are you able to do in a daily basis?

Robyn: A basic conversation, usually topics I am familiar with more like history and culture. I tend to be more strong on than technical things. Reading, depending on the topic, and TV also depending on the subject, so yeah say high intermediate.

RESARCHER: And how much do you say you use Arabic in your daily life?

Robyn: I wish I used it more because I mostly just spoke in English for my research and for my projects but I just finished my tutoring at SIT and that was a couple of hours a week of just Arabic only. And then I tried to listen to the radio as much as I can and to watch TV as well.

RESARCHER: so would you give it any percentage?

Robyn: Say maybe 20 percent of the time

RESARCHER: But you think you are able to use it more?

Robyn: I wish I could.

RESARCHER: What skills do you think you improved more?
Robyn: Being in Oman- well before when I came first to Oman I have never studied Arabic so I had to study fuSHa and we had to learn the basics but when I came back this time I had enough grammar and enough comprehension that I started to study Khaliji ‘amiya which was brand new to me and something I really wanted to learn. So that was probably my goal and what I hoped to improve on. Also, classical grammar is basically what you want to learn.

RESARCHER: So, you think you have a better grasp of the difference, or the ‘*amyia-fuSHa* dichotomy in a way now this second time in Oman?

Robyn: Yeah. Because as I said not knowing any Arabic, I understood that what I was learning is not what people were speaking but my comprehension was so low that it didn’t make a huge difference to me

RESARCHER: and what about motivation? when first finding about the difference, did it deter you? How did it impact your motivation?

Robyn: I was very motivated, because the biggest leap for me in terms of learning ‘*amyia* and connecting it to my *fuSHa* was when i was studying in Egypt.. We had a specifically Egyptian colloquial class.

RESARCHER: was this before?

Robyn: It was this past summer, it was June to September this past year and I think it was during that class and after that I could all of a sudden understand my music and understand TV. And it really unlocked so many doors. So for me it really motivated me.

RESARCHER: Through understanding the difference?

Robyn: Yeah.

RESARCHER: So coming back to Oman with that knowledge also impacted your motivation?

Robyn: Yeah because at that point I understood what the difference was between *fuSHa* and *‘amyia* I mean here in the gulf I think it is a little bit closer. I think in Egypt it is really really big gap between the classical and the spoken. Here it is closer but knowing there is a difference, that was of my goals so I wanted my tutor to help me as I wanted to learn colloquial.

RESARCHER: And now you seem to appreciate that difference between *‘amyia* and *fuSHa*- do you think it is useful to learn both? Would it be better to learn one before the other? What is your idea about that?

Robyn: I guess it depends on why you are learning Arabic. Because I think most students in the US who study Arabic study classical because that’s mostly what we study; the Quran, the texts,

we don't do much of social media or TV or Music as much. But i think that is changing now that there is much more interest in the Arab world and the Middle East culture. So I think you will start to see more classes in the US that try to introduce more 'amyia but it seems there is an emphasis on fuSHa just because it is the standard, it is the easiest to learn because it is understood and it is the same standard in each country, fuSHa doesn't change but 'amiya does.

RESARCHER: So I am going to say few things and I want to hear your opinion on them, the statements.
- Modern standard Arabic or classical is no one's mother tongue so there is no use of learning it
- what do you think?

Robyn: I disagree. I think it is the root of everybody's mother tongue. I guess it is the mother tongue and everything else are the children or the derivatives from it

RESARCHER: Another statement, learning the colloquial or any '*amyia* wouldn't be useful because once you leave that country you are not going to use it.

Robyn: I guess a little bit because i have to say that my Egyptian is not so helpful here because it is very different. But learning any dialect helps you appreciate the difference between the classical and spoken, colloquial.

RESARCHER: So now you have four different learning experiences with Arabic, first in Oman as a beginner, then you learned it in the states then in Egypt and then in Oman again. So that is a lot of exposure. What would you say was the most useful among them and why?

Robyn: Well I guess I have to say that my first introduction to *'amiya* which was in Egypt was very very helpful just because I never had an Egyptian teacher before and I have never - I guess at that time my Arabic was at a good enough level that I could use my Arabic, so for me it was really important to learn '*amyiya* and to immerse myself in it. So I think that was kind of the most important moment.

RESARCHER: So knowing that your experience is probably not the experience of most learners of Arabic, they dont have the chance to be in two different Arabic countries, sometimes you could only get to one Arabic country or you just learn it in the states. So what do you think would be the best approach?

Robyn: Well I guess the best approach would be to have as many different teachers as you can and trying to have native speaking tutors because I know at least from my program I had only one teacher and she was Moroccan. So I just got really used to the Moroccan accent, then we had an evaluator coming at the end and she gave us an oral exam and she spoke Iraqi Arabic which I had never heard before. So just the accent completely threw me off. So if you only get the chance to study in the states, just having a variety of teachers is probably the best you can do.

RESARCHER: And the methods and strategies and ways you have been taught Arabic, what would you change if you were to change things?

Robyn: I would use the Alkitab book series which is pretty much standard. There is couple of other books, but it is probably the most common, and I liked it. I really liked Alkitab. But I wish we had a separate grammar book, because I think the grammar that they offered is not very strong. so as a result I felt that I had to focus a lot on grammar this year, because my grammar was very poor.

RESARCHER: In relation to the introduction of ‘amiya and fuSHa, how would you do it?

