

Multilingual, bilingual, and monolingual Arabic teachers' development of learner self-regulation and language awareness in the Emirates

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The Challenge

Foreign language teaching in super-diverse contexts often consists of multilingual teachers and students from diverse backgrounds. How do teachers navigate and harness this super-diverse multilingual environment when teaching languages other than English? This article explores Arabic teachers' use of multilingualism as a resource in schools in the United Arab Emirates.

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Abstract

Multilingual learning and teaching have been receiving growing attention of late as many cities and states undergo significant demographic changes brought about by increasing levels of human migration. The onset of super-diversity means that teachers often encounter students with very different language and cultural backgrounds in the classroom. This has created a new set of challenges and opportunities, especially concerning the teaching and learning of languages. As a result, research on language teaching and learning in super-diverse contexts has acquired greater importance, yet the teaching of languages other than English (LOTE), specifically LOTE teacher beliefs and practices, has received comparatively little attention to date. To shed more light

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on teacher beliefs and practices as these concern the teaching of LOTEs to multilingual students, this study explored the extent to which 100 Arabic language teachers, working in UK-curriculum secondary schools in the United Arab Emirates, used their students' multilingualism as a resource during lessons and developed their self-regulation and language awareness through specific activities. The findings regarding the participants' efforts to develop their students' self-regulation and language awareness revealed an unexpected, negative correlation between their degree of multilingualism and their reported practices.

KEYWORDS

Arabic, language awareness, language teaching, learner autonomy, metacognition, multilingualism

1 | INTRODUCTION

Teachers, especially in Europe and the Gulf States, are finding that their classrooms are becoming more linguistically and culturally diverse due to a mix of transnational migration and an increasing emphasis by the state and parents on promoting proficiency in one or several foreign languages among school-going students (Goossens, 2019; see also Wright et al., 2015). Increasing levels of transnational migration and professional mobility have also resulted in a growing number of language teachers, many of whom are bilingual or multilingual, moving to countries where they must teach students with whom they do not share a common culture or first language (L1). Such a situation is a common occurrence in super-diverse cities like Dubai and Brussels and might create challenges for teachers as they try to think of compensatory strategies to bridge the language and culture divide. In many such super-diverse environments, the use of English as a lingua franca adds another layer of complexity, with some perceiving it as reducing the importance and prestige of national languages and education in languages other than English (LOTEs). Such concerns have been raised in Scandinavian countries (e.g., Graedler, 2014; Kristiansen, 2010), the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (e.g., Hussein & Gitsaki, 2018), and mainland Europe (e.g., Busse, 2017). For LOTE teachers, successfully navigating such multilingual environments can be challenging. They might need to manage the cultural and linguistic diversity in their classrooms during lessons and promote successful learning outcomes among their students while also taking into account the impact that English has on their students' LOTE learning motivation and achievement (Busse, 2017). Using their students' cultural diversity as an educational resource (see Dooly, 2007) and drawing on their multilingualism, which can positively affect metacognitive processing, metalinguistic awareness, and autonomy (see Hofer & Jessner, 2019; Peek, 2016), could help them manage the challenges they face. Such an approach could also sustain their students' motivation outside of lessons and ensure that they make continued progress (see Ushioda, 2014).

However, studies on teachers' use of multilingualism as a resource have often concentrated on the situation in Europe and have focused more on the teaching of English than on the teaching of LOTE (see Calafato, 2019). As a result, less is known about how LOTE teachers teach in countries outside of Europe, whether they use multilingualism as a resource, and if they promote self-regulated learning among their students. This represents a significant gap in our knowledge of teacher practices in super-diverse contexts globally and limits our ability to identify the issues that LOTE teachers and students encounter as they navigate their shared multilingual spaces. For instance, research indicates that multilingual students in the super-diverse UAE are not particularly motivated to learn Arabic when compared to English and other foreign languages (Calafato & Tang, 2019b). For the UAE, the falling levels of motivation to learn and use Arabic constitute a particularly serious challenge as Arabic is the country's national language (see Solloway, 2016). At the same time, little is known about the approaches Arabic teachers employ with their students in the UAE, how they assess and manage the linguistic and cultural diversity present in their classrooms, and if they try to develop their students' self-regulation, which can positively influence learner motivation (Ushioda, 2014). Such research would be especially valuable for educational institutions and the state because it would provide them with actionable data that they could use to draft up guidelines aimed at promoting more effective language learning and teaching outcomes. A greater focus on super-diverse contexts is also warranted because super-diversity (Vertovec, 2007) is already, or will soon be, the norm in classrooms in many cities and countries around the world. Therefore, it is vital that we understand whether language teaching dynamics are evolving in step with rapidly changing demographics and what implications these have for students' levels of motivation and progress.

This study sought to add to our knowledge of LOTE teaching practices in super-diverse contexts by exploring the beliefs and practices of monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual Arabic teachers working with expat students in UK-curriculum secondary schools in the UAE. The aim was to see whether the Arabic teachers believed that their students' multilingualism could help them to learn Arabic, to what extent they reported drawing on their students' multilingualism during lessons, and how strongly they reported promoting self-regulated learning among their students and using metalinguistic and crosslinguistic activities when teaching. The study has implications for language teacher development, learner cognition and motivation, and language policy while also providing a glimpse into LOTE teacher practices in super-diverse contexts outside of Europe.

2 | SELF-REGULATION, THE MULTILINGUAL TEACHER, AND ARABIC

2.1 | Self-regulation and language learning

In language acquisition contexts, metacognitive strategies and learner autonomy can be subsumed under the concept of self-regulated learning (see Tsuda & Nakata, 2013), which is an individual's ability and agency to self-manage and direct their learning through a set of practices and strategies that enhances learning outcomes and sustains their motivation (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008). Metacognitive strategies, which are a specific category of learning strategies, refer to individuals' conscious decision to monitor and assess their learning according to their evolving needs and goals, for example, through the use of progress logs and language

diaries (Branigan & Donaldson, 2019; Khaldieh, 2000). Learner autonomy can be described as a set of independent practices, and some would say a state of mind, whereby individuals take responsibility for their learning, for instance, by doing additional research at the library on the content covered during lessons (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2019). Studies indicate that a high level of self-regulation in students can be quite advantageous as it allows them to develop and adopt a wide range of learning strategies (metacognitive, cognitive, affective, and social ones) (for a detailed list of such activities, see Guo et al., 2018). These strategies can improve their performance and proficiency in a given language (Oxford, 2017) and help them adapt to their learning objectives (Hromalik & Koszalka, 2018). Should students evince a low-level of self-regulation, as some studies have shown (e.g., Calafato, 2020a), they might ultimately fail to sustain their motivation to continue learning (Ushioda, 2014).

