
VOICES OF ARABIC TEACHERS IN A SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE: TEACHING MATERIALS IN ARABIC AS MOTHER TONGUE CLASSES

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INTRODUCTION

In Sweden, children speaking another language besides Swedish with one or two caretakers have the right to learn their mother tongue in school if they fulfil the criteria stated by the Swedish National Education Agency and the Education Act¹. In elementary school (grades 1-9), around 80,000 children have the right to study “Arabic as Mother tongue” (Swe “arabiska som modersmål”), as a subject in school. The 80,000 children make up 7,4% of the total amount of pupils in grades 1-9. In this group, almost 59,000 children study Arabic as Mother Tongue, this is by far the largest group making up 5,7% of the total number of pupils in Swedish elementary schools². The children make up a heterogeneous group that can be very diverse regarding both geographical origins and time spent in Sweden, ranging from being born in Sweden to being newly arrived. The Arabic teachers follow the syllabus common for all languages taught as “mother tongue”, hence it is not specific for the Arabic language. However, there are some specific materials for Arabic teaching.³

There are students studying Arabic as Mother tongue at high school level, but this report focuses on the elementary school level.

On the 18th of May 2021, *Fenix Publishing House* (Fenixförlag) and *Qatar Foundation International* (QFI) launched a survey questionnaire to teachers of Arabic as Mother tongue in grades 1-9. The main purpose of the survey is to become more informed regarding the needs and challenges that Arabic teachers face in their work in Swedish municipalities and schools. Fenixförlag is eager to support bilingual students in learning their mother tongue; and QFI works on increasing access to learning Arabic in state-funded primary and secondary schools. Hence the need to learn more about how the subject “Arabic as mother tongue” (arabiska som modersmål) is being taught. The survey also aims to make the teachers’ voices central when planning future publications, teachers’ development workshops and seminars regarding the matter.

The survey questionnaire consisted of 52 items. First, the teachers were asked to answer some introductory questions about themselves, their experience as teachers and their degrees. The second part was related to the workplace and the classes they teach. The third part consisted of statements to which the teachers was asked to take a stand on a scale from 1-5 (1= Not important and 5= Very important). The fourth part focused on the pupils and parental contact. Lastly, the fifth part consisted of questions regarding teaching materials, textbooks and the extent teachers have access to suitable materials and libraries.

The survey questionnaire was closed on June 20th, 2021 and there were 82 total respondents. *This report builds on the answers of the 71 answers of the participants who are working as Arabic as mother tongue teachers at*

¹ <https://www.skolverket.se/andra-sprak-other-languages/english-engelska>

² The second largest language is Somali language with just over 17,000 pupils. (Official statistics from the Swedish National Agency of Education: <https://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/statistik/sok-statistik-om-forskola-skola-och-vuxenutbildning?sok=SokC&omrade=Skolor%20och%20elever&lasar=2020/21&run=1>)

³ The syllabus is included in the general curriculum for the compulsory school and can be found in English here: <https://www.skolverket.se/publikationsserier/styrdokument/2018/curriculum-for-the-compulsory-school-preschool-class-and-school-age-educare-revised-2018>

the moment, the other 11 answered “No” to the question if they are working as Arabic teachers. The teachers who answered “No” were not asked any further questions in the survey.

METHOD

This survey is a cooperation between several people with different competencies and specialisations. The content and questions of the survey were put together with the support and input from Nadia Sweilem, an Arabic mother tongue teacher and author in Sweden, along with Sofia Lindblom, a librarian with long experience and expertise working with multilingual books. Furthermore, input was given from *Qatar Foundation International* (QFI) through Dr Carine Allaf, Senior Programs Advisor, and Julia Sylla, Director of Programs. The survey was translated from Swedish to Arabic by Flora Majdalawi, Fenixförlag.

The questionnaire was created in Questback. The link to the survey was spread through Fenixförlag’s channels, encouraging the recipients to forward it to Arabic teachers. The channels were: Fenixförlag’s newsletter, the teachers’ magazine *Lärarrummet*, Bonnier publishing house contact list for teachers and librarians, librarians’ newsletter *Bibliotekarierummet*, Fenixförlag website and social media platforms Facebook and Instagram (including advertisements). Furthermore, the questionnaire was promoted in Facebook groups for teachers and mother tongue teachers and in QFIs social media channels. Emails were sent to mother tongue language centres in Stockholm, Göteborg, Lund, Kalmar, Norrköping, Linköping, Jönköping, Örebro, Västerås, Uppsala, Sundsvall, Umeå, Växjö, and Östersund. Through contacts the questionnaire was also spread in Denmark, Finland, and Norway. After the questionnaire was closed, the results were visualized using the same tool – Questback.

THE PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR WORK SITUATION

This section gives information about the participants and how they answered to the background questions in the questionnaire, sometimes in comparison with official statistics. It also describes the work situation and explains the reasons they see for students neglecting homework, etc.

Of the responding 82 participants, 71 are actively working as Arabic as mother tongue teachers. There were 11 teachers who replied “No” to the question if they are working as teachers of Arabic as Mother tongue. Those who answered “No” might work as Arabic as second language (“Moderna språk”) teachers, they might have received the link to the questionnaire by mistake.

