

Exploring Arabic learning motivation and experiences at Australian Islamic schools: Voices of non-Arab adolescent Muslims

by

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Glossary of Terms

- **ACARA:** Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority
- **AIS:** Australian Islamic schools
- **AL2M:** Arabic language learning motivation
- **a-MLA:** Adolescent non-Arab Muslim learners of Arabic
- **AMTB:** Attitude motivation test battery
- **BIQA:** Basic interpretive qualitative approach
- **CALL:** Computer-assisted language learning
- **CO:** Classroom observations
- **EAL/D:** English as an additional language/or dialect
- **GTM:** Grammar-translation method
- **HLL:** Heritage language learner
- **IL2S:** Ideal L2 self
- **ISAA:** Islamic schools association of Australia
- **K-12:** Kindergarten to Year 12
- **L1:** First language (the language in the case of monolinguals, or languages in the case of childhood bilingual or multilingual acquisition) (Ortega, 2009). In the case of non-Arab Muslim adolescents, the L1 would be English and their home language.
- **L2:** Second language (an additional language learnt after the first). In this thesis, it subsumes the concept of “foreign language learning” (Ortega, 2009).
- **L2 acquisition / L2 learning:** learning an additional language after the L1. Learning and acquisition are used interchangeably (Ortega, 2009).
- **L2 Motivation:** The motivation to learn an L2. As well as theories of language learning motivation (Dörnyei, 2019a)
- **L2MR:** Research focused on understanding motivation to learn an L2. L2MR is one of the domains of SLA research.
- **L2MSS:** L2 motivational self system (Dörnyei, 2005)
- **L2LE:** L2 learning experience
- **Learner / Student:** These two words are used interchangeably.
- **LOTE:** Language other than English
- **MLA:** Non-Arab Muslim learners of Arabic.
- **MSA:** Modern standard Arabic

- **NGS:** Non-governmental schools
- **NSW:** New South Wales, Australia
- **OL2S:** Ought-to L2 self
- **PICRV:** Person-in-context relational view of motivation, self and identity
- **PS:** Possible selves
- **PTT:** Permission to teach
- **QA:** Qualitative approaches
- **SDT:** Self-determination theory
- **SLA:** Second language acquisition. A field of scholarship dedicated to understanding humans' ability to learn languages other than the first (Ortega, 2009).
- **TAFL:** Teaching Arabic as a foreign language
- **TRB:** Teacher registration board
- **VCE:** Victorian certificate of education

Abstract

This qualitative research focused on school-level learning of Arabic in Australia. It explored the Arabic learning experiences, and L2 motivation of adolescent non-Arab Muslims (a-MLA) enrolled at Australian Islamic schools (AIS). The thesis pursued an understanding of (1) how a-MLA make sense of Arabic learning; (2) what they make of their L2 learning experiences; and (3) how they wanted their L2 experiences improved. The thesis also wanted to identify other issues that influence their motivation. Central to this research design was the positioning of school students as experts on their lifeworlds who are entitled to speak for themselves (Gonzalez, Hernandez-Saca, & Artiles, 2016). Data were gathered using semi-structured interviews and classroom observations.

The theoretical framework was informed by the L2MSS: ‘L2 motivational self system’ [ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience] introduced by Dörnyei (2005, 2009, 2019b). The main focus of the thesis aligned to the third component of the model: the L2 learning experience (L2LE). It was anticipated that theoretical flexibility was needed to account for additional influences on adolescents’ possible selves, Arabic-specific issues, and macro-level influences that overlap with Arabic L2LE in the English-dominant Australian context. Accordingly, the L2MSS was supplemented by the PICRV: ‘person-in-context relational view of emergent motivation, self and identity’ proposed by Ushioda (2009). The framework was also informed by literature focused on possible selves (Macintyre, Mackinnon, & Clément, 2009; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oyserman, Destin, & Novin, 2015; Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006; Oyserman, Terry, & Bybee, 2002; Roshandel & Hudley, 2018).

The findings revealed that students’ orientations (interests) were primarily religious. Their orientations mostly aligned to the ought-to L2 self. However, the vast majority of students were disengaged, and a minority were resistant. The impacts of negative L2LE diminished the plausibility of acquiring Arabic. Contextual factors undermined the value of acquiring Arabic. Students’ L2LE, self-efficacy beliefs, and competing priorities influenced abandonment of Arabic in Years 10-12. The repeated failures some students experienced due to the poor L2LE had serious consequences for their sense of self-worth and for their self-efficacy beliefs. Learned helplessness was evident. Alienation and other selves were emergent. Students’ discussions highlighted that the quality of their Arabic learning experiences requires urgent attention. Many students deemed the programs a failure.

Some of the issues students raised related to (1) the number of lessons allocated to Arabic; (2) the management of proficiency levels; (3) the instructional approach; (4) the unstructured nature of learning; (5) the difficulty of content; and (6) the nature of teacher-student relationships. Students' discussions revealed that disruptive behaviours were used as a communicative act (Kim, 2010). The students made many insightful recommendations for the improvement of L2LE, which constitute a student-guided plan for change. Their suggestions covered the (1) structure of Arabic programs, (2) the nature of learning content, and (3) instructional approaches. A key recommendation was using a "hands-on learning" approach instead of the boring, ineffective reading and translation method they experienced. The students offered various tips for the improvement of teachers' performance.