Alongside self-regulation, there has also been a growing focus on language awareness-raising strategies that target students' metalinguistic awareness, that is, their ability to identify and verbalize the rules that govern a language, particularly in contexts where students are multilingual (see Henderson & Ingram, 2018). Studies show that heightened metalinguistic awareness can prove especially valuable when it comes to skills like reading and writing (Eviatar et al., 2018). It also makes it easier for students to learn new languages (Psaltou-Joycey & Kantaridou, 2009). For multilingual students, metalinguistic awareness can be further advanced by using crosslinguistic strategies. These allow them to take their knowledge of the rules that govern the other languages they know and compare these with those found in the languages they are currently learning (Rutgers & Evans, 2017). Of course, not all students might be able to develop such strategies independently, with research indicating that some scaffolding is required (see Lou et al., 2018). To provide effective scaffolding, teachers would need to know how to teach morphosyntax explicitly, a key element in developing metalinguistic awareness (Hu, 2011). They might also need to integrate the teaching of nonstandard language varieties and dialects into their lessons. Language varieties and dialects form an integral part of interactions in super-diverse contexts and being introduced to them during lessons could boost students' language awareness (see Börestam, 2007). The implication is that teachers have an important role to play in helping their students develop their self-regulation and language awareness. However, there presently exists little empirical research on teachers' efforts to develop these in their students, especially in multilingual contexts where teachers and students do not share the same culture or L1.

2.2 | Teachers and multilingualism

Researchers suggest that language learners who have acquired more than one language can possess a wide range of skills and abilities because of their learning experiences that allow them to interact in more complex ways with their environment and lead to heightened cognitive, metacognitive, and intercultural ability (Jessner, 2008; Paquet-Gauthier & Beaulieu, 2016). This multicompetence, as it were, which can also include increased creativity and knowledge of diverse learning strategies, might not be available to monolingual individuals to the same extent. It can theoretically make learning additional languages easier (Hofer, 2017) and language teaching more effective (Calafato, 2019). This is supported in some studies where the learners' level of multilingualism positively correlated with their use of language learning strategies (e.g., Dmitrenko, 2017), although research also indicates that multilingual students and teachers may not always be aware of or able to use their multicompetence (Calafato, 2019).

For example, teachers, who were brought up in an environment where languages were treated as separate from one another and where only the use of the target language was prioritized in lessons, have often been found to be teaching in a similarly monolingual way (see Zheng, 2017). One short-term effect of such a monolingual approach to language learning and teaching, which continues to be quite popular today, is that students do not receive any sustained help in developing their metalinguistic and crosslinguistic awareness of languages nor are they taught strategies that draw on their knowledge of other languages (for a detailed discussion of the monolingual approach, see Lee, 2016).

Students' lack of metalinguistic awareness can then create difficulties for them when they start to learn a new language as they do not have the tools to make sense of its different components. We would like to point out here that any teacher can employ a monolingual approach. As already mentioned, much depends on teachers' beliefs about the benefits of drawing on other languages during lessons, their language proficiency, and their experiences as learners, regardless of whether they are monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual (see Wang, 2019). For instance, studies show that some monolingual teachers believe in the benefits of using multilingualism as a resource and employ a multilingual pedagogy in the classroom where they use the other languages their students know as a resource to raise their language awareness and abilities (e.g., de Oliveira et al., 2016). What perhaps represents a gap in our knowledge is that much of the research on teachers' beliefs and practices concerning multilingualism as a resource, in addition to generally focusing on English, consists of very few participants (for a review, see Calafato, 2019). This can make it difficult to determine how widespread such practices are in any given context. Therefore, it would be informative if a comparative approach was employed to analyze teacher beliefs and practices among larger populations based on their level of multilingualism (e.g., Calafato, 2020b). This would help us see whether there are overarching trends regarding how teachers report benefitting from their knowledge of other languages and if being multilingual correlates positively with their reported implementation of crosslinguistic practices in the classroom. Such a research focus would also aid us in better understanding the interplay between the presence of multilingualism in super-diverse classrooms and teachers' practices in support of this multilingualism when teaching, especially their promotion of metacognitive and crosslinguistic strategies among their students.

2.3 | Arabic language education in the Emirates

The UAE represents, if not in political terms then in societal terms, a microcosm of the kind of super-diversity that is occurring in several regions around the world (see O'Neill, 2017). For this reason, the study of language learning and teaching in the Emirates can offer valuable insights into how teachers navigate the multilingual spaces they inhabit, what a multilingual pedagogy might look like with teachers and students from different language backgrounds, and how teachers can promote language learning in the face of such linguistic and cultural diversity. Today, primary and secondary education in the UAE can be divided into public and private schools. Public schools are Arabic-medium and generally only accept Emirati students, with English taught as a foreign language. Private schools are mostly English-medium, offer a wide range of curriculums, although UK and US curriculum schools tend to be the most numerous (Calafato & Tang, 2019b). They also accept both expat and Emirati students. Private schools happen to be quite popular with Emirati parents, with research indicating that large numbers of Emirati students in Dubai (55%) and Abu Dhabi (29%) are sent to private schools (Hussein &

Gitsaki, 2018). Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) lessons are compulsory for all expat students until grade 9 and optional lessons in a third, foreign language are often offered in secondary schools. MSA derives from Classical Arabic (CA) and is used in news and print media, written correspondences, formal conversation, and in the textbooks and literary materials used in schools for Arabic instruction across the MENA region. Such widespread use furnishes MSA with a high level of prestige when compared to regional and local Arabic dialects. The various dialects exist mostly in spoken form and are not always mutually intelligible. They are used in day-to-day interactions between Arabic speakers (Thomure, 2019).