The rest of this report and the percentages given are built upon the answers of the 71 teachers who are working as Arabic as mother tongue teachers. 69 of them are working in Sweden and two are working in Finland. Thus, in this report, it is mainly the Swedish system that is referred to when it comes to Education acts, regulations and statistics.

Almost 72% of the respondents are females and the rest are males. This reflects the official statistics of all Arabic as Mother tongue teachers in Sweden with just under 70% female teachers:

	Number of teachers							Average degree of employment in percent
	Total	Proportion (%)				With teaching degree	With permanent employment	
		Women	Men	Born in Sweden	Born outside Sweden			
All mother tongues	6 075	68,4	31,6	3,8	96,2	32,4	60,8	53
<i>Arabic</i>	<i>1 397</i>	<i>69,9</i>	<i>30,1</i>	<i>0,8</i>	<i>99,2</i>	<i>32,4</i>	<i>72,7</i>	<i>55</i>

Source: Statistics Sweden

Most of the teachers are between 40 and 59 years old. They work in municipalities all over Sweden, spread between urban and rural areas. The majority, almost 65% have a degree in Teaching/Education. This is a much higher number than the average total among Arabic mother tongue teachers in Sweden, 32,4%, which is also the average of all Mother tongue teachers in Sweden. 56% of the 71 teachers have been working as Arabic teachers for 1-9 years. 24% have done it for 10-19 years, 15,5% for 20-29 years. Just over 4% of the teachers have more than 30 years of work experience as Arabic teachers.

With few exceptions, all teachers see Arabic as an important subject. Almost 96%, whereas 84,5% ranked it as *very important* (no 5). They also see the connection between learning Arabic as a prerogative for learning skills to use in other subjects, 70,5 % gave this a "5" and 20% gave this a "4". However, they estimate that the students are not as aware of its importance. The majority of teachers estimate that the pupils feel safe or very safe during classes. Very few estimated the pupils are not feeling safe during classes. The pupils thrive and can concentrate during classes. The most frequent answer was they can concentrate *fairly well* (52%).

Almost 67% of the teachers work at more than two schools, and many of them work at several stages in the elementary school, for example, grades 3-6 and 7-9, or they work in all of the elementary school stages. 65% of the teachers conduct classes that require differentiated Arabic teaching. 15,5% of the teachers have pupils from the same classes but with different levels of Arabic. 14% of the teachers have pupils with the same level of Arabic but from different classes in the same Arabic class. Only 5,5% of the teachers have answered they have pupils from the same classes with the same level of Arabic in their Arabic classes. Among their pupils, the teachers answer that grades 1-3 and 7-9 have the highest attendance. The reason might be that the beginners are eager for the classes (possibly because the parents encourage them) whereas 7-9th graders are being graded and might have this as a motivation for attending the classes. Most of the teachers state that the pupils do their homework every, or every second time. When the pupils do not do their homework, the teachers see a variety of reasons such as no help from parents, lack of motivation or encouragement from parents to learn their mother tongue. The Arabic as Mother tongue classes are not mandatory. When pupils drop out of classes, 44% of the teachers state that they believe it is due to students having many exams and other homework. 34% state that students do not have time and 30% prioritize other subjects. 40% of the teachers state that they are in contact with the parents every month, 29% state that they are in contact every two weeks. 23% answered that they have contact at the parent/teacher meeting taking place every semester or once a year. Almost 9% of survey respondents state that they are in contact with the parents every second month.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this part emphasis will be on the focus of the survey. First how the teachers perceive the textbook and teaching material situation. Secondly, it also describes to what extent the teachers use the school library and how, if so. Thirdly, this part also includes the teachers' wishes for workshops and teacher training and possible networking.