Robyn: I think you have to start with fuSHA, I think you have to start with the basics. And you need to start with classical Arabic. but I think listening to music, watching TV shows, and having your teacher stops every couple of minutes to explain what is going on, watching with subtitles and things like that is probably the best way to introduce it.

RESARCHER: How did being in a homestay or not being in a homestay impacted your experience?

Robyn: Unfortunately at the time it didn’t really help me because I had no Arabic and my family were completely bilingual, and my homestay parents spoke Swahili so whenever we got together with their family it was just Swahili. So I didn’t really get to speak too much Arabic.

RESARCHER: Any thing else or thoughts you want to add about the issue?

Robyn: Well I hope I get to keep studying when I go back home

RESARCHER: so yeah, what is your next step that might involve Arabic?

Robyn: I think I would want to have a job, I particularly want to work for the government in a position that would allow me to keep using Arabic and keep learning it, there are a lot of programs. They need the Arabic speakers. And so I would like to find a position that would keep training me, because it seems I come so far that i hate to lose it.

RESARCHER: Are you planning to keep studying it formally or what?

Robyn: As of right now, no but that is because i am going to move when I get home but when I get settled I really would like to find a tutor.

RESARCHER: Thank you very much!

Appendix D: Data coding example

Selecting quotes from the survey comments according to themes

CONFUSION In the beginning I was really confused when Omanis spoke to me in Omani Arabic and when they would correct me. However, once I understood the differences it has been a lot more simple for me to understand. (Survey respondent 1, high beginner, 1 semester of Arabic)

AWARENESS I barely was aware there was a difference. (survey respondent 3, beginner, no prior Arabic study)

I have noticed that the most common phrases that I speak in Arabic are colloquial Omani Arabic. AWARENSS I don't think my MSA teacher back in the states will be at all happy with that. It has helped me appreciate the different between Amia and MSA, but I feel that MSA would be more helpful to me in my future study of the Middle East and Arabic language. (survey respondent 4, high intermediate, 4 semesters of Arabic)

The amoung of Omani dialect taught in class was sufficient for this sort of strange beginning phase of learning the language. It is, however, really important to learning the language, because speaking the dialect allows one to approach and understand more people in he community, including thouse without extensive MSA knowledge. INTERACTION Subtle differences just in saying, "hello, how are you?" can through someone off who hasn't heard them before, and even deter them from practicing in the future, for fear of embarassment or confusion CONFUSION. Having experience speaking with those speaking Englih as a sesond language, it is often really awkward and the use of words seems to be at a level above what people speak in day to day life. In general, I think understanding some of the diferences provides more confidence and opportunities for speaking outside of class, which increases likelihood of developing a real fluency in the language. (survey respondent 5, low intermediate, 1 semester)

I prefer speaking dialect Arabic, but was instructed to use MSA in class. This caused me some trouble as I would switch back and forth frequently when speaking CONFUSION. (survey respondent 6, mid advanced, more than 4 semesters)

Since I was using Omani Arabic at home and MSA at school, it was a bit confusing as a beginner. CONFUSION However, I spoke English at home more than Arabic. The way this impacted me the most was probably that when I tried to listen to my family speaking to pick up on things, they were using Omani Arabic, so there were probably many things that I would have recognized in

MSA but didn't since they were speaking the Omani dialect. (survey respondent 7, beginner, no prior Arabic)

It's difficult to study a language that isn't spoken in the home. As I wasn't being graded on my Omani, I didn't put as high of a priority on it. I also missed a lot of the spoken Arabic classes because of my program. LEARNING At times I had to make the conscience choice to not memorize Omani words and instead memorize the MSA ones. I couldn't talk with Omanis without first telling them that I only knew MSA. (survey respondent 8, low intermediate, 2 semesters)

The words are different in a lot of cases! And things were pronounced different as well. AWARENESS I can't say exactly how they were different, my arabic is not good enough to do that. (survey respondent 10, beginner, no prior Arabic)

The difference between MSA and Omani Arabic did not have a noticeable impact on my learning, since I already had a foundation in MSA and the amount of Omani Arabic we were exposed to in class was significantly less than the amount of MSA. LEARNING (survey respondent 11, high intermediate, 3 semesters)

While I am more comfortable speaking in Arabic in general now, the Arabic that I speak has a very Omani flavor. I'm not sure what the implications will be when I return to the states to study Arabic, but I'm sure I will be using Omani vocabulary in my MSA studies. (survey respondent 12, high intermediate, more than 4 semesters)

The differences between Omani Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) aren't that great. AWARENESS Therefore, the few differences that we were faced with did not make a great impact on my learning of the language as a whole. (survey respondent 13, low intermediate, 3 semesters)

Much of our basic conversation (things used in daily life: basic greetings and conversation, taxis, cafes, etc) have Omani specific equivalents. This happens to be the most useful arabic, the most practiced and the most differentiating across the region. (survey respondent 14, high intermediate, more than 4 semesters)

Whether studying Omani Arabic or MSA learning still happens. It was nice to be exposed to both because Omani Arabic also has its own nuances. There is more exposure to Omani Arabic because it is de rigor within its own country. (survey respondent 15, beginner, no prior Arabic)

It most just required more learning, LEARNING particularly on the comprehension side. My vocabulary usually transfered out of the classroom, so it was just a matter of learning another set of words to listen for, and getting used to the accent and speed. (survey respondent 17, high intermediate, 3 semesters)