

Integrating Technology into Arabic Classroom

Engaging the iGeneration

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Abstract:

The abstract is twofold:

1. In preparing for 21st Century education and to meet the challenges of change, Arabic Language teachers should be well equipped for their "digital" learners.
2. Arabic teachers should be ready to take students to a higher level of learning by applying best practices and, consequently, making the digital experience a personal one through constructing meaningful, concrete and lasting experiences in learning Arabic. Students should be able to use social media applications that make most sense to them. They need to see what matters to them in a digital form, which is also their way to move on to a higher level of achievement.

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Statement of problem

Realistically speaking, Arabic teachers do not seem to be ready yet for 21st Century education. There is a real challenge for Arabic Language teachers to be prepared for their "digital" learners. To face this challenge, they need to get prepared to be technologically qualified. From personal observation during workshops and meetings with Arabic teachers around the country, there is undoubtedly a low percentage of teachers who integrate technology, web.2 tools, and social media tools into the teaching/learning process.

The requirement of integrating technology within the classroom compels us to take a deeper look into putting best practices of teaching foreign languages into action. One of the practices is integrating technology into teaching and learning Arabic. There are many examples that will demonstrate this process:

When a student learns the subject matter, what is she/he going to do with this information? How would that apply to her/his life in which way, shape or form? And how is she/he going to excel and advance to a higher level of learning?

Review of literature

"The future is here. It's just not evenly distributed yet."

--William Gibson

1-Barnett Berry, from the *Center for Teaching Quality, in Hillsborough NC, stated in his article: "teacher education for tomorrow"*:

Barnett Berry said: "We point to specific skills teachers need to possess for the schools of today and tomorrow. For example, teachers must be prepared with the ability to find and adapt new technologies to engage iGeneration students — as well as work across traditional subject area lines to broker 21st century project-learning opportunities for them." He directs teachers to truthfully recognize the need and courageously address the issue of technological readiness as a challenge to face and engage in. If the iGeneration is not busy with the same kind of activities that they adore and function dramatically well in, then we lose this generation into boredom and having an aversion to learning Arabic.

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2- In response to the growing need for integrating technology into teacher education programs, the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) released a revised set of [technology standards](#) for all teachers:

- Teachers demonstrate a sound understanding of technology operations and concepts.
- Teachers plan and design effective learning environments and experiences supported by technology.
- Teachers implement curriculum plans that include methods and strategies for applying technology to maximize student learning.
- Teachers apply technology to facilitate a variety of effective assessment and evaluation strategies.
- Teachers use technology to enhance their productivity and professional practice.
- Teachers understand the social, ethical, legal, and human issues surrounding the use of technology in PK-12 schools and apply that understanding in practice.

3- BEST PRACTICES in

FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

The National Association of District Supervisors of Foreign Languages (NADSFL) has identified the following characteristics of effective foreign language instruction. These guidelines provide a basis for common understanding and communication among evaluators, observers, and practitioners in classrooms where foreign/second languages are taught. The characteristics reflect also the importance of language learning strategies, diverse learning styles, the use of authentic cultural documents, and the use of technology as an instructional tool.

1. The teacher sets high expectations for all students, designs assessment, and organizes instruction to engage and motivate all learners.
2. The teacher and students communicate purposefully in the target language as listeners, speakers, readers, writers, and viewers.
3. There is more student activity than teacher activity in most lessons. Student activity includes student to student interactions, as well as teacher to student interactions. Students work independently, in pairs, and in groups. Students ask and answer questions and they create with language.
4. Students take risks as language learners because the learning environment is positive and supportive.
5. When error correction is appropriate, students are given opportunities, including wait-time, to self-correct.
Teacher correction of student errors is often done through follow-up review and re-teaching strategies.
6. Assessments are ongoing. Students are assessed formally and informally on how well they are able to meet the objectives of the lesson. Continuous self-assessments for students and teachers are encouraged.
7. Students use language specific learning strategies and are encouraged to assess their own progress.
8. Culture is a natural component of language use in all activities.

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9. All students are guided to use all levels of thinking skills, e.g., they repeat, recognize, and recall as well as apply, create, and predict.
10. The diverse learning styles of all students are considered in the teacher's instructional planning.
11. Students have positive attitudes toward cultural diversity which are often demonstrated in the learning environment.
12. The physical environment including displays of student work is instructional, motivational, and informative.
13. Students and teachers realize that the text is not the curriculum, but rather a tool to help teach the competencies in the curriculum.
14. Students and teachers use a variety of print and non-print materials including authentic target language sources.
15. Technology, as appropriate and available, is used by students and teachers to facilitate learning and teaching.

4- Teaching the iGeneration: 5 Easy Ways to Introduce Essential Skills with Web 2.0 Tools, William M. Ferriter, Adam Garry

For us to recognize the iGeneration, William M. Ferriter and Adam Garry, they identify in their book the characteristics of the iGeneration: "You know what the iGeneration in your classroom looks like. They're the students willing to experiment their way through anything, confident that trial and error can crack the code better than reading manuals or following directions. They're turning to the Internet first and the library second when assigned research projects. Their minds are working fast, but not always as deeply or as accurately as the adults in their lives would like."