TEXTBOOKS AND TEACHING/LEARNING MATERIALS

ACCESS TO BOOKS

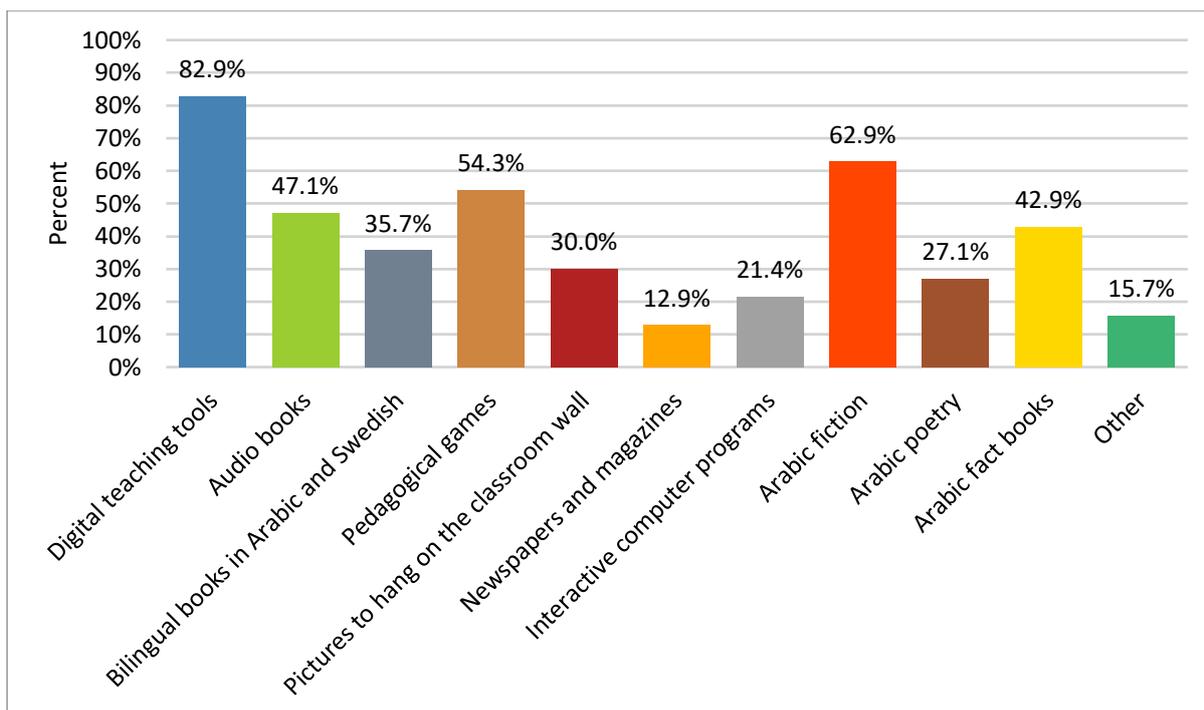
When asked about the biggest challenge finding textbooks, almost 33% of the teachers chose the option *Difficult finding suitable textbooks*, while 27% stated it is working fine for them and 26% stated *There are no suitable textbooks*. 13% stated that there are suitable materials, but they are too expensive. Hence, most of the teachers believe there are not enough suitable textbooks however some of them think there is enough suitable materials on the market but are not available to them due to financial reasons. Different municipalities have different systems for purchasing materials. It seems that most of the survey respondents work for public/municipality schools. 71% of them answered they do not know if the teachers can order what they want in independent schools. In municipality schools, 43% of the teachers say there are limits to how much the teachers can order. 24% of them say teachers can order what they need in municipality schools. 33% state they do not know if teachers can order what they need or if there are limits. 87% of the teachers stated that they would be interested in applying for extra (external) funding if possible.

When asking how teachers access Arabic literature, the survey allowed several answers. 45,5% answered that they buy materials online or in physical shops (books from Adlibris, a well-known online book supplier in Sweden, excluding – 8,5 answered this). The second most common way was that teachers borrow from public libraries and bring the materials to their schools (35,5%). The third most common answer was the teachers encourage students to borrow their own reading resources and bring them to class (33%). 24,5% of the teachers answered that they take their students to the public library so they can borrow books. 14,5% have answered that there is access to Arabic books in the school library.

Most of the teachers (56,5%) state that they use textbooks mostly for grades 1-3 classes. This is probably because students are beginners at this stage and there are several options of textbooks covering the alphabet and reading/writing for this group. The numbers for grade 4-6 is 17.5%, for grades 7-9 is 21,5% (4% replied "I do not know"). The increase for grade 7-9 might be due to a request for more textbook driven teaching because of grading from year 6. However, it is for the older pupils the teachers state that they miss textbooks. 50% responded that they miss it mostly for grades 7-9 and less so for grades 4-6 (28%) and least for grades 1-3 (13%). Almost 9% replied they do not know.

