

DOI: 10.58168/STR2026_369-378

УДК 811.411.21

ARABIC BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE АРАБСКИЙ ЯЗЫК МЕЖДУ ТЕОРИЕЙ И ПРАКТИКОЙ

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Abstract: This article examines the teaching of Arabic in the Department of Foreign History and Oriental Studies of the Faculty of History at Voronezh State University. It describes the key aspects of implementing educational material in the study of Arabic—the official language of the Middle East—one of the key regions of the world that should be inextricably linked with the Arabic language. Furthermore, studying its history, culture, customs, and traditions, as well as analyzing its positive and negative aspects, remains highly relevant. Particular attention is paid to the distinction between the theoretical and practical aspects of this issue. The author sheds light on several aspects that require revision and adjustment of the course, as well as the search for alternative solutions for advancing the educational process, including: lack of necessary equipment; neglect of extracurricular activities; inconspicuous progress in training research personnel; Curriculum issues, etc. The author concludes that a balanced combination of theoretical and practical components is needed, radical changes in the curriculum's management, its location, disciplines, number of hours, and everything related to it are needed, and the creation of a separate department or Center for Arabic Language Studies at VSU.

Keywords: Arabic language, theory, practice.

Аннотация: В данной статье рассматривается вопрос преподавания арабского языка на кафедре истории зарубежных стран и востоковедения исторического факультета Воронежского государственного университета. В ней описываются основные аспекты реализации учебного материала в процессе изучения арабского языка – официального языка региона ближнего Востока - один из ключевых регионов мира, который должно быть неразрывно связано с арабским языком. Кроме того, необходимо изучение его истории, культуры, обычаев, традиций, а также анализ позитивных и негативных аспектов и это без сменно очень актуально. Особое внимание уделяется на различие между теоретическими и практическими аспектами данного вопроса. Автор проливает свет на некоторые аспекты, которые, нуждаются в пересмотре и корректировке курса, а также в поиске альтернативных решений для продвижения вперед в образовательном процессе, среди которых: отсутствие необходимого оборудования; игнорирование интереса к внеаудиторным мероприятиям; незаметного прогресса в подготовке научных кадров д; проблемы учебной программы и др. Автором делается вывод о необходимости сбалансированное сочетание теоретического и практического компонентов, провести радикальные изменения в управлении учебной программой, её местоположении, дисциплины, количество часов и всем, что с ней связано, создавать отдельную кафедру или Центр изучения арабского языка в ВГУ.

Ключевые слова: арабский язык, теория, практика.

Studying Arabic at the Department of Foreign History and Oriental Studies in the Faculty of History at Voronezh State University is a unique experience. This new direction and sought-after specialization meets the needs of the times and addresses a significant shortage of specialists in this field, both in Russia and globally. The Middle East is known to be a key region in the world, with important political, economic, social, and military implications. Studying the Middle East

must be inextricably linked with Arabic, the official language spoken by the region's inhabitants. Furthermore, it is essential to study its history, culture, customs, and traditions, as well as analyze its positive and negative aspects. And, of course, an understanding of Islam, the religion practiced by the majority of the region's population, is essential. All of this is virtually impossible without knowledge of Arabic.

Voronezh State University has long included this specialization—Arabic—in its curriculum. It is now taught as a second language in the Faculty of International Relations and as a third language in the Faculty of Romance and Germanic Philology. In 2012, Arabic was introduced into the curriculum of the Military Education Center of the Faculty of Military Education as an important step in the need to pay attention to this living language. The Department of Foreign History was then assigned responsibility for teaching Arabic at the university. The word "Oriental Studies" was subsequently added to the department's name to reflect its current specialization—the Department of Foreign History and Oriental Studies.

