



NEWSLETTER SPRING & SUMMER 2020

YOU SPOKE - WE LISTENED AND TOOK ACTIONS

For several years now, our students have let us know through evaluations and personal comments that they would like to focus more on everyday basic vocabulary and examples of real life speaking when learning Arabic. Survey data collected from our first- and second-year Arabic language classes revealed the following: an overwhelming majority, 85% of the students surveyed, thought that teaching Modern Standard Arabic is not sufficient and that they should also be exposed to or taught a local variety of Arabic as used by native speakers in oral communication. This desire mimics a national trend: with the emergence of the proficiency movement in second language acquisition, a number of national surveys have shown that learners of Arabic expect to learn a local variety of Arabic as well as Modern Standard Arabic.

| BREAKTHROUGH | |
|---|----------------------------|
| Honing Academic/Professional Skills Focusing on MSA | beyond year two |
| TRANSITIONAL | |
| Developing Academic/Professional Skills Focusing on MSA and varieties of Ammiyyah | |
| INTRODUCTORY | |
| Acquiring the Basics Experiencing the Sociolinguistic Realities of Arabic through MSA and Levantine | year two year one |

Primary, Secondary Discourse in Second Language Acquisition

The field of Arabic second language acquisition makes a distinction between the intimate personal or primary discourse (expressed in the dialect) and the fundamentally distant professional or secondary discourse (expressed in MSA). Students who learn Arabic only through MSA lack the tools of primary discourse that would allow them to interact with Arab peers and friends

on an informal level. This gap in communicative competence at the lower levels undermines the ultimate achievement of higher levels skills and can be compared to "building a major edifice without a deep and fortified foundation." (Ryding, 2017)

In order to be more mindful about what and how students learn, we have changed our first- and second-year approach to one where we focus more on teaching both: Modern Standard Arabic as well as dialectal forms to reflect the actual use of language by its native speakers. In our first two years of language instruction, in the introductory level, students will acquire the basic language skills in all four modalities: reading and writing through MSA and speaking and listening through Levantine Arabic. From the third year on, in the transitional level, students will start to develop academic and professional skills using MSA while continuously being exposed to a variety of Arabic dialects of their choice. In the highest level, the breakthrough level, advanced learners will be able to hone their academic and professional skills focusing on MSA.

OUR FALL 2020 COURSES



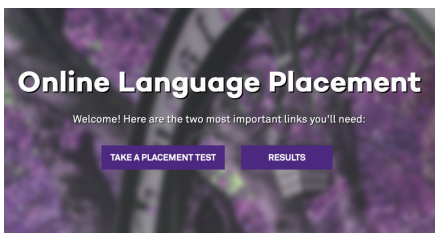
In order to keep students and our instructors safe and to insure an uninterrupted and sophisticated educational experience, we will be teaching courses synchronous online. We are confident that we can deliver a high-impact and deep learning experience and bring students closer as a virtual learning community. In addition to our regular language courses, we offer a course on *Beginning Persian*, a course on *Media Arabic* and, for the first time, a course that

explores the multi-faceted language and cultural history of *One Thousand and One Nights*. You can learn more about the courses we offer, including class descriptions and information on required books [here](#).

We are excited to welcome Taymaz Pour Hammad who will be teaching first-year Persian for us. Currently a PhD candidate in Comparative Literary Studies at Northwestern, Taymaz is writing his dissertation on English translations of the fourteenth-century Persian poet Hafez.

STAYING IN TOUCH

Even though campus is not yet quite open for business, students can always reach us: they can [schedule a zoom meeting](#) with Franziska Lys, Director of the MENA Languages Program, to introduce themselves or ask questions about enrolling in classes. Professor Lys is eager to meet new students anytime. Students can also [email](#) Charlene Mitchell, our program assistant, if they have a question or need a permission number for a class.



Language Placement

We want students who know Arabic, Turkish, Hebrew or Persian already and would like to enroll in our classes for the first time need to take the [Online Language Placement Test](#). The results of the test will allow us to place students into the appropriate class.

OUR INSTRUCTORS CONTINUE TO AMAZE US

The MENA Languages instructors are consummate professionals with many years of teaching experience among them. They continue to amaze us with their drive to improve their teaching and their desire to develop courses that engage and capture students' interests.



Three of our instructors in our program (Oya Topçuoğlu, Hanna Tzucker Seltzer, Ragy Mikhaeel) received a prestigious Alumnae of Northwestern grant to design three new content courses for our program. *Cairo and seven layers of civilization* (in Arabic), *The four-dimensional Jerusalem* (in Hebrew), and *Istanbul, gateway between the East and the West* (in Turkish) are being developed this summer with the help of the Media and Design Studio in WCAS. The courses will allow students to explore in the foreign language broader cultural, social, and political issues of the Middle East. Authentic texts and media sources are accompanied by creative language learning exercises designed to help students function across different registers and genres. The

target audience for these courses are learners who want to improve and solidify language skills on the intermediate mid / intermediate advanced level of language proficiency on the ACTFL scale.