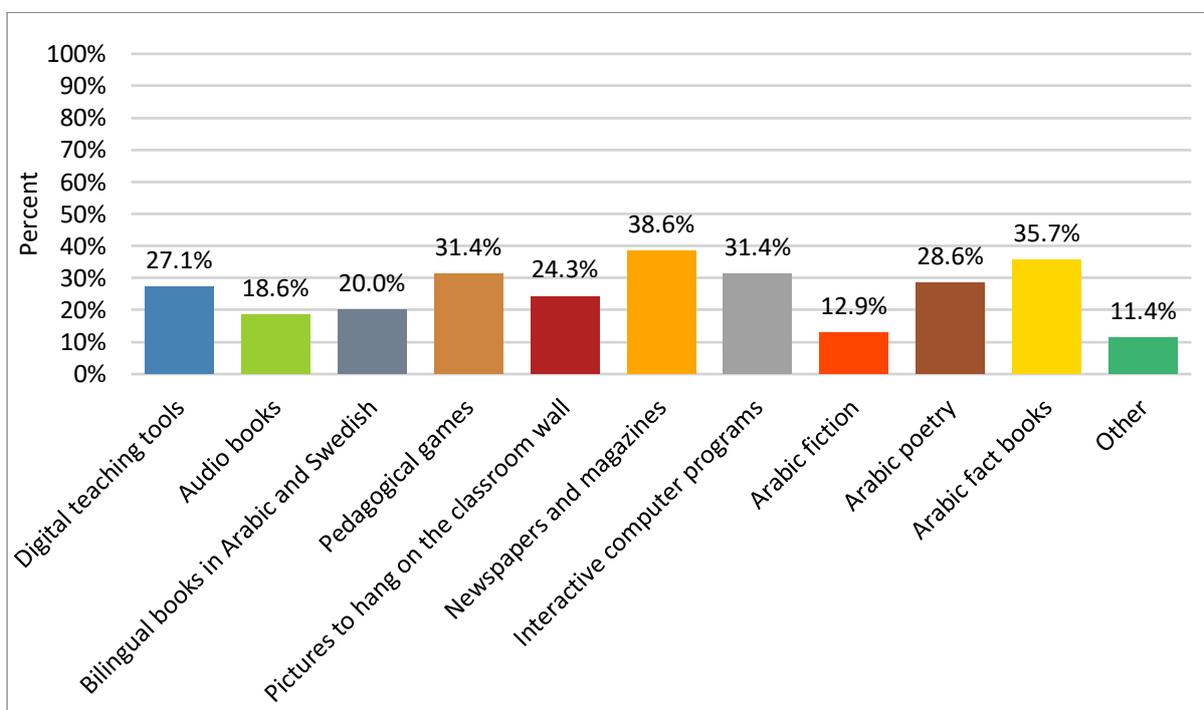
TYPES AND USE OF TEACHING MATERIALS

One of the questions in the survey was "Which pedagogical teaching materials do you use in your teaching?". The teachers could answer several options ("textbooks" excluded as they were the topic of earlier questions).



Almost all, 83% are using *digital teaching resources*. The second most frequent answer was *Arabic fiction* (63%). After these follow *pedagogical games* (53%), *audio books* (47%), *fact books in Arabic* (43%) *textbooks written parallel Arabic-Swedish*⁴ (35,5%) and *Arabic poetry* (27%).

The next question in the survey was “Which pedagogic/teaching materials are you missing?”:



The answers on missed materials corresponds with which types were less frequently used. Only 13% of the teachers stated that they use *newspapers* and 38,5% stated that they miss /would like to use Arabic language

⁴ In a question specifically about Arabic-Swedish books, 78,5% of the teachers answer yes on the question “Do you think it is good with parallel language books? Swedish and Arabic in the same book?” (15,5% answered No and the rest replied they do not know.

newspapers more. Newspapers/magazines was the most frequent answer to what the teachers are missing. The second most missed material was *nonfiction resources in Arabic* (35,5%). This was followed by *interactive computer games* and *pedagogical games* (both 31,5%). *Arabic poetry* (28,5%) and *digital teaching resources* (27%) were also mentioned as missing. When given the opportunity to comment on the overall topic of the survey, one teacher stated magnetic letters are difficult to find and she would like to use such. Yet another teacher commented that it is important with digital materials as it can be a struggle to carry books from one school to another.

As indicated above, the materials which work well for the teachers are of a wide variety. Some teachers have named the books or series they use. Many teachers answer the materials they use are either written for the Swedish pupils or that the teachers themselves adapt the materials to comply with the Swedish education act, values ("värdegrund"), curriculum and syllabus⁵. One series of textbooks that is common is Nadia Sweilem's العربية.. لغتي "Arabic is my language". Another one is لغتي العربية "My language is Arabic" by Ibrahim Shaker Jasem. For teaching letters and the first stage of writing/reading, some teachers also mention the series of Nada Abdullah Sanber.

Some also mention that Lebanese books can be suitable, but they do not explain their answers. Most probably what they mean is that the Lebanese textbooks are neutral when it comes to aspects such as religion and politics. "The Butterfly series سلسلة الفراشة" is one of the most popular ones among the teachers and this is a Lebanese one.

Similarly, some teachers do prefer materials from the Arab speaking world, although with adaptations:

"I believe textbooks from Arab countries are the best when it comes to teaching Arabic, they contain many beautiful pictures and fiction. They can be a bit difficult for the pupils who did not attend Arabic schools but it has been fine for the pupils who've been working hard and tried to work in school and then brought texts home and read with their parents at home. A big challenge is that the content has to be controlled by the teacher, as the teacher needs to remove what does not fit the Swedish culture or the Swedish Education Act." Male teacher without teaching certificate, in his fifties, working at one school with grade 7-9 south of Stockholm. (Translated from Swedish and adapted slightly by the author of this report.)

An important source of materials is the internet. Many teachers mention that they use digital resources and games for their teaching. Some say there are plenty of resources online, but the teachers need to know how to use them:

"There are many useful books and materials but there is a difficulty with games as the Internet contains a lot of educational materials, and the teacher must have experience in selecting and modifying." Male teacher without teaching certificate, in his fifties, working in several schools with several age groups in a rural area in mid Sweden. (Translated from Arabic and adapted slightly by the author of this report.)

Some teachers have specified which website they are using and those ones are: <https://arabicforall.net/kids/> (Website of a book series, based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and mentioned by two teachers in the survey.)

⁵ Since 1992, there is no entity regulating, approving, or following up on teaching materials, and if they comply with the teaching education act or syllabus. It is up to the teachers to find suitable materials and adapt them as they seem fit. This applies to all school subjects.

<https://attakallum.com/en/homepage/> (An Egyptian based website with a series of teaching and learning materials.)

<https://mothertongue.ae/> (Website of a language Centre in Abu Dhabi.)

<https://3asafeer.com/index.php> (An Arabic digital literacy platform based in United Arab Emirates.)

<https://madrassa.org/> (Free e-learning platform with many subjects, based in United Arab Emirates from an initiative of Sheikh Mohammed Rashid Al Maktoum, Ruler of Dubai.)