The authors then, push teachers to take up the task of facilitating, directing and setting students to develop: "Yet teachers can capture the attention of the iGeneration and help them grow by integrating technology into classrooms in a way that focuses on the skills that have been important for decades".

They come up with a list of the benefits of integrating tech tools into teaching that:

- Includes a wealth of handouts and activities focused on each skill and digital tool discussed
- Explores practical methods to connect the enduring skills taught for generations with the technology that students are using every day
- Presents concrete ways for students to make a difference around the world
- Provides student and teacher step-by-step directions for each digital tool
- Investigates numerous online resources and discusses the pros and cons of each one
- Provides step-by-step tutorials of online resources at (example): go.solution-tree.com/technology

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5- In his book: *Educating the Net Generation*, Bob Pletka Ed.D. , chapter 4: My so-called Digital life, discusses a project that was implemented. He states that “one type of instructional technology that engages students in discussion and creates a sense of inclusion is computer Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL). CSCL is a system of collaborative learning that uses technology to build knowledge and expertise, support student learning, and facilitate group interaction As a result, student engagement and achievement are likely to be enhanced. (page79).

On page 91 one articulate student states: “we must practice and utilize what we are taught, which will in turn give us more insight in what we already know. For teenagers, what is being taught must have relevancy and purpose. Just as students find relevancy and a purpose in hands-on classes, I found such in doing the E-maze project. My experience from this project has proven it true. I witnessed my classmates rummaging through the thesaurus at 9:30 on a Friday night to better enhance their narratives in an effort to improve their chances of being chosen. Whether it is doing science labs, painting in art class or just mistakes I’ve made in the past, I think we learn by doing. In *The art of Looking Sideways*, Alan Fletcher Said: “the fact is that the mind thinks with ideas not information, so acquiring knowledge is useless unless one learns how to use it. A dictionary may contain all the words but no one can tell a poet which to choose or what to write.”

6- Teaching and Learning with the Net Generation

By Cassandra Barnes, Raymond C. Marateo, and S. Pixy Ferris

In *Teaching and Learning with the Net Generation*, Cassandra Barnes, Raymond C. Marateo and S. Pixy Ferris strongly recommend that practice of integrating technology is what “make Net Geners more assertive information seekers and shapes how they approach learning in the classroom.

These students make conscious choices about what learning techniques work best for them, which can include reading lecture notes online, viewing interactive media such as PowerPoint presentations or digital images, or working in groups.”

When assessing the functionality of these forms of practice, they advocate that “Such an assessment is supported by educators and scholars whose findings indicate a greater desire for active, engaged learning experiences among Net Gen students.”

They even propose that from previous research “Oblinger and Hagner (2005) observe that Digital Age students express a need for more varied forms of communication and report being easily bored with traditional learning methods. Glenn (2000) notes that Net Geners need self-directed learning opportunities, interactive environments, multiple forms of feedback, and assignment choices that use different resources to create personally meaningful learning experiences, while Hay (2000) finds that Net Geners want more hands-on, inquiry-based approaches to learning and are less willing simply to absorb what is put before them.”

What explains these shifts in learning styles? Tapscott (1998) argues that this more independent learning style has grown out of the ingrained habits of seeking and retrieving information from the Internet, which marks a striking contrast to previous generations of students, who tended to acquire information more passively from authority figures.

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7- Using Wiki Technology to Engage Students

Educational Technology Strategies for Creativity and Collaboration

Sep 18, 2008 [David R. Wetzel](#)

For example, David R. Wetzel wrote in his article “Using Wiki Technology to engage students” that “Teachers and students work collaboratively in a student centered technological learning environment, as Wikis bridge the digital gap between technological tools”. Later he added that: “The collaborative nature of a class Wiki allows teachers to move their teaching to a new level. This new level involves students in the teaching and learning process. [Science newsletter projects](#) is an example of this type of collaborative use of Wikis by students.”

One teacher asked: so what are Wikis?

“Wikis are a powerful tool that bridges the gap of many technology tools available in the classroom.” They let teachers perform many tasks and have a reasonable control over the construction and the function of the Wiki.

Teachers could:

- Upload interactive lessons, which take advantage of in class and online resources.
- Embed links to online resources to support the lesson such as videos and pictures.
- Access documents which have been uploaded for students to view such as Power Point presentations, project guidelines, assessment rubrics, and more.
- Upload homework assignments that can be viewed by students and parents; such as worksheets (for students who lose their copy), reading assignments, project guidelines, and more.
- Use LCD projectors to take advantage of all the interactivity discussed above.
- Teach their entire lesson with an interactive whiteboard, which allows the saving of teacher and student work in some models.

Strategies for Transforming Learning with Wikis:

Students’ learning of subject content is raised to a new level because of their ability to easily collaborate in the learning process. How this process is transformed include:

- Students can save their class work in personal Wiki folders and complete assignments from home and then submit assignments to teachers online, via the class Wiki.
- Student groups can collaborate on work during and after school. This is accomplished by posting class work in group Wiki folders for later editing by group members on a future date or from home.