The thesis makes three recommendations. Firstly, AIS and Arabic teachers need to apply motivational teaching strategies and implement the students' recommendations, with a particular focus on "hands-on learning". Secondly, Arabic teacher training programs need to be organised urgently to create a better fit between students' expectations and their teachers' approaches. It is also important that appropriate learning content and programs of work are developed for these learners in keeping with their recommendations. It is suggested that the 'Islamic Schools Association of Australia' spearhead these initiatives. Thirdly, further research on Arabic learning at AIS is needed to examine various key issues.

Keywords: L2MSS, ought-to L2 self, L2 learning experience (L2LE), Arabic, L2 motivation, non-Arab Muslims, adolescents

Declaration

I, Nadia Selim, declare that:

this thesis presents work carried out by myself and does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; to the best of my knowledge, it does not contain any materials previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; and all substantive contributions by others, to work presented, including jointly authored publications, is clearly acknowledged.



Signature

17-12-20

Date

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Academic publications

- Selim, N. (2019). Will Arabic survive in Australia? Participation and challenges. *Islam and Civilisational Renewal (ICR)*, 10(1), 85-105.
- Selim, N. (2019). Arabic should not be cast as heritage: Arabic lives. *Ulum Islamiyyah*, 27(1), 18-25.
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- Selim, N. (2017). Muslim societies' ambivalence to Arabic: Reasons, manifestations and consequences. *International Journal of Islamic Thought (IJIT)*, 11(June), 32-44.
- Selim, N. (2017). Ibn Sahnun's ninth century framework: A guide for Arabic language curriculum writing. *Islam and Civilisational Renewal (ICR)*, 8(4), 488-506.

Chapter 1. *Introduction*

Learners are central stakeholders in any educational endeavour or context. Language learners' motivation is complex and hard to define. However, it is implicated in the choices they make, the effort they expend, and their persistence in learning a second language (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Motivation emanates from within the learner but is susceptible to a range of external influences that emerge from their learning and social environments. This has implications for persistence in language learning and praxis. Hence, exploring the relationship between school students' motivation and perceptions of experienced instruction is essential. Using this knowledge to create relevant contextually-situated interventions can be central to the creation of effective Arabic language programs that meet students' needs.

Current understandings of L2 motivation were mainly shaped by quantitative research focused on the learning of English as a second language (Boo, Dörnyei, & Ryan, 2015). The field has undergone a paradigm shift, and qualitative examinations of L2 motivation (L2M) are gaining traction (Ushioda, 2019a). Qualitative examinations of L2M are compatible with the need to account for learners as 'real people' with selves, identities, and agency as opposed to theoretical abstractions (Ushioda, 1994, 2009, 2016). Qualitative approaches can facilitate greater focus on student voice. Inviting learners to make sense of their motives, expectations, experiences, and needs can lead to richer understandings of their L2M. The field also recognises that more needs to be understood about the motivation to learn languages other than English (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017).

Extending these qualitative approaches to the research of Arabic learning motivation (AL2M) among Australian school learners of Arabic is essential and timely. The Arabic learning experiences of non-Arab Muslim learners of Arabic (a-MLA) in Australian Islamic schools (AIS) are not well understood. Exploring the motivation and Arabic learning experiences of a-MLA can help Australian educators deliver meaningful Arabic language education. This qualitative thesis has four aims (1) understanding how Arabic learning experiences at AIS influence non-Arab Muslim learners' motivation; (2) identifying other influences of their motivation; (3) providing a detailed account of learning experiences; and (4) presenting the students' recommendations for change if gaps between expectations and realities emerge.

1.1. Background to this research

Australia is a multilingual and multicultural country. It was the first English-speaking country to outline an explicit multi-language policy (Martin, 2005). The National Policy on Languages (NPL), 1987, articulated four guiding principles for promoting languages in Australia and listed nine ‘languages of wider teaching’ (Arabic, Mandarin/Chinese, French, German, Greek, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese and Spanish) (Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2009). However, most English-background speakers stay “steadfastly monolingual” (Martin, 2005:54). This problem persists despite the efforts of many language policymakers and planners to promote languages.

The Group of Eight leading universities (2007) raised concerns about the downward trend in language learning. The Group of Eight urged prompt action to curb the educational, security and economic risks that can result from Australian monolingualism (GO8, 2007). Participation figures are patchy (Murray, 2010) and often outdated, but they reflect a decline in Year 12 enrolments in languages. In the 1970s, 40% of school leavers graduated with a language (GO8, 2007). However, in the early 2000s, the national average for Year 12 participation in languages was about 13.1% (Clyne, 2005). The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) released data for Year 12 enrolments in languages from 2010-2017/2018. The data indicate that the national average was 10.58% in 2017, but that it fell to 10.53% in 2018 (ACARA, 2017, 2018).

Low participation in language learning is a matter of concern in Australian public discourse (Theodosiou, 2017). This concern has borne a diverse body of research focused on improving trajectories into the future by analyzing participation, attrition, understanding realities, and proposing solutions. I furnish a few examples here to exemplify the currency of the matter. Mason (2018) provided a snapshot of the realities of programs. She stressed the need to explore the quality of language provisions (down to the seemingly incidental aspects such as classroom spaces) (Mason, 2018). She argued that focus on participation figures left us with limited knowledge of the realities of programs (Mason, 2018). AEF et al. (2014) identified potential ways to encourage more students to learn languages in Years 11-12. Other researchers attempted to resolve problems for a specific language or languages. For instance, Orton (2016a, 2016b) focused on promoting participation in Mandarin/Chinese and resolving its teaching problems; and Yuan and Shen (2016) introduced audio-visual resources for learning Mandarin/Chinese. Whereas Lo Bianco and Aliani (2013) researched

students' experiences of learning Italian and Japanese to understand how language policy and planning manifested as real learning on the ground.