This leads us to address the specific language situation in Sweden. Several teachers say they are not satisfied with the materials available and state this as a reason to create their own materials. Several of them mention that they collect material from several sources to make a useful combination that fits their pupils. One teacher takes this even further and states:

"[I use] Books treating the Arabic language as a second language for the Arabic pupils, not as a first language." Female teacher with teacher's degree in her thirties, working at several schools in a big city teaching at different stages. (Translated from Swedish and adapted slightly by the author of this report.)

Two other teachers also state they aim at teaching Arabic as a foreign language. It seems that all the websites that the teachers are mentioning are created for pupils learning Arabic as beginners. It is not possible to say how many of them use these websites, as many of them just mention "digital resources". Five state that they use the sites for beginners. If it is because they view their students as students of a foreign language rather than a mother tongue is not specified. As the websites have different language levels the reason for the teachers choosing them does not have to be that they aim at beginner speakers of Arabic. However, one of the websites is the Global Curriculum Series المنهج العالمي. This series clearly aims at pupils learning Arabic as a foreign language and follows the standards of the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR). This one is mentioned by the Arabic teacher in Finland. Another source the Finnish teacher is mentions is Mohammed Karam El Gretlys book احب اللغة العربية "I Love Arabic (Language)".

Teachers also create their own materials to relate to connect the mother tongue subject to the rest of the curriculum.

"[My] Materials are focused on making Arabic part of the life and education of pupils and are not separate from what they learn at school. Thus, they contain information from different subjects, such as geography, biology and social sciences." Female teacher in her forties without teacher's degree working at one school in south of Sweden and teaching at several age stages. (Translated from Arabic and adapted slightly by the author of this report.)

FICTION AND NONFICTION BOOKS

Regarding material that works well in the classroom, the teachers are mentioning the use of fictional genres. Several teachers just mention "Fiction books" and do not specify further. 57% of the teachers state that they use fiction in their teaching. However, the term is not specified in the survey itself but some teachers state that they choose books such as:

Other teachers prefer short stories with questions added after the story. One teacher prefers when grammar is explained together with a summary of the story. Several teachers have mentioned the title صورة عائلية ("A Family

Photo⁶). This a chapter book with contemporary stories originally published by Majdalawi Masterpieces in Amman and licensed to Fenixförlag for a Scandinavian edition. Also mentioned from Fenixförlag is another book called الأقوى في الصف ("The Strongest in the class"). These titles come with extra free teaching materials and worksheets (free reproducible exercise sheets) which teachers appreciate.

THE SCHOOL LIBRARY⁷ AS A RESOURCE

According to Sweden statistics library report 2020, 534000 pupils from preschool class to the third year of high school have access to one of the 881 school libraries with at least part-time staffing. Besides these libraries there are also 395 integrated public- and school libraries in the Swedish municipalities. This gives further 126000 pupils access to school libraries. In total, there are around 1,3 million pupils in Swedish schools, around 45% of the pupils have access to part time staffed school libraries. The statistics does not state materials per language but the library law states that public libraries should cater for official minority languages and other mother tongues (such as Arabic) specifically.⁸ In Stockholm municipality alone, with around 100 000 pupils from preschool class to ninth grade, the school libraries have around 670 books in Arabic according to the search engine.⁹ However, browsing the results, some of the books target younger children as well.

All teachers state that they encourage pupils to read in their spare time. 64,5% of the teachers in the survey state that they use the library or use it sometimes, but 35,5% of the teachers state they do not use the school library¹⁰. However, 34% state that there are no Arabic books in their school library. 14% of the teachers state that they do not know if there are Arabic books in the school library or not.

Half of the teachers do not have any cooperation with the librarians while 45,5% get help and tips on Arabic books, 4% state they get other help from the librarians. Also, 44% of the teachers state they inform the librarians of suitable books to purchase, 56% of the teachers do not engage in giving tips. Furthermore, most of the teachers (54%) take their pupils to the library sometimes, 5,5% state they do it often whilst 40% never do. The percentage of teachers stating they never go to the school library reflects the percentage saying they do not have or do not know if the library has books in Arabic. Accordingly, 25,5% state that they do not know if the books in the library are too difficult for their pupils. On the other hand, 47% reply the books in the library are not too difficult and 27% state they are too difficult. In general, there seems to be a need to know more about the Arabic book collection available in libraries.

DIGITAL WORKSHOPS

The last part of the survey questionnaire consisted of several questions on the topic of professional development. The teachers were asked to rate digital workshop topics and how interesting they found each

⁶ This is a title of a series called "Hind wa Saif", written by Flora Majdalawi. Some of the series titles were licensed to Fenixförlag by Majdalawi Masterpieces, where a short Swedish summary is provided at the end of the book. "A Family Photo", one of the series titles is supplemented by a working booklet containing worksheets for: reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar and literary analysis.