In some countries, there have been efforts to introduce students to Arabic dialects during MSA lessons at the university level, with some institutions even implementing specific Arabic teacher education programs in support of this process (see Belnap, 2018; Featherstone, 2018; Trentman, 2018). The goal is to expose students of Arabic to both dialects and MSA so that they are better able to interact with Arabic speakers in real-world situations, where, as Al-Batal (2018) notes, people normally use a mix of dialects and MSA. Studies indicate that some teachers and students support this integration, often from early on, and that it can have a positive effect on learner motivation as many students realize that they require knowledge of both MSA and dialects to reach their desired level of proficiency in Arabic and satisfy their social and professional needs (see Abdalla & Al-Batal, 2011; Al-Batal & Glakas, 2018; Isleem, 2018). At present, such integration of dialects and MSA is not offered in UAE schools. Given the heteroglossic nature of Arabic (Arabic dialects, MSA, and CA), Arabic language teachers can be described as teaching an L2 even if they are native speakers of Arabic as they too have to acquire MSA through formal instruction (no one speaks MSA as their L1) (Featherstone, 2018). Having to teach MSA to expat students in an English-medium school likely adds to this complexity. Not only must teachers navigate MSA and their own Arabic dialects (teachers, like their students, can come from diverse countries) but they must also account for English, which might be an L3 or even L4 for them and their students (see Calafato & Tang, 2019b), depending on whether they learned other languages before it. English, meanwhile, has acquired growing importance in the UAE and is regarded as the country's acrolectal lingua franca, sometimes to the detriment of Arabic (see Solloway, 2016). Federal authorities have shifted to Arabic-English bilingual education in some public schools and English is used as the medium of instruction by institutions of higher education (Hopkyns et al., 2018; Kippels & Ridge, 2019).

The effects of such changes can be witnessed in recent studies, which indicates that Emirati students are more strongly motivated to learn English than they are other foreign languages, whereas expat students are generally less motivated to learn Arabic than they are English and other foreign languages (Calafato & Tang, 2019a, 2019b). This is despite the UAE government's efforts to promote the learning and use of Arabic through numerous initiatives and directives (for an overview, see Thomure, 2019). According to some researchers (e.g., Thomure, 2019), this simultaneous prioritizing of English and lower motivation to learn Arabic could be occurring because private schools do not give Arabic enough importance, oftentimes because the generally Western expat leadership in such schools is neither proficient in Arabic nor do they have much background knowledge about it. As such, they are "at a loss regarding what to do and who to turn to for best practices in teaching Arabic" (Thomure, 2019, p. 81). There are, however, few if any studies that might provide empirical support for such claims. Indeed, research on Arabic as a foreign or second language has mostly focused on learners of Arabic at universities in Malaysia (e.g., Yusri et al., 2013) and

the United States (e.g., Khaldieh, 2000), and bilingual preschool education in Israel (e.g., Schwartz & Gorbatt, 2018). As for studies on Arabic teachers, these have customarily explored their attitudes and experiences concerning Arabic language learning and proficiency in general (e.g., Abdalla & Al-Batal, 2011; Samimy, 2008), rather than explicitly their teaching practices, either reported or observed. As a result, little is known about how they teach the language and what strategies they use to promote more effective learning outcomes among their students. One of the few exceptions is Schwartz and Asli (2014), who specifically list the many strategies that the three teachers in their study used. These strategies included trans-languaging techniques, the use of cognates, and bilingual books to help their students learn in Arabic–Hebrew bilingual kindergarten in Israel (it is debatable if Arabic is being entirely taught as a second language here though). Najour (2018) is another study that explored teachers’ use of code-switching techniques to raise their students’ awareness, although the focus moved specifically between MSA and different Arabic dialects rather than between Arabic and other languages.

2.4 | Research questions

To better understand LOTE teacher practices in a super-diverse environment like the UAE, we sought to answer the following research questions (RQs):

1. Do the participants believe their students’ multilingualism benefits their learning of Arabic?
 - 1.1. Do they report drawing on this multilingualism when teaching?
 - 1.2. What challenges do they report their students encountering?
2. Are there differences in the extent to which the participants, based on their level of multilingualism, report developing their students’ self-regulation?
3. Are there differences in the extent to which the participants, based on their level of multilingualism, report promoting language awareness among their students?

3 | METHOD

3.1 | Participants

One hundred Arabic language teachers completed the questionnaire out of a total pool of 146 initial participants (i.e., those who only filled out the first few items of the questionnaire and left the rest empty). All participants taught MSA in UK-curriculum secondary schools in the UAE to expat students. UK-curriculum schools were chosen as research sites for the project to more accurately capture the super-diverse nature of the UAE. Unlike public schools, which mostly accommodate Emirati students, UK-curriculum schools are popular among a wide swath of both expatriate families and Emiratis. Studies on such schools in the UAE attest to their super-diverse student population and associated multilingualism (Calafato & Tang, 2019a, 2019b). Ninety participants reported Arabic as their L1, whereas nine stated that Arabic was their L2 (one participant noted that Arabic was their L3). Sixteen participants reported being proficient in only Arabic (monolingual), 60 were proficient in two languages (bilingual), and 24 were proficient in three or more languages

(multilingual)¹. Seventy-four participants learned English as their L2 (French was an L2 for 4 participants). Forty-seven participants reported possessing 15 or more years of teaching experience, followed by 20 with 10–14 years, 19 with 5–9 years, and 12 participants with four or fewer years of teaching experience (two did not answer this item). In terms of gender, 66 participants identified as female and 17 as male (17 participants abstained from indicating their gender). A majority of participants ($n = 74$) were between 30- and 49-years old, with five participants being 29-years old or younger and six reporting their age as between 50 and 59 (15 participants chose not to state their age).

3.2 | Data collection and analysis

Data was gathered via an online questionnaire, made available in English and Arabic, using the SurveyXact platform (all data collection instruments used in the present study can be freely downloaded on the IRIS Database; iris-database.org). The questionnaire contained 45 items of which 32 were 6-point Likert items. The items asked the participants what language aspects and skills they focused on during lessons and assessed their approaches to developing their students' self-regulation and language awareness. Studies have revealed that some language aspects like reading and grammar correlate more strongly with metalinguistic awareness than do speaking and listening (Lasagabaster, 2001; see also Hu, 2011). We included items that explored the participants' use of crosslinguistic activities involving specifically Arabic and English as all students are expected to be proficient in English and may use English as a lingua franca among themselves (see Wang, 2019). As a result, we thought that some of the participants might use English as a mediating language in the classroom and we decided to explore this in our study. The participants' openness to teaching dialects was also investigated because it could provide additional insights regarding their efforts to develop students' language awareness (see Börestam, 2007), as well as shed light on their approach to Arabic heteroglossia in the multilingual language classroom. The Likert items were developed using Oxford (2017) as a reference. The remaining 13 items consisted of open-ended questions on the viability of using other languages as a resource in Arabic lessons, what challenges the participants believed students encountered when learning Arabic, the participants' language backgrounds, and biographical data like gender and age. RQ1 was answered using data from the open-ended questions, whereas data from the Likert items helped to answer RQs 2 and 3.