In this climate, research of this nature is needed. In my research, I identified that participation in Arabic learning at schools is problematic and that research to resolve such issues is needed (Selim, 2019b). The most recent figure I could find for participation in Arabic learning in Australian schools was from 2006, when it was estimated that 25,449 students were learning Arabic (Lo Bianco & Aliani, 2013). Cruickshank (2008) likened participation in Arabic to a pyramid, saying that many students studied Arabic in the earlier years, but that only 8% of Arabic speakers studied Arabic in the final years of school. Arabic participation data from 2006 corroborates this (Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2009). In 2006, 2,743 students learned Arabic in Year 1, but only 211 students took it in Year 12.¹

Participation in Arabic learning is lower than participation in the learning of the other languages of wider teaching. Average participation in Year 12 Arabic between 2006-2017 was 1.9%, while average participation in Year 12 Japanese (19.8%) and French (19.6%), for example, was ten times greater (Selim, 2019b). Resolving this situation requires investigating Arabic students' learning experiences and understanding how other learners might be encouraged to learn Arabic. These research needs were identified almost thirty years ago (Campbell, Dyson, Karim, & Rabie, 1993). Campbell et al. (1993) highlighted the need for increasing Arabic's appeal to Australian students. They stressed that where school programs exist, "serious efforts to interest students of non-Arabic speaking background[s] and develop appropriate programs" are necessary (Campbell et al., 1993:iv).

Curiously, researchers have not adequately examined these Arabic-specific issues or assisted in their resolution. Therefore, the necessity for research that explores students' motivation, experiences, and program improvements is pressing if we are to protect and expand participation in Arabic language learning in Australia.

1.2. Focus, impetus, and position

Many macro-level factors could be influencing AL2M and participation in Year 12 Arabic learning. Some influences could derive from the English-dominant nature of the Australian learning context or the global dominance of English. In other words, Arabic

¹ $(211/2743) \times 100 = 7.6\%$

learning occurs in the shadow of English (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017). Some influences could derive from the broader ecology of Australian language education. For instance, “Asianism” emerged in the 1980s to reverse the established “preference for European languages” and the “recent preference for community languages” (including Arabic) by lobbying for certain Asian languages (Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2009: 16). Asianism culminated in the provision of \$200 million in federal support for Chinese (Mandarin), Indonesian, Japanese, and Korean only (Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2009). This intervention led to an exponential increase in learning these languages (Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2009). Other influences could derive from societal attitudes. For instance, it has been suggested that the negative stereotypes of Arabs held by non-Arab Australians have a deterring influence (Campbell et al., 1993). Alternatively, influences might emerge from learners’ immediate social contexts or micro-level learning experiences.

This thesis seeks to capture the salient influences on AL2M from the perspective of a-MLA in AIS. The research uses a qualitative lens focused on foregrounding students’ voices. It is hoped that this research’s outcomes will contribute to the protection of existing participation and the improvement of participation trajectories in the future. This hope is informed by the idea that creating positive experiences in classrooms can foster increased participation. For instance, Lo Bianco and Slaughter (2009) stated that positive micro-experiences (e.g. quality teaching or students’ sense of achievement) could override the negative attitudes about languages that students inherit from their parents or society.

In this research, I am an insider and an outsider. I am an Australian Muslim, but I am an adult Arab, which removes me from the specific group I am researching (non-Arab Muslim adolescents). Nonetheless, in relation to the research focus, my Islamic faith and background as an Arabic teacher are likely to generate effective research and more intimate understandings of data (Jones, 2013). In terms of my position, I need to acknowledge that other researchers influence my orientation to this research. Firstly, I am influenced by Pennycook (1990, 2001, 2004, 2010). He argues that applied linguists need to engage in research which (1) is grounded in social, historical and political realities; (2) seeks to redress inequities; and (3) provides alternative visions for the future rather than pessimistic critiques of the status quo. Secondly, I am influenced by work that seeks to redress the framing of students in research (Erickson & Shultz, 1992), mainly student voice research which consults with and partners with students in education (Pearce & Wood, 2019). Finally, I am

influenced by Ortega (2005), who asserts that researchers cannot serve those whom they do not research.

1.3. Significance of the research

The value of L2 research generally, and L2M research specifically, derives from its capacity to impact society in positive ways (Ortega, 2005; Ushioda, 2019a). This research has such potential. Firstly, its results will add to our understanding of factors that influence participation in languages by focusing on the motivation and experiences of one of the less understood groups of language learners (Selim, 2019b). Secondly, the results can generate language-specific knowledge to assist language planners and educators. The need to move away from generic approaches to language planning is recognised in Australia (AEF et al., 2014). Cruickshank (2008) highlighted the lack of consideration for Arabic-specific issues, which relegated the responsibility for bridging the gap between the generic syllabus and Arabic programs to teachers. This situation has implications for students' experiences and motivation which requires research attention. Thirdly, this thesis can offer Arabic teachers of a-MLA insights into their AL2M and needs. These insights can inform future practice and improve experiences of Arabic learning. Fourthly, the thesis adds to emergent work focused on what is taught in AIS (Jones, 2012, 2018; Jones, 2013) by focusing on Arabic. Such research can inform educators in the AIS context.