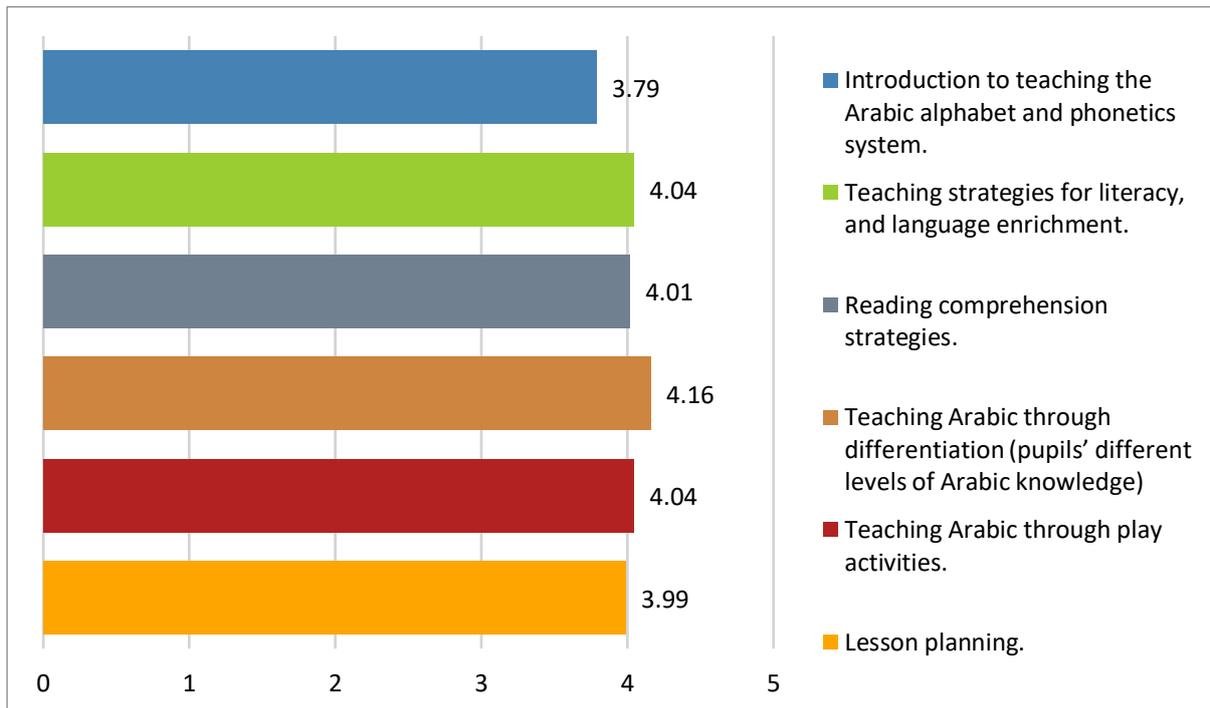
⁷ In the survey questionnaire, "school library" and "library" are both used. "School library" is dominating in the questions and "library" in the answers.

⁸ <https://www.kb.se/samverkan-och-utveckling/biblioteksstatistik/hamta-ut-statistik.html>

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https://skolbiblioteket.stockholm.se/#/search?s=&f=%257B%2522f_dct_language%2522%253A%255B%2522a_rabiska%2522%255D%252C%2522f_ax_target_group%2522%253A%255B%2522barn%2520%2526%2520ungd_omar%2522%255D%257D&so=&p=0&pp=10

topic. They could rate them from 1 to 5 where 1 means “not interesting at all” and 5 “very interesting”. The numbers in the table state the average rating:



From the above numbers we can see that all topics were popular and ranked high by the teachers. Especially the “Teaching Arabic through differentiation”. When the teachers were asked if there are any other topics they would like to gain more knowledge of, there were several suggestions: the most frequent suggestion was to get more knowledge and input as well as materials for supporting children with special needs. Three teachers mentioned this in different ways. Other topics the teachers suggested for workshops were: assessment, working with different language levels/differentiation in the same group, new and advanced teaching methods for pupils in the diaspora, focus on what is important to teach in grades 7-9, learning from daily life activities, teaching with a genre based pedagogy, writing and how to adapt the content when there are contradictions between the books and the Swedish culture¹¹. Several teachers want to learn how to create their own materials, both in general and specifically computer games. Other suggestions were to create networking spaces for Arabic teachers in Sweden, and also with other subject teachers such as English to explore areas of cooperation and topics integration. One teacher would like to see certificates specifically for Arabic as mother tongue teachers and several ones would appreciate more conferences for exchanging ideas. There was also a suggestion to learn to work with non-native speakers (foreign language learners of Arabic) while another teacher would like to get more knowledge on how to further motivate the students to study their mother tongue.

86% of the teachers would be interested in participating in workshops. In terms of timing, 30% would prefer to attend in September. 24% would prefer to attend in June and 14% in October. The rest opted for *I do not know* or *Other*. Those who stated why they would not participate stated that lack of time is the reason.

NETWORKING AND SUGGESTIONS FROM TEACHERS

60% of the teachers are currently members of different communities or networks with other Arabic teachers in Sweden. These types of networks primarily consist of colleagues in the same municipality/Language unit or in the closest municipalities. These networks are organized by the municipalities and scheduled to facilitate the

¹¹ Choosing materials for teaching is up to the teachers, they can choose their teaching materials, also from abroad, and adapt them to the Swedish educational context the way they seem fit.

participation of the Arabic teachers. There are also other ways teachers connect with each other. Several of the teachers in the survey are members of teaching groups on Facebook, in Whatsapp groups, cooperate through email, telephone, Google classroom, Zoom or networking when taking teacher developmental courses (fortbildning (Swe)). Moreover, when given the opportunity to add comments in the questionnaire, some teachers do not only want to cooperate, but also wants to unify the Arabic language studies across schools in Sweden. Also, one teacher would like to see more engagement from the Swedish National Agency for Education regarding mother tongue teaching. The same teacher would also like to see an updated version of the syllabus and that the Swedish National Agency for Education decides on which materials should be used to comply with the syllabus. The syllabus is common for all mother tongue languages and (like all syllabus) gives the teachers the responsibility to interpret it and teach accordingly. The only extra material to guide the Arabic teachers specifically is a commentary for the assessment of Arabic language.