In this article, we will shed light on several aspects that, in our opinion, require revision and adjustment of the curriculum, as well as the search for alternative solutions for advancing the educational process. Among these issues, the following stand out:

Lack of necessary equipment for the educational process, including tools that help teachers and students better absorb the material, such as modern technical devices, including projectors. Ignorance of and lack of interest in extracurricular activities that should facilitate the study of any academic discipline. This is especially important for beginners, who require additional support in understanding and memorizing material through methods other than those used in the classroom and standard teaching methods. An example is the organization of celebrations dedicated to World Arabic Language Day, among many others. This indicates a lack of attention to such initiatives, which are crucial for the

educational process, as they are aimed at developing students' practical skills.

The lack of progress in training and developing the necessary academic personnel for the successful organization of the educational process. Therefore, in order to address the shortage of personnel in the educational sector and provide young people with the opportunity to participate in research and education, as well as gain teaching experience, it is necessary to attract specialists with a good command of Russian and Arabic. Furthermore, it is desirable for them to have a university degree in history or Asian and African studies.

The use of new technologies in the educational process is undoubtedly extremely necessary today. Limiting the use of distance learning as a continuous means of acquiring language skills essentially negatively impacts students' academic progress.

This is especially true given that a good specialist must have a high level of education and knowledge. Furthermore, such a specialist must possess a broad outlook and knowledge of the Arabic language. We once again emphasize the need for a thorough knowledge of both languages: one's native language and Arabic. According to the great Arab thinker al-Jahit, "In our time, some translators ignore this and limit themselves to knowledge of the original language. However, they fail to pay due attention to the target language, which creates significant difficulties during translation and editing." Specialists need to master, understand, and master Arabic in order to successfully teach it.

Teaching Arabic grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, listening, comprehension, reading, speaking, and speech development in Russian is undoubtedly a very complex task. Furthermore, studying and translating a variety of texts from Arabic to Russian and vice versa requires not only experience and skills, but also a thorough knowledge of both languages, even if only to a limited extent. Given the current importance of this task, it is essential to ensure a high level of training for academic and teaching staff. In this context, it is necessary to take the necessary measures and ensure all the necessary conditions for the

successful implementation of the educational process. Some students are uninterested in learning Arabic, so they begin skipping lectures from the very beginning of the school year. This, in turn, negatively impacts the learning process for the entire group. While students are working diligently to absorb knowledge and develop their study skills, another group is nearby who are not even interested in learning. And their intentions don't stop there; they begin to disrupt the learning process by distracting their classmates.

Sometimes they simply chat among themselves about various topics completely unrelated to their studies, while other times they become immersed in their mobile devices, browsing social media. Some even fall asleep during classes. When exams arrive, they come expecting to pass on the first try, and if they fail, they begin creating problems to cover up their failures. It's important to remember that students who regularly attend class, complete their responsibilities on time, and actively participate in the learning process should not be treated equally with those who haven't fulfilled all of these responsibilities or haven't attended at all, as education, knowledge, and fairness are the fundamental pillars of a successful educational process anywhere.

A lenient approach to punishment for those who skip or neglect classes leads to such students perceiving this as a license to act and continue to perpetuate the chaos. Of course, there are other issues, too—financial aspects. Here, it's necessary to retain every student and graduate nearly all of them to achieve good results, while adhering to the principle of necessity. Time is the best remedy for such problems. All these circumstances lead to a weakening of the educational process and a significant decline in the academic level of students to critically low levels.

As for first-year students, they enroll in the Asian Studies program believing they will learn something new and different from what they learned in school. Moreover, this specialization is particularly in demand currently due to its connection to the Middle East, a region that is attracting the world's attention. This region is known for its vast reserves of energy, mineral, and other natural

resources. In addition, its strategic location, which connects three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe, also contributes to this.

In the 2023–2024 academic year, a large group of students was admitted to the Faculty of History, the Department of History of Foreign Countries and Asian Studies, and I began teaching them a basic course in Arabic. From my experience working with various groups over many years, I've noticed that they are highly disciplined and eager to learn this new language. They also strived to regularly attend lectures and complete homework assignments. Some of them even began additional Arabic lessons, demonstrating their enthusiasm and desire to develop their skills in this area. This group was divided into two groups: the majority stood out for their active participation in lectures, absorbing information, memorizing new words and expressions, and quickly grasping linguistic, sound, and spelling rules. They surpassed the other group only in the speed of learning and memorization. Regarding other organizational aspects, such as attendance and participation, they were on par with the others.