The thesis can contribute to Arabic research in similar contexts (e.g. the USA and the UK). Ryding (2018) suggested that the theoretical underpinnings of Arabic research should be expanded. Alhawary (2018) suggested that Arabic researchers should focus on creating greater synergy between theory and praxis. The thesis fills a gap in the literature on AL2M. Firstly, it focuses on the experiences of a-MLA in AIS and examines their influence on AL2M. This group of learners is underrepresented in research on AL2M. The findings can enrich our understanding of AL2M by introducing the perspectives of additional cohorts of learners. Secondly, it focuses its lens on secondary school students. Presently, most of AL2M research draws on findings from the tertiary sector. Thirdly, it qualitatively examines AL2M from an experiential perspective, which can generate richer findings than the dominant survey approaches do. Fourthly, it uses the L2MSS (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009, 2019b), which is one of the current models of L2 motivation. Most examinations of AL2M have focused on older theories of motivation.

Moreover, the findings of this exploration could resonate with several research needs in the field of L2M. These include (1) the need for more research focused on secondary school learners' L2M (Boo et al., 2015); (2) the need for more examinations of the impact of instruction on motivation (Csizér, 2017); (3) the need to understand the nature of L2M in relation to learning languages other than English in countries like Australia; (4) the need to examine aspects of the L2MSS in relation to the learning of languages other than English (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017; Mendoza & Phung, 2019); (5) and the role religion can play in L2M (Lepp-Kaethler & Dörnyei, 2013). The centrality of student voice to this thesis is in step with trends in L2MR (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2014; Lamb, 2009; Lamb, 2005).

1.4. Australian Islamic schools (AIS)

This research was pressing for two reasons. Firstly, we do not adequately understand how non-Arab Muslim adolescents make sense of learning Arabic at K-12 Islamic schools. Secondly, we do not know if their learning experiences meet their needs. There are forty-six AIS that cater to over 38,000 Muslim learners (ISCA, 2020). While this is a minuscule percentage of the total number of school-goers in Australia, it is a substantial figure of potential Arabic learners. I remind the reader that it was estimated that 25,449 students were learning Arabic in Australian schools (Lo Bianco & Aliani, 2013). Before elaborating on Australian Islamic schools (AIS), it is essential to position them in the Australian educational system.

1.4.1. AIS in Australian education

Australian schools are either governmental or non-governmental. Non-governmental schools (NGS) include Aboriginal schools, Independent schools (e.g. AIS), and educational philosophy schools (e.g. Montessori schools). Schools must be registered with the education department within their local state (or territory) (studyinaustralia.gov.au, 2019). NGS operate under state (or territory) and federal legislation (ISCA, 2019b), which requires using national curricula, participating in national testing, and providing annual reports (ISCA, 2019a). Independent schools have three distinguishing features (ISCA, 2019b). Firstly, they are established individually and are answerable to their governing boards. Secondly, they are funded by parents as well as the government. Thirdly, they offer faith education consistent with a specific community's beliefs (e.g. Jewish schools).

AIS exhibit an outwardly Islamic ethos but are the same as all other Australian schools (Clyne, 2001), and they take pride in their pre-tertiary results (Jones, 2018). Saeed (2004) encapsulates this succinctly. He explains that Islamic schools

receive Australian government subsidies. Fees are kept low so that parents (who are often recent migrants or from working-class backgrounds) can afford to send their children to these schools. Students learn the same subjects as taught in other public primary and secondary schools. The various state education departments monitor the curricula to ensure that basic standards are maintained. The difference is that students at Islamic schools receive Islamic religious education, and are usually taught Arabic as well. In all other respects, the curriculum of the Islamic school is like that of any other public school. Teachers in these Islamic schools come from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds. Only the religious education teachers are expected to be Muslim. (p. 56)

It is important to note that AIS are not *madrasas*, which are strictly Islamic institutes that use an Islamic curriculum to graduate specialists in Islamic sciences (Mabud, 2018). Additionally, AIS are not after-hours community schools linked to mosques or community-run Islamic centres (Diallo & Lockyer, 2016).² Instead, AIS are officially recognised and regulated providers of mainstream primary and secondary education.

1.4.2. Purposes of establishment

AIS were established as an alternative to secular public schools. Like Catholic and Jewish schools, the establishment of AIS was rooted in Muslim families' desire to educate their children in an environment that permits them to both learn and freely practice their faith (Ali, 2018). One of the first two AIS was established by Silma and Siddiq Buckley because their daughter had been turned away from a Presbyterian college in Sydney for wearing a headscarf (Ali, 2018). Clyne (2001) explained that the "teaching of the Qur'an and Arabic", alongside Islamic practice, are central purposes of AIS (p. 134). Abdullah (2018) explained that Muslims believed "that a quality Islamic religious, cultural and Arabic/ethnic language experience could be more readily realised by the establishment of full-time Islamic schools" (p. 196). That is, Arabic learning is part of the Australian Islamic schools' promise.

1.4.3. The Arabic courses at AIS

The Campbell report (1993) on Arabic learning in Australia made brief notations about some Independent Islamic schools operating in Victoria and New South Wales (NSW). In

² AIS are not the same as heritage schools in North America, or supplementary schools in the UK (Diallo & Lockyer, 2016).