TRENDS AND CONCLUSIONS

There were relatively few teachers who took the questionnaire survey. We assume they did it voluntarily since they were not required to answer. Hence, many of the teachers are genuinely interested in the topics of the survey. It is encouraging to see that such a clear majority, 86%, would like to participate in workshops for teachers of Arabic as mother tongue. The most preferred topic seemed to be teaching at different language levels in the same classroom. However, the other topics were also very popular. The positive attitude to all topics supports the idea that the teachers are eager and likely to participate in professional development. The most popular topic was "Teaching Arabic through differentiation", probably because of the heterogeneous composition of the Arabic classes.

Teachers are already using a wide variety of teaching materials. They spend time and effort finding them and adapting them to the Swedish school system if they are brought from the Arab region. However, the materials that are missing are also, to a great extent, the ones teachers would like to use more. Newspapers/magazines are the most missed type according to the teachers' answers. Second and third were non-fiction books in Arabic and pedagogical games. Digital tools and resources are becoming more and more important, this is probably highlighted by the pandemic even though most teachers have continued teaching on site¹². There seem to be diverging ideas on the benefits and the quality of these tools. Many teachers use digital resources, but they would like to see a greater variety. Since many (if not all) teachers work in more than 1 school, they might prefer digital resources but still, there seems to be a desire for tangible materials such as (physical) books and letter materials and games. It remains unclear how teachers procure their materials and books but 87% of respondents would be interested in applying for external funding to purchase materials and books if possible.

Fiction books and stories are mentioned by many teachers as often being used. The teachers do not clearly state it, but a positive thing with fiction could be that it is easier to use in Sweden as opposed to textbooks from the Arab world, which teachers feel they need to modify.

One resource that can be developed more are the (school) libraries. A relatively large part of the teachers does not know if the libraries have books in Arabic (14%) and 34% of the teachers state there are no Arabic books in their school libraries.

It might be interesting to note that there is a gender difference in the answers. As the number of participants does not give external validity, this could be an indication. In western societies gender is a very well-studied factor in the socio linguistic field, this is not the case in the Arab world. However, this has started to change. For

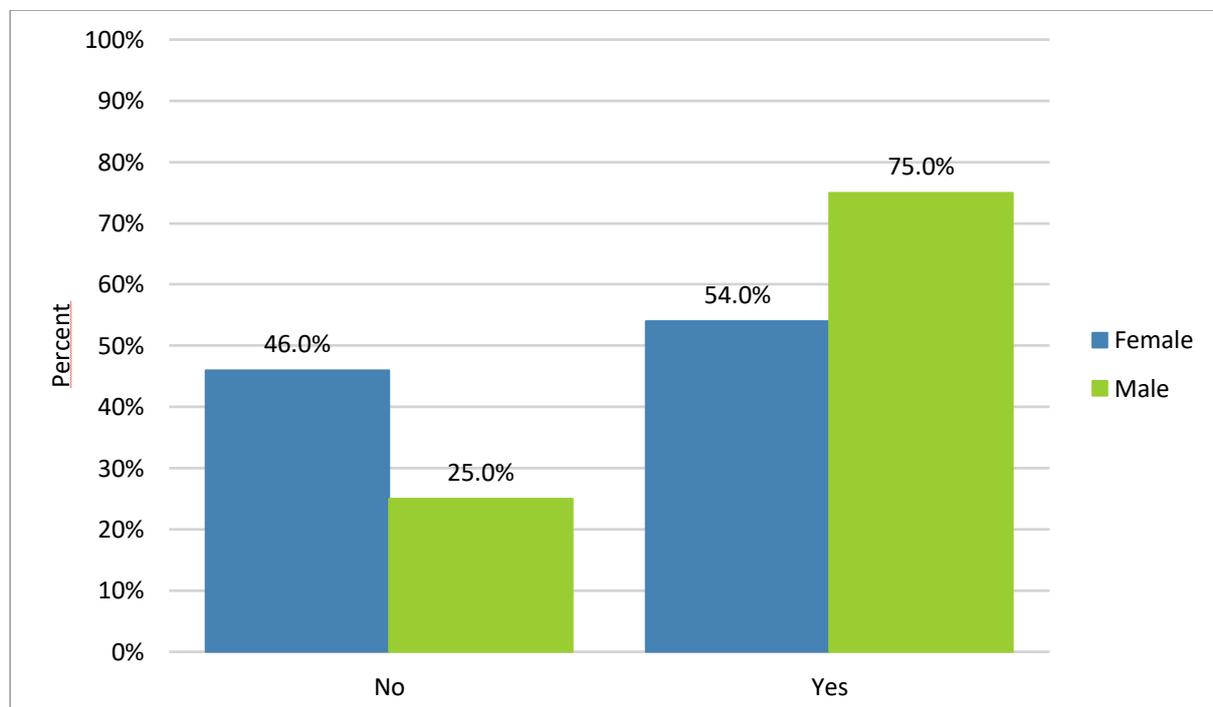
¹² Swedish schools have to a large extent been open as usual (all grades 1-6), some have had different days for different classes to be studying online and at the school respectively (grades 7-9). There are no reports on how the mother tongue classes have been conducted during this time and it differs between municipalities and schools.