A list of UK-curriculum secondary schools (key stages 3–5) operating in the emirates of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Ras al-Khaimah, Fujairah, and Sharjah was drawn up via school listings on multiple educational websites. Contact details for each school were entered into a spreadsheet after which an email, written in English and Arabic, was sent out to each school explaining the aims of the research project, guaranteeing participant anonymity and data confidentiality, and asking for help in recruiting Arabic language teachers. The email contained a link to the questionnaire and an official invitation letter that explained the parameters of the study, data management, and storage, and what rights the study participants possessed. The data collection period lasted 2 months, after which access to the questionnaire was disabled. The Likert items were analyzed using SPSS 25. In addition to factor analysis and reliability testing (see Section 4.1), significance testing was carried out using the Kruskal–Wallis, one-way analysis of

¹We consider bilingualism as a subset of multilingualism, although bilingual participants are treated as separate from multilingual participants in this study to understand how their differing levels of multilingualism affected their practices.

variance (ANOVA), and χ^2 tests to check for differences between the participants based on variables like age, gender, teaching experience, language background, and gender. The Bonferroni procedure was used for posthoc testing. We used an alpha level of .05 for all tests and report Hedge's g alongside all statistically significant results (to understand how scores are interpreted, see Plonsky & Oswald, 2014). Data from the open-ended questions were coded based on recurring themes, ideas, and words (several participant responses consisted of only a word or a short phrase), after which these codes were grouped under thematic categories. Where applicable, significance testing was carried out on the codes using the Kruskal-Wallis and χ^2 tests to check for differences in participant responses based on gender, teaching experience, level of multilingualism, and so forth.

4 | FINDINGS

4.1 | Questionnaire structure

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using maximum likelihood extraction with direct oblimin rotation was performed to explore the underlying structure of the questionnaire's Likert items (excluding the eight Likert items concerning the extent to which the participants focused on specific language aspects and skills). Using the greater-than-1-eigenvalue method, the EFA indicated that all items loaded on to five factors (see Table 1), with the model explaining 66.99% of the total variance (values below 0.30 are not displayed).

Results from the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (.758), Bartlett's test of sphericity, $\chi^2(276) = 959.337$, $p < .001$, and the Goodness-of-fit test, $\chi^2(147) = 142.203$, $p = .600$, indicated that the data was suitable for factor analysis. As can be seen in Table 1, items 1–5 represent the *autonomous learning* factor as all items deal with promoting learners' independent learning of content that is often not covered during lessons. Items 6–10 represent the participants' efforts to encourage students to use *metacognitive* strategies; items 11–17 focus on working with texts and words using *crosslinguistic awareness*-raising strategies, with a special emphasis on Arabic–English comparisons. Items 18–24 emphasize *metalinguistic awareness*-oriented activities where the participants explicitly focused on language structure, sometimes by using a multilingual approach (i.e., using their students' knowledge of other languages).

Table 2 provides Cronbach's α and Guttman's λ -2 scores for each of the constructs and these indicate a satisfactory level of reliability. As for Pearson's coefficient, which is presented in Table 2 alongside the reliability measures, we can see that the constructs are statistically significantly, positively correlated, with the strength of the correlations being mostly weak to medium.

4.2 | Multilingualism as a resource and learner challenges

The participants were asked a set of open-ended questions about (1) whether knowledge of other languages could help their students to learn Arabic, (2) the main challenges their students faced, and (3) if they tried to include the other languages their students knew when teaching them Arabic.

TABLE 1 Factor loadings for the various questionnaire items

I like to teach my students to...	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
1...initiate activities in Arabic on their own (listening, reading books, etc.)					0.411
2...look up words not taught in the lesson					0.798
3...look up synonyms of the words taught in the lesson					0.537
4...learn grammar not taught in the lesson					0.763
5...use the content they learn outside of class					0.597
6...research different techniques that might help them learn Arabic better				0.816	
7...organize a schedule outside of class devoted to Arabic language study			0.317	0.657	
8...set clear time-specific achievement goals for themselves			0.843		
9...keep a log of what they have and have not learned			0.995		
10...keep a diary where they write their thoughts about learning Arabic			0.781		
11...use rhymes to help them learn new words		0.475	0.405		
12...read bilingual texts (Arabic and English) in lessons		0.832			
13...identify Arabic words in texts that resemble words in the other languages they know		0.853			
14...break words up into smaller components to show them how they are constructed		0.566			
15...transliterate words from Arabic into English		0.588			
16...translate sentences from Arabic into English (English into Arabic)		0.725			
17...write sentences in a mix of Arabic and English	0.487	0.742			
18...act out new words	0.428				
19...identify word order patterns (subject, verb, object)	0.376				
20...compare the use of verb tenses in Arabic with those used in the other languages they know	0.555				
21...compare the use of parts of speech in Arabic and the other languages they know	0.586				
22...manipulate words to form different nouns	0.952				
23...manipulate words to form different adjectives	0.953				
24...manipulate words to form different verbs	0.884				

4.2.1 | Benefits of knowing other languages when learning Arabic

Twenty-two participants felt that knowledge of other languages could not help students learn Arabic, with three participants specifically stating that Arabic was unique and so other languages would not be useful. Nine participants felt unsure that other languages might help, with

TABLE 2 Reliability analysis of the factors identified via exploratory factor analysis

Factor	<i>n</i>	α	λ	1	2	3	4
1. Autonomy	5	.705	0.724	-			
2. Metacognition	5	.795	0.821	0.424**	-		
3. Crosslinguistic awareness activities	7	.865	0.876	0.340**	0.223*	-	
4. Metalinguistic awareness activities	7	.836	0.851	0.311*	0.362**	0.557**	-

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

two of them stating that multiple languages might cause confusion in students. One of these participants remarked that students would often compare Arabic with English and that this might cause them to make mistakes. In contrast, 61 participants felt that knowledge of other languages was an asset. Here, four participants emphasized that knowledge of any other language would be helpful, with one participant stating that knowing other languages meant that learners benefitted from heightened acoustic memory and cognition. A second participant felt that knowledge of other languages led to better learning outcomes, adding that the students in their class who only spoke English had a more difficult time learning Arabic than those who spoke another language in addition to English. A separate group of 24 (out of the 61) participants stated that knowledge of specifically English could help when learning Arabic. These participants stated that English helped with translating words, especially technical vocabulary, and drawing crosslinguistic comparisons. Seven participants felt that knowing Urdu or Persian helped because these languages had a similar alphabet and many words in common with Arabic. Another two participants felt that Hebrew was an asset as its structure was governed by similar rules. Significance testing did not reveal any statistically significant differences in the participants' beliefs regarding the benefits of students being multilingual when learning Arabic based on any variable.