Victoria, four AIS taught Arabic between 1988-1991 (Coburg Islamic School, Islamic Trust College, King Khalid Islamic College, and the Islamic school of Victoria). The report provided brief totals of the numbers of students and teachers. In NSW, two Islamic schools were in operation: Al-Noori Muslim Primary School and the Malek Fahd Islamic School. Al-Noori launched their Arabic program in 1983, while Malek Fahd started theirs in 1989 (Campbell et al., 1993). About Al-Noori, Campbell et al. (1993) stated that the “school believes that a sound understanding of Islam rests on the knowledge of Arabic” (p. 4). As for Malek Fahd, Campbell et al. (1993) stated that Arabic was taught for religious and cultural reasons (Campbell et al., 1993). Little else was written about the AIS Arabic programs in this period, save for an observation that the AIS sector was ideal for researching and developing Arabic programs (Hall, 1996).

The first descriptions of Arabic programs emerged this decade. Jones (2013) examined what was being taught at AIS in his PhD thesis. He wanted to understand the compatibility of Muslim values with Australian values and the role AIS play in either creating Australian-Muslims or Muslims in Australia. Jones (2013) interviewed 50 teachers and 31 former students (mostly under 30 years of age, but some were older than that). Jones explained that he interviewed teachers from ten schools but that he visited 19 schools in total. Arabic was considered a faith topic (alongside Qur'an and Islamic studies) and, therefore, afforded some space in the thesis. The data revealed that two hours of basic Arabic were offered per week in Years 1-10. He explained that some schools attempted to stream Arabic classes in high school but that this was done by asking students if they spoke Arabic. He also noted that the teachers were mostly native speakers but that they were inadequately trained. Primary lessons focused on the script and taught simple words.

Jones (2013) explained that an Arabic-speaking student described repetitive learning between Kindergarten and Year 8. A teacher said that even Arab students remained at low levels of proficiency and that the turnover of teachers was a problem. An Arab student liked his Arabic program because the Sheikh taught the correct pronunciation of the Qur'an, thereby raising questions about the nature and content of Arabic programs. Jones also revealed that students dropped Arabic in Years 11-12 because pursuing it was meaningless. He provided few excerpts from alumni, but these showed more dissatisfaction among non-Arab alumni. One non-Arab remembered that they would spend their time in lessons doing other things, and another felt that she memorised everything to pass.

Ultimately, Campbell et al. (1993) described a sector in its infancy and Jones (2013) offered many helpful insights. However, there is still much to learn about the motivation of adolescents taking Arabic programs. In both sources, we do not learn much about how young Muslim learners make sense of their motives or learning or how their experiences influence their motivation. Jones' research suggests that there might be gaps between what non-Arabs expected of programs and what they experienced. The breadth and depth of the implications on motivation, persistence and success in learning Arabic could be significant but remain under-researched. In an environment where participation in Arabic is low, demotivating experiences cannot be afforded. Leaving such issues unresolved is tantamount to negligence.

1.5. Young non-Arab Muslims' voices

Kellett (2011a) noted that there are three groups of students in schools: young children, children, and young people. Young people are typically 12-18 years of age (Kellett, 2011a). This thesis focused on young people (11-17 years of age). Young people are also 'adolescents' according to the World Health Organisation, which uses the term to refer to individuals who are 10-19 years of age (WHO, 2019).

Adolescents were selected as participants for three reasons. Firstly, they were likely to manage extended interviews and open-ended questions better. Secondly, some were expected to have spent more time learning Arabic than children or young children. Thirdly, some were expected to be contemplating continuing with Arabic in Years 10-12 (when Arabic is no longer compulsory) or at university (if they had selected Arabic as a matriculation subject). Essentially, it was anticipated that discussions with these students would yield richer data.

'Home language' was used as the primary criterion for inclusion and exclusion of participants. Using Arabic for communication is a parameter for delineating Arabs from non-Arabs in the literature on Islam and Arab identity. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him: pbuh) is said to have deemed anyone "who conversed in Arabic" an Arab (Sulaiman, 2007).³ Therefore, in the Islamic tradition, the term 'arab [Arab]' was used to refer to those who could speak Arabic correctly (Webb, 2016). Conversely, the term 'ajam [non-Arab]' was used to refer to those who could not speak Arabic correctly (Webb, 2016). Suleiman (2003) explained that the "primordality of language as a "given" of national identity" is stressed in

³ Though the chain of transmission (sanad) of this ḥadīth is deemed weak (da'eef). Please see: <https://dorar.net>

the Arab community (p. 28). Moreover, Hourani (1983) noted that the three Arab identity markers are language, lineage, and history.

Student voice is central to the framing of this thesis. The adolescents are positioned as experts on their motivation and experiences, who are best placed to address gaps that must be bridged to meet their needs. This positioning is based on the belief that students' knowledge of their experiences is unique (Pekrul & Levin, 2007). This positioning is also underpinned by the belief that students must be given space to express their views (Bourke & Loveridge, 2018), especially when it has been suggested that dialogue makes them feel valued (Rudduck, 2007). Furthermore, it is accepted that student voice can mobilise school and parent opinion in favour of change (Pekrul & Levin, 2007).