Based on survey results from faculty and staff at NU, the Director of the MENA Languages Program, Franziska Lys, and 22 other faculty members, were named **Influencer** by the Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching. According to the faculty development research literature, an *influencer* is an individual who is central to shifting the perspectives and practices of a group of faculty. Research demonstrates that the influencer's role is key as a change agent within a community of practice.



All of our instructors use the summer months to improve their teaching skills. Three instructors are taking virtual workshops in the ACTFL sponsored *Learn-Explore-Apply: High Leverage Teaching Practices* series. They explore topics such as using authentic resources, using the target language, from input to processing to output, and teaching grammar communicatively. One instructor is a participant in the Mellon LCTL Collaborative Partners project at the University of Chicago developing shared assessments and curricula in Turkish. Another instructor explores the nuances and changes in the Levantine dialect through a series of online classes. We have also scheduled our own virtual workshops to explore the integrated approach of teaching Arabic, to find out how to teach the alphabet in a virtual environment, to learn about assessment using the ACTFL assessment rubrics, and to explore teaching interactively in a virtual environment using the writing capabilities of an iPad.

OUR AWARD-WINNING STUDENTS

Awards for Outstanding Achievements in Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, or Turkish

First-year

Maya Waldman, Jolie Boulos, Huma Manjra

Second-year

Lauren Collins, Jackson Miller, Georgia Schafer

Third- or Fourth-year

Natalie Myren



Special mention for their dedication to

language learning: Charles Hummel and Ernest Coppee (Arabic), Elena Laski (Hebrew), and Shayan Ghodsi (Persian).

Undergraduate Language Grants

Abigail Everding (Turkish), Georgia Schafer (Turkish), and Thomas Lourenco (Arabic) were awarded **Undergraduate Language Grants** to pursue their language and cultural studies. Read more about Abigail and Georgia [here](#). Congratulations to all!

OFFICE OF
UNDERGRADUATE
RESEARCH

Fulbright Awards

Dominic Owen Balestrieri-Fox was awarded the prestigious Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship. Dominic was one of 20 such award winners nationally, and he will be teaching in Turkey.



ARIT Summer Fellowships

Abigail Everding, another of Instructor Oya Topçuoğlu's students, was awarded the ARIT Summer Fellowship for Intensive Advanced Turkish Language Study at Boğaziçi University, in Istanbul, Turkey.



AMERICAN RESEARCH
INSTITUTE IN TURKEY

Gilman International Scholarship

Georgia Schafer and Abigail Everding, both in WCAS, won a Gilman International Scholarship to do the Bogazici University summer Turkish program next year. Congratulations to Georgia and Abigail and their instructor Oya Topçuoğlu.



CULTURAL EVENTS 2019/2020

Volunteering at a Refugee Center

Arabic instructor Rana Raddawi and Arabic Tutor Maher Said accompanied students learning Arabic to the **ICNA Relief Agency** in Rogers Park for a day of volunteer work at the Food Pantry. The students registered the names of refugees, helped with food preparation and the distribution of supplies and they were able to practice their Arabic with both the refugees and the on-site personnel.



Arabic instructor Fadia Antabli took her students out for a traditional meal, as did



Turkish instructor Oya Topçuoğlu had her students complete a Scavenger Hunt

A New Way of Experiencing Cultural Events.

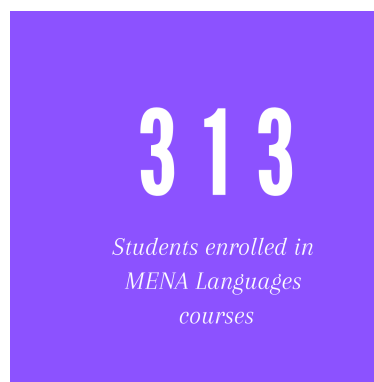
Teaching virtually in the spring gave us many opportunities to introduce our students to native speakers of Arabic, Hebrew, Turkish and Persian and to novel cultural events. Listening to a musician and singer playing the Arabian Oud, discussing how best to manage the Covid-19 crisis with a Jordanian psychologist,

Persian instructor Mazir Faridi. The students enjoyed traditional cuisine and speaking the language with native speakers.

at The Block Museum exhibit called *The Modernisms: Iranian, Turkish, and Indian Highlights from NYU's Abby Weed Grey Collection*.

and having one's fortune read from the sediments of a coffee cup, a custom that started in Turkey in the 16th century, were just some of the events students experienced.

OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS



Please forward this Newsletter and share our story!

The content of this Newsletter was produced by MENA Languages Program Director [Franziska Lys](#) and Program Assistant [Charlene Mitchell](#). Contact us with any questions or comments.

Program Office: mena-languages@northwestern.edu, (847)467-6783

Website: www.mena-languages.northwestern.edu

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