

Beginning Jordanian-Palestinian Colloquial Arabic

Spring 2019, Amman, Jordan

6 credits

Dr. Doug Magnuson, mesp.director@gmail.com

There are many different languages in the world, and every language has meaning. But if I don't understand a language, I will be a foreigner to someone who speaks it, and the one who speaks it will be a foreigner to me. (1 Cor. 14:10-11)

“Language isn't just a body of vocabulary or a set of grammatical rules; it's a flash of the human spirit, the vehicle through which the soul of each particular culture comes into the material world.” Wade Davis

COURSE DESCRIPTION — This course provides students with an experience of beginning to learn and use the colloquial Arabic of Jordan-Palestine, as a way of beginning to enter into the “languaculture” of the local people (Jordanians and Palestinians).

I. COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course is introductory. Arabic is a “lifelong” language, one which requires years of intensive study and the learning both Modern Standard (“fusha”) and one or more local dialects. (The Foreign Service Institute ranks Arabic as a “Category Four” language, among the hardest to learn.)¹ Thus, this course will be an introduction and taste of the local dialect of Arabic, and the experience of using it to begin to get around and interact with local people (building relationship and learning languaculture). Students will gain beginning vocabulary, including the kind that they can use immediately to interact with the Jordanians and Palestinians they will encounter daily (including language for getting around via taxis).

Specific learning objectives – that students would:

1. begin to use Arabic to enter the world (the *languaculture*) of the local people;
2. engage Arabic in a way that shows love and respect for local people;
3. engage Arabic (in class and out) in a way that is supportive of rather than competitive with others in the MESP cohort;
4. develop a basic vocabulary that can be used for getting around, and to be comfortable taking taxis and interacting with shopkeepers, including ordering food, in Arabic;
5. enjoy the experience (rather than being anxious or traumatized);
6. **achieve the Intermediate Low level, according to the standards of the ACTFL.**²

In order to maximize time for learning the dialect, and because typically the written script is not used or necessary for Arabic dialects (as it is for Modern Standard Arabic), students will not be expected to learn the Arabic alphabet; instructors will use a phonetic script for any writing they do. (Students are encouraged, however, to learn the alphabet on their own.)

Our hope and expectation is that you will enjoy this experience, and will take full advantage of it. As with every aspect of your MESP semester, what you “get out of it” will depend to a large extent on “what you put into it.” To maximize this opportunity, you should (a) review (record and listen to class sessions), and (b) attempt to use what you are learning as much as possible, in taxis and with others, on a daily basis. As one of our early language learning mentors used to say, “learn a little, use it a LOT!”

II. OUR ARABIC PROVIDER – the *Consortium for Global Education (CGE)*, Jordan.

¹ see <http://aboutworldlanguages.com/language-difficulty>

² see <https://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012/english/speaking#novice>. Students will be orally assessed by CGE staff at the end of the course. **For students needing a formal written evaluation of their level, they may pay to have that done by CGE (our Arabic provider) at the end of the course.**

CGE Jordan has been teaching Arabic to expats for the past ten years, is one of the leading Arabic language institutes in Amman, and is an ACTFL certified oral proficiency tester.³

III. REQUIREMENTS, ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING.

The emphasis in MESP Arabic is active engagement and participation, both in and out of class. Students will be in small groups, allowing for maximum participation. The context is immersion. The use of English or translation is minimal. You need to be prepared to deal with the ambiguity that comes with language learning – don't look for word for word or sentence for sentence translation; rather, try to understand the basic idea. Enter into the process by which children learn language. No cell phones or electronic devices should be used in the class (other than for recording purposes).

Students should record sessions, and listen to the recordings in between sessions (recommended: 15-30 minutes per day). You are also encouraged to take advantage of the fact that you are spending the semester in an Arabic-speaking environment. Make the most of this by using the Arabic you are learning in the real life contexts you encounter on a daily basis in Amman (and on travel) – riding taxis, bargaining in the markets, interacting with servers and staff in restaurants, connecting with people in their weekly service project, etc.

Specific Requirements:

- A. Class Time. Students will have the equivalent of 68 hours of “seat time” over the course of the semester.

Class times: Wednesday and Sunday afternoons, 1:30-5:30 pm [note: those doing individual tutoring will meet from 2-5:30], for 15 sessions beginning Sunday January 13 (classes will meet on Jan. 13, 16, 20, 23, 27, 30, Feb. 3, 6, 10; after a break for Israel/Palestine travel, classes will resume Feb. 27, Mar. 3, 6, 10, 13, 17). There will be a midway evaluation from the teacher after the Feb. 6 class.

Class will be held on Wednesdays at the MESP Center, and on Sundays at CGE (located in the Midas building in Khalda). Please be sure to be at CGE on Sundays **before** 1:30 p.m. (your grade will be affected by lateness).

- B. Outside of Class. Students are expected to spend 120 hours outside of class (over the course of the semester) reviewing and using their Arabic. **Students will be asked to report on their outside of class hours on a weekly basis (this will be reported to the PA each Saturday by 10 pm).**⁴ It is highly recommended that you focus on this from the beginning – it is difficult to “make up” hours later in the semester. **Note: half of these hours should be completed by the end of the Israel/Palestine trip; the final time for counting hours will be just before re-entry.** Note also that it is vital that you spend as many hours as possible, even from the very beginning, out using your little Arabic (“learn a little, use it a LOT!”) interacting with people (NOT sitting by yourself looking over vocab words) – language is learned by using it, and you

³ For more on CGE, and their philosophy of and approach to teaching/learning Arabic, see <http://cgejordan.com/what-we-believe.html>.