4.2.2 | The main challenges learners faced when learning Arabic

When asked about the main challenges they believed their students faced, the participants' responses focused on five main themes (see Figure 1).

One group of participants ($n = 16$) stated that Arabic was not given sufficient importance by schools and parents when compared to other subjects, notably English, mathematics, and the natural sciences. As a result, the students were generally not as motivated to learn the language. One of the 16 participants specifically mentioned "the tyranny of the English language in schools," whereas another participant talked about Arabic being "crowded out" by other languages as a reason for why, they felt, their students did not fully understand the value of learning Arabic. Seven participants also thought that the curriculum was too difficult and that they had inadequate resources, including a poor selection of texts that did not take into account contemporary Arab society. A separate group of 23 participants claimed that students did not use Arabic outside of school, which significantly limited their progress, whereas another 24 participants revealed that learners found Arabic vocabulary and grammar to be challenging. Fifteen noted that their students had difficulties reading Arabic texts, with one participant remarking that most students faced the same learning difficulties in Arabic that they had when

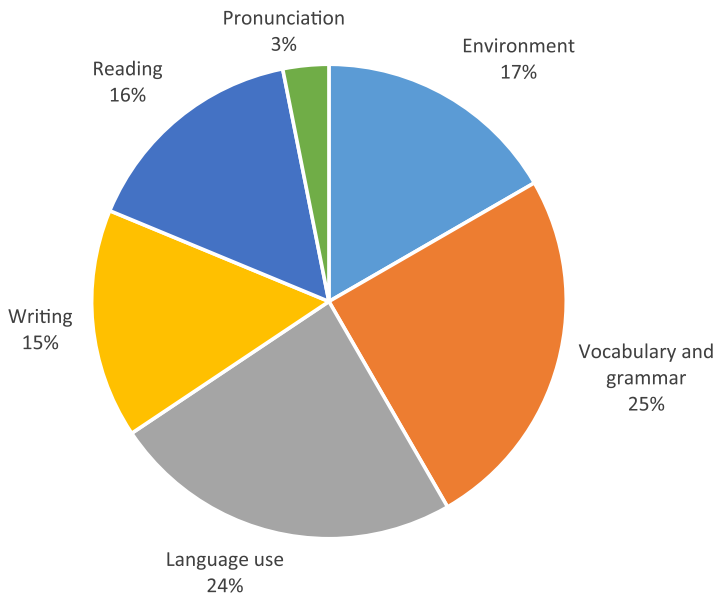


FIGURE 1 The challenges the participants believe their students faced when learning Arabic

learning their L1s. They added that if literacy was difficult for the students in their L1, the same would be true in the case of Arabic.

4.2.3 | Drawing on learners' other languages when teaching Arabic

Fifty participants replied that they generally did not use languages other than Arabic when teaching, whereas 46 revealed that they used other languages. Eight participants did not provide any details regarding how they did this, only stating that they sometimes included other languages in their lessons (see Figure 2 for an overview of the responses). Twenty-four participants specifically said they used English, Urdu, Spanish, or Persian to translate Arabic words and when giving out instructions to make sure that students had understood what was being asked of them. Five participants said that they used their students' languages to engage with them regarding aspects of Arabic culture and how the language was used by Arabic speakers in real-world contexts. Two participants described doing this by showing their students videos. Seven participants mentioned using their students' other languages to engage in a cross-linguistic comparison of grammar rules and word construction. One participant, for example, stated that that they used "English as an intermediate language and in teaching grammar, I try to approximate concepts by comparing them with the rules of French, German." Another participant mentioned comparing Arabic with Mandarin Chinese and English, focusing on the word order in sentences. One of the participants wrote that they were "trying to apply English teaching methods to the teaching of Arabic via exposure to literary texts, their deconstruction, and analysis," whereas another talked about using other languages in lessons to connect Arabic content to that which the students were learning in other subjects.

The Kruskal–Wallis test was conducted to check for differences between the participants regarding whether or not they drew on their students' other languages based on variables like

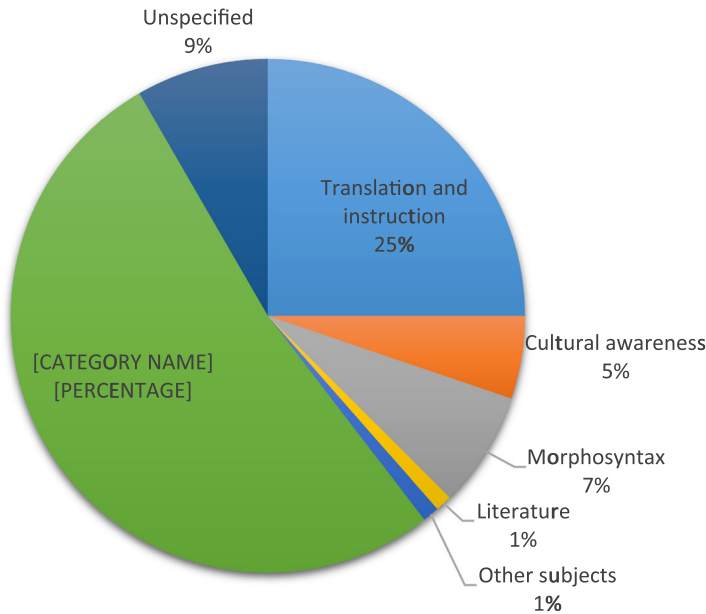


FIGURE 2 The ways in which the participants drew on their students' other languages

the participants' level of multilingualism, teaching experience, age, and gender. The results indicated statistically significant differences between the monolingual ($M = 1.06$, $SD = 0.25$), bilingual ($M = 1.58$, $SD = 0.50$), and multilingual participants ($M = 1.52$, $SD = 0.51$) regarding whether or not they drew on their students' other languages when teaching, $H(2) = 13.386$, $p = .001$, with the multilingual ($p = .017$, $g = 1.071$) and bilingual ($p = .001$, $g = 1.123$) participants drawing on their students' knowledge of other languages statistically significantly more than did the monolingual participants; the effect size is large in both instances. No statistically significant differences were found between the participants based on any other variable.