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- Student groups can edit each other's work as they complete a class project, resulting in a more collaborative effort.
- Students are held accountable for group work, because a Wiki records who participated or did not participate in group projects.

Wikis transform teaching and learning, because of the collaborative nature of this technological tool which actively engages students in the learning process.

Methods

-Teachers will be handed an inventory sheet to determine if their students are likely to be engaged in class.

-The ideas and observations of this topic are shared through a power point presentation which includes:

-An introduction on the importance of preparing ourselves as Arabic teachers for the 21st Century education.

-Explaining the importance of applying best practices, concentrating on integrating technology into teaching Arabic.

-Several examples of students' work/videos will be shared.

-Ideas and insights will be asked of attendees.

Recommendations of practical implementation

Scott Moore, Arthur F. Thurnau put together "Strategies for Using Technology and Collaboration to Engage Students". They advice to:

Use class time for doing and interacting, not sitting and listening

- Use class time wisely; it is the most valuable time instructors have.
- Keep lectures to a minimum and have students work on specific tasks.
- Use class time to help students develop critical problem-solving skills.
- Make yourself available to help students with their specific questions and difficulties.

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Use class technology (especially wikis and blogs) to support collaboration and sharing

- Create a wiki for a class website so that students and the instructor can be co-authors of and contribute information to the site.
- Use the wiki to facilitate communication between instructor and students (and among students) through announcements, exercises, and information sharing.
- Have a different student each day write and post notes related to the day's in-class activities. Encourage students to update or change the notes in the wiki.
- Assign one student per class session to generate and post test questions based on the material covered in class; students can view and edit these questions on the wiki.
- Encourage students to post blog entries regularly to share information—with students and with you—about interesting sites and tools, technical tips, data collection, etc.

Teach students to think like scientists

- Incorporate a process of discovery throughout the semester.
- Use assignments as an opportunity for students to practice scientific thinking (gathering, analyzing, evaluating, and summarizing data) and learn something new.
- Use in-class time to practice process of data analysis.
- Give students the opportunity to share/publish results (e.g., on the website).

Give students the opportunity to work on assignments that are personally meaningful

- Allow students to choose their own topics. This enhances student buy-in and intrinsic motivation to work on the project and think deeply about the subject.
- Encourage students to collaborate and help each other with technical details, assignment clarification, etc.

Allow (and encourage) students to teach one another... and you

- Create opportunities for them to develop the skills needed for teaching (e.g., reflecting on what they know and don't know, thinking about how to communicate new information effectively).
- Use projects as structured teaching opportunities where students take on the role of a topical expert who must inform colleagues about their topic.
- Have students use blogs and wikis to share and reflect on information related to class topics.
- Encourage students to teach and help each other outside of class.

Trust students to come to class (or not)

- Carefully consider the value you add to make students *want* to come to class. Students will attend class if they find it a worthwhile use of time.
- Consider putting **everything** on the Web (all announcements, assignments, and notes).

Provide many opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning

- Incorporate lots of analysis and writing and involve students in the grading process.
- Invite students to apply their learning to their interests to maintain a high quality of effort.

Add to that my own recommendations:

-Attending professional development and training sessions on using the computer and its applications.

-Attending training sessions on Using free online social media websites and web.2 tools

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-Attendees will be asked to do homework! To log into to a Google group for Arabic teachers and write their reflections, ideas, comments, suggestions and inspirations on the content of this presentation.

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Read more at Suite101: [Using Wiki Technology to Engage Students: Educational Technology Strategies for Creativity and Collaboration](http://www.suite101.com/content/using-wiki-technology-to-engage-students-a69448#ixzz1CNkOkkCu) <http://www.suite101.com/content/using-wiki-technology-to-engage-students-a69448#ixzz1CNkOkkCu>

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The National Association of District Supervisors of Foreign Languages (NADSFL) http://www.lbschools.net/Main_Offices/Curriculum/Areas/World_Language/pdf/BestPracticesforEffectiveForeignLanguageInstruction.pdf

http://www.21stcenturyschools.com/What_is_21st_Century_Education.htm

Examples of how one teacher uses a Wiki in her classes can be viewed at [Wiki Woman](#)

Additional information on uses of Wikis can be viewed by visiting [Using Wikis in Math Classes](#) and [Using Wikis in Science Classes](#) to read about example strategies and techniques for integration of Wikis.

Examples of ways the students’ can make the [most of learning with wikis](#)

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Description of presenter

Sanaa Jouejati has been an Arabic teacher for more than twenty years face-to-face and online. Developed online Arabic for the North Carolina department of Public Instruction and the Virginia Department of Education. A consultant, presenting at state and national language conferences, trains Arabic teachers on Arabic language pedagogy, Best Practices, concentrating on integrating technology into teaching Arabic. A member of the World Languages Standards Revision Working Group at the Ohio Department of Education. Chair, ACTFL Arabic-Special Interest Group.