1.5.1. Muslims as learners of Arabic (MLA)

In many Arabic studies, non-Arab Muslim learners are distinguished from other non-Arab learners because of the religious and historical affiliations they might have to Arabic. In various studies, non-Arab Muslims are considered a subset of Arabic heritage language learners. The term heritage language learner (HLL) emerged in North America to describe learners who study, maintain or revive a non-societal language which has familial, personal, or historical relevance that is more pronounced than their proficiency (Fishman, 2001; Valdés, 2005). There is no universal consensus on who qualifies as an HLL (Labanieh, 2019). HLL are a heterogeneous group; some are fluent speakers, while others might not speak the language but feel culturally connected to it (Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003).

Non-Arab Muslims are harder to define because their backgrounds neither fully align with the term HLL nor with the term non-HLL (Lee, 2005). Definitions of HLL are often ethnolinguistic, and from this perspective, non-Arab Muslims are not HLL (Husseinali, 2012). However, some Arabic researchers account for religious, cultural and historical affinities irrespective of ethnolinguistic ties (Husseinali, 2006; Ibrahim & Allam, 2006). Husseinali (2012) explained that "if we extend the definition of HLLs to include learners who have cultural affinity to Arabic then we will extend our circle of HLLs to include the many Muslim students who take Arabic to connect to religious texts" (p. 99). In terms of proficiency, some researchers equate non-Arab Muslims with other L2 learners. Turkistani (2019) explained that since Muslims do not have access to the natural use of Arabic in their homes, they are essentially L2 learners. Montrul (2016) also stated that those who neither speak nor understand the language are similar to L2 learners.

Labelling languages or learners, in one way or another, invariably has implications. For instance, it has been suggested that identity labels can influence self-reported language use (Villa & Villa, 1998). I problematised using the term HLL (Selim, 2019a) because, as García (2005) identified, the word ‘heritage’ frames language as a ‘remembrance’ rather than part of a learners’ present or future. As this thesis is not committed to North American jargon or interested in intergroup comparisons, the term HLL is not used. Non-Arab Muslim adolescents are viewed as L2 learners. Their potential affinity for Arabic is recognised but not assumed to exist given the complexities that emerge in contexts such as Australia (see section 2.2). The learners are, therefore, referred to as Muslim learners of Arabic (MLA).

1.6. Research questions and aims

Based on the aforementioned, the thesis sought to answer the following research questions: (1) how do adolescent MLA (a-MLA) in AIS make sense of Arabic learning, (2) what do a-MLA make of their L2 learning experiences, and (3) how would a-MLA like their L2 learning experiences improved. These research questions aligned with the four aims of the research. See Table 1.

Table 1 Research questions and research aims

Research questions	Research aims
1. How do adolescent MLA in AIS make sense of Arabic learning?	1. Understanding how Arabic learning experiences at AIS influence non-Arab Muslim learners’ motivation. 2. Identifying other influences.
2. What do adolescent MLA make of their L2 learning experiences?	3. Providing a detailed account of their Arabic learning experiences.
3. How would adolescent MLA like L2 learning experiences improved?	4. Presenting the students’ recommendations for change if gaps between expectations and realities emerged.

1.7. Overview of the exploratory thesis

This thesis used a basic interpretive qualitative approach (BIQA) as outlined by Merriam (1998, 2002a) and Merriam and Tisdell (2015). This flexible qualitative approach was the best suited to the exploratory nature of research (Liu, 2016). Fieldwork at four Islamic schools began after a rigorous ethical procedure. All participants and their guardians gave their informed consent. The research mainly relied on semi-structured interviews, but classroom observations were used to triangulate the design and deepen understanding of the

students' perspectives. Research instruments were piloted twice before the main research commenced. Attempts to balance the gender of participants were made. The participants were enrolled in Years 7-10 and were mostly 13-14 years of age. Attempts were made to recruit students from Years 11-12, but none volunteered for unknown reasons.

The individual interviews were 45 minutes-long on average. I transcribed interviews verbatim and used the transcripts for data analysis. In total, forty (40) interviews were thematically analysed with the assistance of the computer software N-Vivo. Codes are used to refer to participants and their statements to protect their confidentiality. Observations were also analysed. However, given the focus on student voice, the results chapters mainly consist of excerpts or quotes from students' interviews. In the presentation of data, emergent themes were not reduced to numbers of instances (Landrum & Garza, 2015).

1.8. The organisation of the thesis

Following this introductory chapter, the thesis unfolds as follows. In chapter two, a literature review is presented. The purpose of the literature review is threefold. Firstly, it situates the thesis in the literature on L2 motivation by outlining the history of L2 motivation research, current research trends, and future directions in the field. Secondly, the chapter presents and discusses the L2 motivational self system (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009, 2019b), which informs this thesis. It then presents and discusses the theoretical framework. Thirdly, the literature review discusses the gap this thesis fills in research on AL2M

In chapter three, the research methods used to answer the research questions are explained, described and discussed. Initially, the suitability of qualitative approaches to L2 motivation research is explained. Then an explanation of the BIQA used in this thesis is provided. The chapter then presents various considerations that informed the research with adolescents. The chapter then discusses the research design and process in great detail. The research sites, the participants, the research instruments, the triangulation of the design, the pilot study, and trustworthiness are discussed.

In chapter four, the findings related to the first research question are presented. The chapter focuses on *how a-MLA in AIS make sense of Arabic learning*. This chapter and question cast a wide net that captured various facets of the students' L2M motivation and sense-making. Firstly, the students' perceptions of their schools' purposes are presented. Secondly, students' motivational orientations are described. Thirdly, students' definitions of

learning expectations are identified. Finally, evidence for, and explanations of a-MLA resistance and disengagement are presented.