4.3 | Arabic language skills and dialect preferences

The participants were asked what language aspects and skills they focused on when teaching Arabic. Figure 3 provides a visual representation of their responses, which indicate that they focused most frequently on the four language skills and learning vocabulary, whereas somewhat less on promoting knowledge of Arab culture, grammar, and dialects.

Kruskal–Wallis test results indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual participants regarding the teaching of vocabulary, $H(2) = 7.877$, $p = .019$, cultural knowledge, $H(2) = 7.774$, $p = .021$, and dialects, $H(2) = 6.669$, $p = .036$. Bonferroni posthoc test results indicated that the monolingual participants ($M = 5.67$, $SD = 0.49$) prioritized grammar to a statistically significantly greater extent than did the bilingual ($M = 5.05$, $SD = 0.89$) ($p = .043$, $g = 0.744$) and multilingual participants ($M = 4.86$, $SD = 1.01$) ($p = .023$, $g = 0.945$). The monolingual participants ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 0.737$) were also found to focus more on promoting cultural knowledge among students to a statistically significantly greater extent than did the bilingual participants ($M = 4.86$, $SD = 0.94$) ($p = .016$,

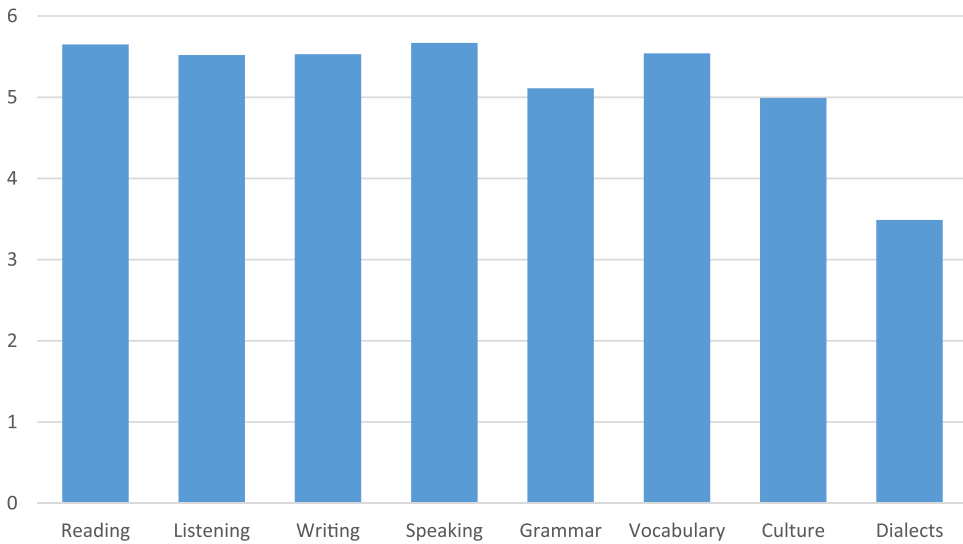


FIGURE 3 The participants' focus on different language aspects and skills when teaching Arabic. 1, *Never*; 2, *very rarely*; 3, *rarely*; 4, *occasionally*; 5, *frequently*; 6, *very frequently*

$g = 0.809$); the effect size is medium to large in all three instances. As for dialects, once adjusted by the Bonferroni procedure, it was revealed that there were no statistically significant differences between the participants. However, the monolingual participants were found to focus on teaching knowledge of dialects to an almost statistically significantly greater degree than did the multilingual participants ($p = .053$).

The participants were also asked what dialects they would teach their students if they could. Twenty-two participants replied that students should learn the Emirati dialect because they resided in the Emirates and it was important that they could converse in the local dialect. Another 15 participants felt the Egyptian dialect would be a good choice because it was a popular dialect and there was a good deal of Arabic content available in it. Twenty-three felt that the Levantine dialects, specifically the Syrian and Jordanian varieties, were appropriate because these, according to the participants, were close to MSA. Thirty-three participants felt that only MSA should be taught as it connected all Arabic dialects and because choosing dialects was a complicated process. Three participants advocated for the teaching of Gulf dialects in general, whereas fewer participants voiced support for the Hejazi ($n = 1$), Iraqi ($n = 1$), Sudani ($n = 1$), and Yemeni ($n = 1$) varieties. χ^2 Tests, using variables like age, teaching experience, and the number of languages known, did not produce any statistically significant results in terms of the participants' dialect preferences.

4.4 | **Autonomy, metacognition, and metalinguistic awareness**

Figure 4 shows the participants' responses regarding how strongly they liked to promote metacognitive strategies and autonomous learning among their students (see Section 4.1 for scale items). The data indicated that the monolingual and bilingual participants reported promoting such strategies to a greater extent than did the multilingual participants.

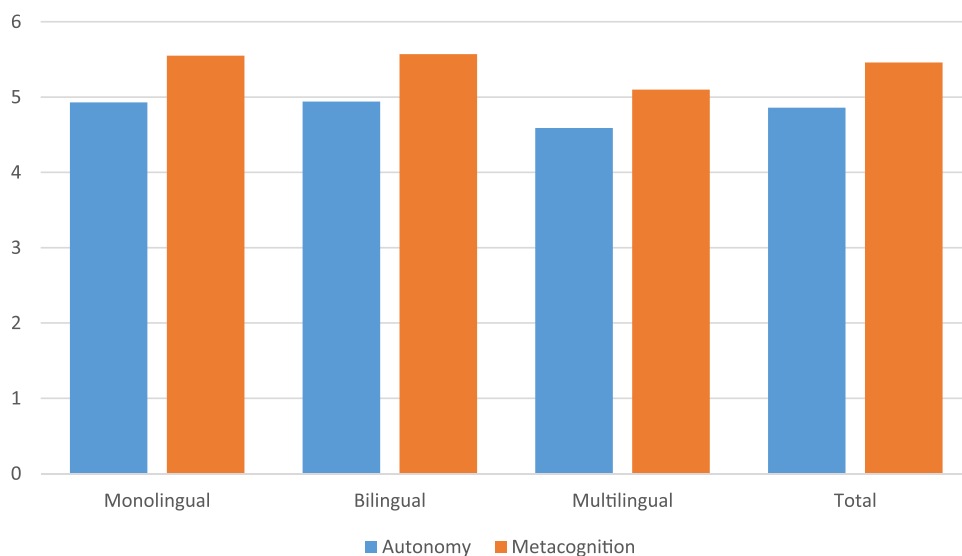


FIGURE 4 The participants' promotion of metacognitive strategies and autonomous learning among their students. 1, *Strongly disagree*; 2, *disagree*; 3, *somewhat disagree*; 4, *somewhat agree*; 5, *agree*; 6, *strongly agree*