The first semester concluded, and all of them successfully passed the exam. However, in the second semester, they were surprised by changes: the teacher changed, and the learning environment was converted to remote learning due to the personnel issues mentioned earlier. Of course, the level of these students will gradually change due to the ineffectiveness of distance learning programs in achieving results that can only be achieved in classrooms with an in-person teacher, as well as the loss of practical and extracurricular activities that uniquely help introduce students to the world of Arabic and the Middle East."

The curriculum in the Department of Oriental Studies in the Faculty of History at Voronezh State University also faces several challenges that require changes and for which solutions exist. Here, we will examine in detail the subjects students study over the four years of their studies and the number of hours allocated to each subject.

"Basic Arabic Course" - This course begins at the beginning of the first semester

of the first year and continues until the end of the first semester of the second year (three semesters). The total number of weeks of study is (32) weeks, and the total number of hours allocated to this course is (128) hours.

"Advanced Arabic Course" - This course begins at the beginning of the second semester of the second year and continues until the end of the first semester of the third year. The total number of weeks of study is (32) weeks and the total number of hours allocated to this course is (192) hours.

"Intercultural Communication and Arab World Studies" – this course begins at the beginning of the second semester of the third year and continues until the end of the fourth year. The number of study weeks is (28) week, and the total number of hours planned for this course is (192) hour.

These course materials alone are insufficient for a comprehensive study and understanding of the Arabic language in all its aspects; they cover only a small part. Furthermore, the academic hours allocated for these subjects are extremely limited.

We believe that additional, new courses should be added to the curriculum at all stages of study, such as "Language Development, Speaking, Listening, Reading, Text Analysis," etc. The number of hours planned for each subject should be at least doubled. Most importantly, lectures on some subjects taught in the program must be taught in Arabic, not Russian, for example, the history of Middle Eastern countries or the history of Arab countries. Another aspect concerns what happens after graduation. Graduates find it difficult to decide their next step. Most graduates receive their diplomas without knowing what they will do with them, where to go next, or what to do next.

The answer to this question lies primarily with the mentor – and again, with the faculty. In our opinion, they should guide their potential and intelligent students in the right direction and explain to them the importance of making their next career decision. Moreover, they should help them overcome any difficulties they may encounter. The mentor must show due interest in this matter, leaving the

situation unchanged or allowing the student to decide for themselves what specialization to pursue after receiving their bachelor's degree. Every year, many students who complete their studies are eligible for further education, so it is important to channel their energy into further improving the educational process and the information they acquired during their bachelor's degree. Based on the above, we can draw the following conclusions:

1. The theoretical and practical aspects of studying any academic field, especially languages, differ. Theory can encompass understanding of oral and written material, while practice facilitates deeper assimilation and consolidation of the material in students' minds.
2. To achieve continuous education, a balanced combination of theoretical and practical components is necessary to achieve the best results. This is only possible by providing the necessary conditions, beginning with the teaching staff and creating a stimulating educational environment that promotes active student participation and the development of their skills in the context of modern technologies and teaching methods.
3. To develop the teaching of Arabic at Voronezh State University, radical changes are necessary in the management of this program, its location, curriculum, and everything related to it.
4. We believe that the creation of a separate department or Center for Arabic Language Studies would be more appropriate and relevant to this specialization. Furthermore, we propose hiring specialized faculty with knowledge and experience in management and education, preferably those fluent in Arabic.
5. All of these problems undoubtedly require someone to address them, remove them from view, and strive to ensure all the necessary conditions for a successful educational process in the department, faculty, and university.
6. And finally, we are proud that over all these years, we have been able to sow the seed for Arabic language study at Voronezh State University. And some of our graduates who completed their studies at VSU actually continue to study Arabic and Oriental Studies, choosing Arabic as their main specialization.

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