LEARNING
ARABIC
IS FUN

An engaging and interactive approach can result in better learning outcomes for students. Fabio d'Emilio, Service Delivery and Publishing Director at Pearson Middle East shares simple ways native and non-native speakers can be better engaged to learn Arabic

A 2017 survey carried out by the UAE government showed that only 68 per cent of students in the UAE were highly skilled in Arabic, according to national tests. This is no surprise – most parents in the UAE today complain that their children do not show the same levels of progress in Arabic as they show in other subjects, especially if they are non-native speakers. Indeed, an estimated 83.5 per cent of the UAE population is made up by expats. As younger students continue to struggle with literacy in the Arabic language, schools in the UAE are being urged to dedicate more time to teaching Arabic reading and language comprehension skills. A big reason for this is the teaching methodology widely used across schools. Most educators would agree that traditional ways result in teachers having trouble engaging children in the classroom. While the Internet and online resources have changed the way other subjects are mastered, Arabic is still taught primarily through older practices.

Schools, therefore, need to promote a new approach – and one that will engage kids better, make learning fun, and ultimately result in stronger Arabic skills. An interactive approach can boost learning by leaps and bounds. Here Fabio d'Emilio, Service Delivery and Publishing Director at Pearson Middle East shares some simple ways in which both native and non-native speakers can be better engaged to learn Arabic more easily.

Use of creative characters that children find appealing
Educators and researchers have found that a child's enjoyment of learning directly relates to their desire and willingness to learn. In other words, the more enjoyable learning is, the more likely a child will be engaged. The use of engaging characters enormously transforms the learning process for kids and is likely to result in better outcomes.

Inquiry-based approach
This type of learning encourages students to engage in the process of looking for data and to independently seek answers to their questions, rather than being handed information. Not only does this method of teaching help children to gain a better understanding

and retain knowledge better, but it also puts them in control of what they learn, developing key 21st-century skills such as collaboration, creativity and critical thinking.

Blended learning can make a big difference
This style of education combines online educational materials and opportunities for interaction online with traditional classroom face-to-face teaching. Programmes such as Pearson's bilArabi (a new Arabic language program for K-9 students in the

UAE for UK and US curriculum schools) are based on a blended learning approach, where children can access their Student eBook through the digital component, and take part in online practice activities, such as quizzes to test their Arabic language knowledge and understanding. This suits traditional and more technologically advanced schools. It also helps parents and teachers support students to achieve their potential, and seamlessly progress to the next level of learning, through the effective integration of print and digital content and activities.

The use of photo and video
A learning program which uses a blend of illustrations and real-life photos along with course content will engage students better. There should also be a seamless link between the print and digital components, helping students focus on learning activities and teachers deliver lessons with ease, thereby improving the overall learning and teaching experience.

Literature-based
An interactive and quality Arabic learning should include a comprehensive range of informational and literature reading texts which ensure children are fully immersed in reading and writing from the beginning of the course. This allows them to become better readers, writers and thinkers. Stories which are engaging accelerate language proficiency and progress.