One-way ANOVA test results revealed statistically significant differences between the bilingual ($M = 4.94$, $SD = 0.85$) and multilingual ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 0.96$) participants with respect to their metacognition-raising practices, $F(2, 91) = 4.372$, $p = .015$. The Bonferroni posthoc procedure indicated that the bilingual participants promoted such practices to a statistically significantly greater extent than did the multilingual participants ($p = .014$, $g = 0.699$); the effect size is medium. No statistically significant differences between the participants were found based on any other variable.

Figure 5 illustrates the participants' responses regarding their promotion of crosslinguistic and metalinguistic practices among their students. The data indicated a negative cline as one moved from the monolingual to the multilingual participants. The participants also seemed to promote metalinguistic practices to a greater degree than they did crosslinguistic ones (see Table 1 for scale items).

One-way ANOVA test results revealed statistically significant differences between the monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual participants regarding the extent to which they promoted metalinguistic, $F(2, 88) = 3.773$, $p = .027$, and crosslinguistic, $F(2, 87) = 4.049$, $p = .021$, practices among their students. Bonferroni posthoc test results indicated that the bilingual ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.24$) participants promoted crosslinguistic activities to a statistically significantly greater extent ($p = .042$, $g = 0.658$) than did the multilingual ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 1.33$) participants. The monolingual ($M = 5.23$, $SD = 0.75$) participants, too, promoted metalinguistic practices to a statistically significantly greater extent ($p = .020$, $g = 0.931$) than did the multilingual ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 1.01$) participants; the effect size is medium to large. No statistically significant differences between the participants were found based on any other variable.

5 | DISCUSSION

This study sought to explore whether the participants believed their students' multilingualism benefitted them when learning Arabic, how they drew on this multilingualism during lessons and the extent to which they reported developing their students' self-regulation and language

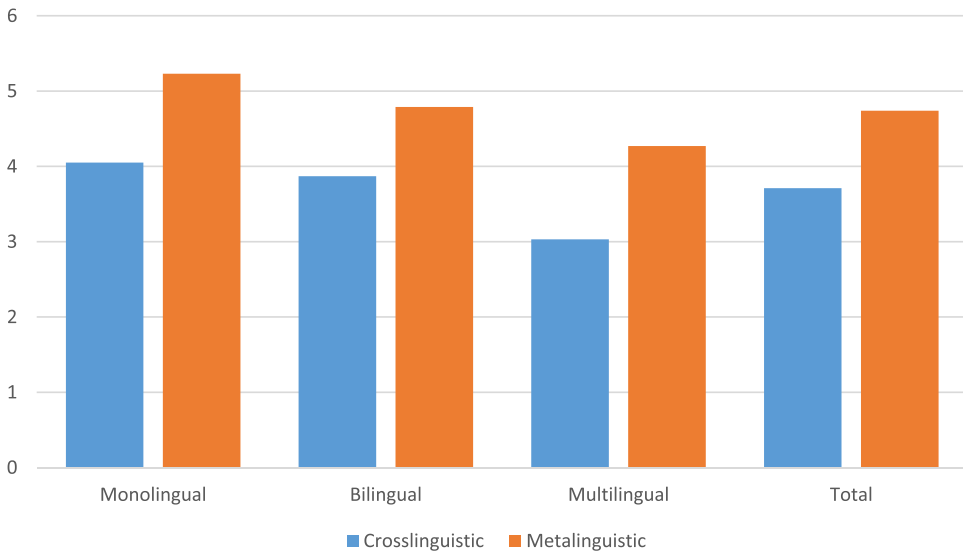


FIGURE 5 The participants' promotion of metalinguistic and crosslinguistic strategies among their students. 1, *Strongly disagree*; 2, *disagree*; 3, *somewhat disagree*; 4, *somewhat agree*; 5, *agree*; 6, *strongly agree*

awareness. As such, the findings revealed that a sizeable majority of the participants believed that their students' multilingualism benefitted their learning of Arabic. Several participants talked about their multilingual students generally performing better in class, possessing heightened cognition, and drawing on crosslinguistic comparisons. The participants' beliefs about the benefits of being multilingual when learning a language support the findings from other studies where teacher participants reported similarly positive beliefs about multilingualism (e.g., Calafato, 2020b). However, their positive beliefs did not always lead them to draw on their students' multilingualism during lessons: approximately half of the participants did not draw on their students' knowledge of other languages when teaching Arabic. The participants' level of multilingualism appeared to be a decisive factor here, perhaps understandably so, with more bilingual and multilingual participants drawing on their students' knowledge of other languages than did the monolingual participants (see Section 4.2.3). Despite their positive views about their students' multilingualism, the monolingual participants likely did not have the linguistic resources to engage in a multilingual pedagogy (see Schedel & Bonvin, 2017). For monolingual Arabic teachers who are desirous of drawing on their students' knowledge of other languages, organizing language lessons (e.g., in English, Urdu, etc.) might help them accomplish this by augmenting their teaching abilities and the pedagogical resources at their disposal as they became more multilingual. Lessons could be organized during school hours or teachers could be offered incentives to enroll in language lessons in their free time. The lessons would also help them better understand the challenges that speakers of other languages face when learning Arabic. For example, a quarter of participants reported that their students found Arabic grammar and vocabulary to be difficult. Another third of participants observed that their students faced difficulties with reading or writing in Arabic. In learning other languages, the monolingual participants would obtain deeper insights into why their students might be encountering such problems. They could then use these insights to help their students not only improve their knowledge of Arabic grammar and vocabulary but also their literacy skills.