example Albirini points out that studies need to explain women’s language use both on an individual and collective level as “the idea that Arab men’s and women’s language practices are dictated by social norms and expectations ignores the role of their gendered agencies” (Albirini, 2016, p 190).¹³ This might be worth looking at here as well. One of the biggest differences in this survey is that the males give a more positive impression overall. They state that their pupils are more comfortable, and they answer more positively (higher numbers) regarding the ability of their pupils to focus during classes etc. This difference occurs even though the female teachers in this survey have a teaching degree to a larger extent than the male teachers, 66,5% and 60% respectively. The male teachers are also giving less suggestions to workshop topics and make a more self-assured impression in their answers:

“As a licenced Arabic teacher from Göteborg University, I found that some of your books missed some of the requirements for Arabic teaching. Hence I am working on writing my own book that I will use with my own pupils, whos’ credit statistics showed that my pupils have reached the highest grade level for the past and present year.” Male teacher with a teacher degree, in his fifties, working in West Sweden. (Translated from Swedish by the author of this report.)

Another topic that points to a “gender gap” is the one regarding the biggest challenge they face accessing textbooks. 45% of the male teachers state it works fine while the same number for the female teachers is less than half that number, 20%. The female teachers also state that there are no suitable textbooks to a much higher extent, 32%, in comparison to the male teachers among which only 10% state there are no suitable textbooks.

Regarding the question if the teachers are taking part of a network or belonging to different communities, there was also a difference between the female and male participants that might be interesting to investigate further. The male teachers state they are part of communities to a greater extent:



¹³ Albirini, A. (2016). *Modern Arabic sociolinguistics: Diglossia, variation, codeswitching, attitudes and identity*. London: Routledge

This might also be important to consider if planning networking activities for Arabic mother tongue teachers in the future.

Recommendations

SURVEY FINDINGS

Teachers are using fiction combined with Arabic newspapers in the classrooms. This is an area worth exploring further. It would be beneficial to know more about what type of fiction the teachers use and how often. Teachers seem to be favouring materials from the Arab region to some extent. Why, and the consequences of this is also interesting to investigate. No teachers state that they need to adapt the fiction in contrast to the textbooks. If looking into this aspect more in the future it would be interesting to know how they use the fiction in teaching Arabic, and what type and form they prefer.

The teachers state that they adapt some materials to the Swedish context and spend time and effort finding suitable materials. It would be beneficial to investigate further how the teachers decide what material to use, and how they use it in the best way possible. Interviews with teachers of Arabic as mother tongue would be valuable. This could give a more in depth understanding on what type of materials are missing on the market and how new materials could be related to the syllabus and fill a gap and meet the needs of the teachers. Teachers want grants to purchase teaching materials and would like to attend professional development workshops if they can find the time.

Regarding the libraries, it is important to keep in mind that many of the teachers work at different schools and would appreciate to receive clear and updated information about what is available in the different libraries in their "district".

It is important to explore the possibility of school librarians working more closely with Arabic teachers. It is not clear if all libraries have Arabic fiction, this is important to research as well. Are there ways the librarians can be more accessible or "visible" to the Arabic teachers? Could the two professions meet and discuss the possibilities and needs? A positive thing with teachers working at several schools could be that library resources could be shared. If purchases can be planned and coordinated between libraries, there could be a greater variety of books that the teachers and students could benefit while in circulation.

FUTURE SURVEYS

In the survey questionnaire there were no questions on how the teachers use the fiction, this could have been useful. It would maybe also have been a good idea to ask if the teachers would be interested in a workshop on how to use fiction in teaching.

Regarding the questions of the survey there are some things to consider for future questionnaires. It is important to be clear with formulations and concepts such as "library" vs "School library" so this is interpreted the same way among the teachers. Other formulations to consider are the ones in the statements to which the teachers should agree. Most of them were clear and easy to understand but some were more ambiguous: "I experience that my pupils are aware that education in Arabic is important for their education development." Is one example, another is: "I feel that my pupils are aware that knowledge in Arabic can affect their grades positively in other subjects." Also "I experience that my pupils think the teacher in Arabic is a teacher as important as other subject teachers." These questions are tricky to answer on a scale "1 Not important at all" to "5 Very important". We could assume that it is for example importance of the subject of the teachers that should be graded but it could also be interpreted as grading the statements themselves – is it important or not how the teachers/pupils see this?

To get a higher answering rate on the questionnaire, it could be beneficial to reflect on what other time of the year the teachers are less busy (if ever!). Maybe there is a gap around the New Year when teachers are less busy and not all are celebrating the Christmas season. Also, to make the survey reach more closely to the teachers, it

could be useful to use the register of Mother tongue coordinators Statistics Sweden use, if possible. There might be a bigger chance the teachers get an email directly to their work email using this channel.