In chapter five, the findings pertaining to the second research question are presented. The chapter concentrates on describing *what a-MLA make of their L2 learning experiences (L2LE)*. The chapter begins by briefly stating the students' self-assessments of their language skills. The students' overall assessment of AIS Arabic programs are presented. The data revealed dissatisfaction with L2LE and that learning outcomes deterred students from pursuing Arabic in the senior secondary years. The chapter expands on many aspects of students' L2LE, such as lesson allocations; the nature of instruction; and the influence of the teacher's personality, learning content, assessment methods, and disruptions.

In chapter six, the findings relating to the third research question are presented. This chapter explains *how a-MLA would like their L2 learning experiences improved*. Students suggested many improvements. These included changes to structural aspects of programs (such as the number of lessons), proposals for enhancing their L2LE (such as changes to learning content and instructional approaches), and suggestions for teachers. The students expended a great deal of energy in describing an alternative instructional approach, which they described as "hands-on". The range of recommendations that emerged in connection with this question constitute a student-centric plan for change.

In chapter seven, the major findings of the research are discussed. The most important findings that emerged are outlined, and their significance briefly addressed. The discussion explains how contextual influences, L2LE, and repeated experiences of failure diminish the value and plausibility of the successful acquisition of Arabic and lead to its abandonment. The chapter discusses how repeated failures affect students' self-efficacy, self-worth and foment rebellious attitudes. The chapter describes how various facets of the L2LE influence L2M and discusses the students' recommendations.

In the concluding chapter, a summary of the research is presented. The aims and key findings of the thesis are revisited. This summary is followed by a brief outline of the original contributions this thesis makes to knowledge. Subsequently, the limitations of this exploratory research and the recommendations for future research are outlined.

Chapter 2. *Literature*

This thesis explores the Arabic learning experiences and L2 motivation of adolescent non-Arab Muslims enrolled at four Islamic schools. This literature review has three goals. Firstly, it seeks to situate the thesis in the field of L2 motivation. Secondly, it presents the L2 motivational self system (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009, 2019b) and the theoretical framework which informs the research. Thirdly, it addresses the gap in Arabic learning research on motivation that the thesis seeks to fill.

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section highlights the need for L2 motivation research; presents an overview of its history and trends; discusses the L2 motivational self system (L2MSS), and concludes with a discussion of the theoretical framework. The second section presents an overview of the relationship Muslims have with Arabic, some of the possible complexities, and reviews research on AL2M. The conclusion summarises the discussion and presents the research questions.

2.1. Motivation and experiences research

Derived from the Latin verb ‘to move’, motivation describes what moves “a person to make certain choices, to engage in action, to expend effort and persist in action” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011:3). A comprehensive understanding of L2M is elusive. Still, it can be understood as what drives learners to choose to learn another language and to maintain their effort and persistence in the long, arduous process of acquiring it (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). L2 motivation research (L2MR) is thriving due to the need to understand this deceptively simple concept. L2MR has surpassed research in most domains in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) (Boo et al., 2015; Ryan, 2019b). For instance, six edited volumes were published on L2M in the past decade (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015).

Five reasons underpin this enduring interest and growth. Firstly, L2 acquisition presupposes the existence of motivation (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Ushioda (2019a) emphasised that motivation “is implicated in why individuals engage (or do not engage) in L2 learning, and how successfully they acquire the L2” (p. 662). Secondly, educators focused on learner-centred education are interested in learners’ active role in the educational process (Ryan, 2019a). Thirdly, teacher-researchers often undertake research to improve

practice and enhance L2M (Ryan, 2019a). Fourthly, L2MR is “an attractive point of intersection between theory and practice in the psychology of language learning” (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015: 89). Finally, the field is flexible, which permits innovations (Ryan, 2019a).

2.1.1. The importance of L2M research

External forces influence the learner’s motivation, and tensions can arise when external forces control, suppress, or distort their internal motivation (Ushioda, 2003). Pedagogical goals must align with students’ needs and interests to balance internal and external motivational forces (Ushioda, 2008). Achieving this close alignment requires examinations of students’ motivation, expectations, goals, and experiences. However, classroom studies are limited (Ushioda, 2008, 2016), and ones focused on the motivational impacts of L2 instruction are rare (Csizér, 2017). Csizér and Kálmán (2019b) explained that while “the influence of learning experiences on foreign language learning motivation has been widely acknowledged and emphasised, there are hardly any studies concentrating on these learning experiences” (p. 225).

Focus on the motivation and experiences of school students (aged 11-18) is crucial because where instructed SLA is concerned, adolescents are particularly well-suited to success (Boo et al., 2015). However, between 2005-2014 a review of 416 academic publications showed that research focused on school students’ L2M accounted for only around 25% of the sample (Boo et al., 2015). Additionally, there is growing concern about the underrepresentation of students’ voices in L2MR. Lamb (2005) called for a greater emphasis on student voice and on methods that can generate new knowledge. Ushioda (2008) emphasised that the greater representation of students’ voices should reflect minimal mediation by researchers. This concern resonates with the established emphasis on student voice in the field of education (Bourke & Loveridge, 2018; Cook-Sather, 2006, 2018; Fielding, 2004; Flynn, 2018; Gennrich & Dison, 2018; Gonzalez et al., 2016; Joseph, 2006; Mitra & Gross, 2009; O’Neill, 2018; Pearce & Wood, 2019; Rudduck, 2007; Rudduck & Fielding, 2006; Smyth, 2007, 2012; Wood, Taylor, & Atkins, 2018; Woodward, 2018).