The participants also felt that there was too much of an emphasis on English at school and that their students did not use Arabic outside of school. Their statements support the findings from other studies on the UAE where student participants accorded less importance to Arabic than they did to English and other foreign languages (e.g., Calafato & Tang, 2019b; Thomure, 2019). Schools and teachers could motivate their students to use more Arabic outside of school if they systematically introduced them to Arabic dialects as part of the MSA curriculum. After all, MSA is a formal, written language and its use in daily interactions can be fairly limited (Al-Batal, 2018). By introducing their students to Arabic dialects, teachers would boost their language awareness in a way that more accurately reflected the heteroglossic nature of Arabic and its use in real-world interactions. The integration of dialects into MSA courses has already been achieved at the university level in some countries (Belnap, 2018; Trentman, 2018), although it is not currently part of the school curriculum in the Gulf States (see Hopkyns, 2020; Thomure, 2019). Furthermore, a majority of the participants responded positively when asked if they would like to teach an Arabic dialect if they could. Several stated that they would like to teach the Emirati dialect as they lived in the UAE, the Egyptian dialect due to its popularity and widespread use in Arabic media, or the Levantine varieties because of how close these were to MSA. The participants' dialect preferences might be due to reasons of nationality, although they did not explicitly give their nationality as a reason for their preferences. In any case, a majority of the participants showed a *willingness* to teach Arabic dialects and their positive attitudes support the findings from other studies where teachers evinced similarly positive attitudes towards the teaching of dialects (Abdalla & Al-Batal, 2011; Isleem, 2018). Should dialects be officially incorporated into the Arabic curriculum for schools, teacher education programs that have been implemented at certain institutions could serve as a blueprint for developing teachers' ability to teach Arabic dialects alongside MSA (see Featherstone, 2018; Trentman, 2018). Several participants also indicated that parents did not give much importance to Arabic, which could discourage students from using it (see Gardner, 1985). One way to counter this would be for teachers to engage more deeply with parents about the benefits of learning Arabic in an increasingly multilingual world where proficiency in several languages is considered an asset.

The participants also reported strongly promoting self-regulation among their students, although they did not report engaging as strongly with their students' language awareness, especially their students' crosslinguistic awareness. What perhaps was unexpected was that the participants' level of multilingualism negatively correlated with their reported efforts to develop their students' metalinguistic and crosslinguistic awareness. Being more multilingual also did not lead to the participants developing their students' self-regulation to a greater degree. On the contrary, the multilingual participants reported developing their students' self-regulation and language awareness to a lesser extent than did the bilingual participants, who, in turn, reported developing these to a lesser degree than did the monolingual participants. This occurred even though the majority of the participants thought that multilingualism benefited their students. One possible, albeit speculative, explanation for this situation might be that the majority of the participants reported translating words and handing out instructions when drawing on their students' knowledge of other languages. Fewer participants reported drawing on their students' other languages to teach Arabic morphosyntax and culture (see Section 4.2.3). As translation is mostly absent as an activity from the Likert items (see Table 1), the bilingual and multilingual participants may have received lower scores here as they did not appear to implement other crosslinguistic activities to the same degree as they did translation. However, this does not explain why the monolingual participants received higher scores regarding developing both their students' self-regulation and language awareness. One possibility is that their linguistic

constraints acted as a force that drove them to further develop their learners' self-regulated learning and language awareness as a way to get their students to take more responsibility for their learning and as a compensatory strategy for not being able to effectively interact (orally at least) with their students in other languages. This is again quite speculative and these unexpected findings require further research to help us understand what led to such differences between the monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual participants.

In any event, the findings suggest that many of the participants relied heavily on translation while using other crosslinguistic activities to a lesser extent. Studies show that a heavy reliance on translation might not always develop students' language awareness and could hurt the learning process and vocabulary retention among students (see Schwartz & Asli, 2014). For example, students might develop the habit of simply waiting for the teacher to translate words for them and not make any efforts to learn the language. Therefore, there is a need to provide teachers with the tools to help them engage in a diverse range of crosslinguistic activities in the classroom, should they so desire. The majority of the participants in this study certainly indicated that they considered multilingualism to be a positive resource for their learners. Their limited use of crosslinguistic activities other than translation might be due to a lack of training and familiarity in implementing these (see Schedel & Bonvin, 2017). Schools and educational institutions could organize teacher workshops and education programs that specifically include such a component. The government could also contribute by encouraging schools and institutions to offer such programs via funding initiatives. Such an approach would likely be of great benefit to teachers, who themselves come from diverse backgrounds and might not have previously experienced the level of linguistic and cultural diversity that they encounter in the UAE. Students might also obtain deeper insights into the workings of Arabic and become more motivated to learn the language if exposed to a greater diversity of crosslinguistic practices.

6 | CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings presented here relate specifically to Arabic teachers in UK-curriculum schools in the UAE that are teaching expat students. Teachers working in other contexts might have a different approach towards multilingualism as a resource, the place of dialects in the Arabic language curriculum, and developing their students' self-regulation and language awareness. It is also worth noting that this study relied on teachers' self-reports when discussing their beliefs and practices as it was found to be logistically difficult to carry out observations. Due to the study's reliance on self-reports, participant responses may not accurately mirror their actual day-to-day classroom practices, although similar concerns can be raised with other data collection methods like interviews and observations. In any case, certain trends are revealed by the findings that are worth researching in greater detail, and that may have implications for the teaching and learning of Arabic and other LOTE in super-diverse contexts. To begin with, we feel that the MSA curriculum for schools should introduce students to Arabic dialects as this could encourage them to use Arabic more frequently outside of school. The findings indicate that the participants are willing and already have certain ideas about which dialects to teach (and why). Therefore, it is important to provide them with the opportunity and tools to do so. Secondly, and rather unexpectedly, we found that the monolingual participants

reported implementing activities in support of their students' self-regulation and language awareness more strongly than did the bilingual and multilingual participants. We tested for differences based on teaching experience, gender, age, and beliefs about their students' multilingualism and found no statistically significant results to explain why this might be. The participants all taught the same Arabic curriculum in UK curriculum schools in the UAE. There were no differences based on the context. Further research on the interplay between language teacher multilingualism and their practices, self-reported or observed, will hopefully shed more light on the reasons for these differences between the monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual participants, and whether these differences are present in teachers of other languages or if it is something specific to teachers of Arabic in the UAE.

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