⁴ The report should include number of hours per day using Arabic, on a day by day basis, and the nature of the Arabic practice (conversation, listening, etc.). Activities *must be in the local dialect* (not Modern Standard Arabic), *and in the range of the student's comprehension* (i.e., listening to something you don't understand, doesn't help you learn the language) - we will not “count” (most) activities that are not in the zone of comprehension (some exceptions specified below; and if you have questions, ask).

have a great opportunity here to actually use it (something you don't have in many of your university settings at home).

Your Arabic hours may include:

- Listening to the recording of the daily dialogue / lesson (recommended: 15-30 minutes per day).
- Reviewing the vocabulary and phrases in your notebook (note: this is most effective if you have the material recorded, so you can listen as well as look; note2: do not spend inordinate time on this – do not use reviewing your notebook as an escape from getting out and interacting with people).
- Using Arabic (speaking and active listening) at your Service Project (recommended: 2-6 hours per Service Project, for a total of 16-48 hours for the semester).
- Using Arabic in daily life in Amman, in taxis, shopping, etc. (recommended: 1 or more hours per day). It's a good language learning practice to spend time in the balad going from shop to shop, using the little you know over and over. When you find friendly shopkeepers, go back to them (note that you'll want to be aware of male-female cultural dynamics, as you do this; women, you'll probably be most comfortable having a guy in your group if you're interacting with male Jordanians, and you'll want to interact without being overly "friendly"; and women, you'll want to look especially for female shop keepers, and go back to them as much as possible). (We can help you with ideas.)
- Using Arabic in Palestinian homestays (we will be in homestays for 6 or 7 evenings, which would afford you up to 4 hours per day of opportunity for using your Arabic).
- Using Arabic on travel, in Cairo and Morocco (we will spend one week each in Cairo and in Morocco, during which time you will have at least two hours per day in which you have opportunity to use Arabic).
- Attending an Arabic church service (without listening to headset translation, or at a church that does simultaneous translation like the Sudanese church on Friday morning – for that one, you can "count" the whole service).
- Watching a MESP recommended Arabic film with English subtitles (like *Captain Abu Raed* or *Theeb*).

Activities may include

Listening:

- *To recordings of your Arabic lessons*
- *To others' conversations*
- *To the CD in the Jordanian-Palestinian Arabic book in the MESP library (from CGE)*
- *Listening to an Arabic church service*

Speaking:

- *Expressing yourself to / practicing what you're learning with your host family, to personnel in restaurants & stores, taxi drivers, shop keepers, etc.*
- *Speaking with classmates (or your PA) and correcting each other*

Ideas for interactions:

- *Ask someone to teach you how to make a recipe*
- *Ask someone to give you directions to a place*
- *Ask someone to tell you about their family*
- *Ask someone to describe their hometown to you*
- *Ask someone to describe what they're wearing and what you're wearing*
- *Ask someone what they like to do in their spare time*

- *Ask a student or a teacher to tell you what classes they have this semester*
- *Ask someone to describe their daily routine, including times of day*
- *You can respond by trying to describe all these items above, as well.*
- *Take a photo and describe as much of it as you can (even simple phrases, like “red shirt,” “brown eyes” etc.)*

Evaluation and Grading:

Because Arabic does not share many similarities with English, it is critical for students to be equipped with an effective method for acquiring and retaining the high frequency Arabic words and phrases that they will be given during their study. Therefore, prior to the start of their Arabic course, students will be required to watch a training video on "The Notebook Method." This method has been proven to help students in their retention of Arabic. Additionally, it will be incumbent on students to regularly review their notebooks throughout the duration of the course. Periodic quizzes will be given over the content of their notebooks to assure progress has been made.

MESP will have all students evaluated at CGE at the end of the course, via the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) oral assessment process. This assessment takes about 10-20 minutes, and will be scheduled shortly after the last class. You will receive a one-page statement of your level. If, beyond this, you want or need a more extensive formal written evaluation of your level at the end of the course, you may pay for this service at CGE (see https://cgejordan.com/what-we-offer.html#language_evals).

Students will be evaluated by their teacher(s), midway through and at the end, based on

1. Attendance (absence will negatively impact your grade)
2. Participation (active engagement & participation)
3. Energy level in sessions
4. Effort, willingness to try new phrases, apply yourself
5. Not using English in sessions
6. Keeping the notebook

Students will also fill out a self-evaluation, in which they reflect/report on their

1. Attendance (absence will negatively impact your grade)
2. Participation (active engagement and participation in all sessions, effort)
3. Not using English in sessions
4. Review and preparation - listening to recordings / reviewing the materials from the sessions
5. Use of Arabic outside of sessions
6. Keeping the notebook (doing what is asked on a daily and weekly basis)

Students' final grade will be based on:

- (1) 75% - The teacher evaluations and self-evaluation (with the teacher evaluation weighted double)
- (2) 15% - Arabic hours logged outside of class (based on what % of those hours you log)
- (3) 10% - Reaching the target OPI level. (If you exceed the target OPI level, it will bump your grade up.)