

Prova scritta: Inglese B2 Tandem – 27 Gennaio 2015

Maximum time: **90 minutes**.

Part 1 Reading comprehension

Answer the five comprehension questions based on the information in the text.

- Answer the questions **in your own words** in complete sentences.
- Do not begin sentences with 'Because'.
- **Do not copy** whole phrases or sentences from the text.
- Write a **maximum of 25 words for each answer** (long answers will be penalised).
- Do not use a dictionary.

1. Why do many Arabic journalism students have difficulty communicating in the Arabic heard on *Al Jazeera*?
2. What is meant by the term "heritage learners" of Arabic?
3. What reform has the Saudi government recently introduced to encourage the use of Arabic?
4. Why might the reform mentioned in question 3 cause confusion?
5. How do wealthy Gulf residents contribute to Arabic becoming a second language in the Gulf?

Part 2 Composition

Write an essay of 150-200 words on the topic below.

English should be the medium of instruction for all subjects in public schools in my country.

Give reasons and examples to support your position.

Battling to Preserve Arabic From English

At Illinois University in Qatar on the Arabian Gulf the administration recently came up against a surprising problem: How to improve students' Arabic.

The overseas campus of the American university attracts students from 30 countries for its programs in communications and journalism. Although courses are given in English, about 60 percent of students speak some form of Arabic. "But most of them don't speak Arabic well enough to appear on Al Jazeera," said E. Dennis, the school's dean.

For the past two years the school has offered a course in Arabic for Media. But it is optional, and not terribly popular. According to a new plan by administrators, a goal is to help students "achieve competence at a level that will allow them to work professionally in the media."

Proposed measures include arranging for more instruction in Modern Standard Arabic — the dialect used in print and broadcast, which can seem almost like a foreign language to students raised in the Gulf — hiring an Arabic writing coach and making Arabic for Media a requirement.

"Our staff realized there was a problem," said Gerd Nonneman, director of the Illinois University language center. Two-thirds of our students come from an Arab background, but more than half of them "never reach professional proficiency in their own language," he said. Therefore, Illinois University divides its Arabic language classes into two categories, "heritage learners" and "foreign learners of Arabic," with both groups brought together in the final year for advanced learning. The school also recently submitted a proposal to the Qatar Foundation, an NGO that frequently finances educational initiatives, to create new teaching materials for heritage learners. "Despite their cultural background, many of these kids have never really had an Arabic education," Mr. Nonneman said.

But if the ambitious scale of the school's response is unusual, the underlying problem, namely the rise of English as a lingua franca throughout the Arab world and the consequent decline of Arabic, has prompted increasing concern. Recently the Qatari government, which has devoted an enormous amount of resources to building branch campuses from half a dozen U.S. universities in Education City, announced that starting next year the language of instruction at Qatar University, the country's largest, would switch to Arabic from English.

This month, Gulf News, the English-language daily, reported that Saudi Arabia had prohibited the use of English to answer telephone calls in hotels, private companies and government offices. "As is so often the case in the Gulf, the move was announced suddenly with little chance for the organization or students to prepare for it," said Jane Kinninmont, a Middle East specialist. "The recent shift to Arabic at Qatar University reflects wider sensitivities about protecting the local culture in the country with the world's highest rate of inward migration," Ms. Kinninmont said.

"There is a feeling that Arabic is fast becoming a second language in the Gulf, as people need to use English as a common language with the huge number of expatriate workers who make up most of the private sector, and as the wealthy and educated youth increasingly speak to each other in English," she added.

"If the parents are wealthy enough to send their children to private schools everything is taught in English," she continued. "In state schools in the Gulf the medium of instruction is Arabic, but the teaching is often not very good. And Gulf Arabic is very different from Modern Standard Arabic.

But Mr. Nonneman was more skeptical. "Language is not something you can turn on like a switch," he said. "You need to learn an academic history in the language."

Instead of banning languages, Mr. Nonneman said he favored a truly bilingual education, in which students would be taught, and expected, to speak both English and Arabic fluently from elementary school onwards.