The emerging concern in L2MR echoes long-held sentiments about the way students are framed in educational research. Erickson and Shultz (1992) observed that students’ experiences are rarely placed at the centre of research and that students are framed “from the perspective of adult educator’s interests and ways of seeing, that is, as failing, succeeding, motivated, mastering, unmotivated, responding, or having a misconception” (p. 467). Lamb

(2009) argued that problematic motivation could lead to low achievement standards, disruptive behaviours, truancy and even exclusion from school. However, “locating the problem of poor motivation in learners themselves is socially unjust” (Lamb, 2009: 67).

This thesis responds to these current research needs by focusing on adolescent learners’ L2M and their Arabic learning experiences in the Islamic schooling context. This thesis explores students’ views and provides an opportunity for their voices to be heard by privileging their perspectives on their motivation and experiences. The thesis also resonates with the emerging interest in religion’s role in motivating people to learn a second language (Lepp-Kaethler & Dörnyei, 2013).

In the following sections, the history and trends of L2M research are discussed.

2.1.2. L2 Motivation: History and trends

Ryan (2019b) explained that the field of L2 motivation (L2M) grew out of the individual differences (ID) framework in psychology. This framework focused on “general patterns of variation and broad tendencies that make certain types of people different from others” (Ryan, 2019b:165). Interest in language learners’ motivation inspired 60 years of research (Al-Hoorie & Macintyre, 2019), which can be divided into three broad research periods (Boo et al., 2015; Csizér, 2017; Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Ryan, 2019b). These are the social-psychological period (or foundational period); the cognitive-situated period; and the process-oriented period (which might have been an early manifestation of contemporary socio-dynamic interests) (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Covering six decades of work is beyond this thesis, so a brief selective overview is presented, with a few illustrative examples.

2.1.2.1. Social-psychological period

The first period commenced following a publication by Gardner and Lambert (1959) (Al-Hoorie & Macintyre, 2019). This social-psychological period introduced the notion that L2M is different from motivation to learn other subjects because L2 learning is not a socioculturally neutral activity (Ryan, 2019a). The period produced various theories; however, Gardner’s work was the most influential (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Gardner’s socio-educational model of L2M comprises three components: (1) *integrativeness* [integrative orientation, attitudes to the L2 community, interest in foreign languages], (2) *attitudes towards the learning situation* [teacher and course]; and (3) *motivation* [effort,

desire and attitude to learning] (Dörnyei, 2005; Gardner, 2019). Gardner also developed the ‘attitude motivation test battery’ (AMTB) (Dörnyei, 2005). The AMTB is a self-reporting questionnaire that utilises psychometric assessments (Dörnyei, 2005). However, Gardner’s work is synonymous with the integrative and instrumental dichotomy (Ryan, 2019a). Motivational orientations are a set of reasons for language learning, which can be categorised in terms of the goals or activities they enable a learner to realize (Noels et al., 2019; Zarrinabadi, Ketabi, & Tavakoli, 2019). That is, orientations are antecedents of L2 motivation (Ortega, 2009). An integrative orientation arises from a sincere interest in, and positive attitudes to, the L2 and L2 community (Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Ushioda, 2008). The instrumental orientation is utilitarian and focused on practical advantages (Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Ushioda, 2008). Gardner’s work influenced the quantitative and correlational L2MR agenda for decades (Ushioda, 2008).

2.1.2.2. Cognitive-situated period

The second period took off in the 1990s (Dörnyei, 2005). Two essential needs underpinned efforts in this period. First, a need to make L2MR relevant to educators because pedagogically-oriented approaches to L2MR were yet to emerge (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Ryan, 2019a; Ushioda, 2003, 2008). Second, a need to realign L2MR with developments in motivational and educational psychology (Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Ryan, 2019a). These needs were pursued in different ways. For instance, Dörnyei (1994) expanded existing frameworks by introducing a three-level framework that dealt with the language, the learner, and the learning situation. The first level (language) included Gardner’s integrative and instrumental motives. The second level (learner) considered stable personality traits such as the need for achievement and self-confidence. The third level (learning situation) accounted for course-specific, teacher-specific, as well as group-specific motivational components (Dörnyei, 1994).

Other researchers began adapting theories from other domains. One such theory was ‘self-determination theory’ (SDT). Deci and Ryan (1985) distinguished between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and also addressed amotivation. They argued that intrinsic motivation requires self-determination and proposed that self-determination hinges on autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Intrinsic motives relate to an inherent pleasure felt when undertaking the action, while extrinsic motives relate to action taken as a means to a separate end (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Noels (2001) found that students

were less autonomous and intrinsically motivated when teachers were perceived to be more controlling. Interest in attribution theory, self-efficacy theory and goal theories were also key outcomes of the period (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

In this period, concerns emerged about the constraints of prevalent quantitative measures of L2M (Dörnyei, 2001b; Ushioda, 1994). Research on more natural L2 acquisition diverged from mainstream L2MR, as demonstrated by the introduction of the construct of *investment* by Norton (1995) (Ryan, 2019a). Norton used this new construct to explain the identity struggles of immigrant L2 learners locked in unequal power relations with native speakers (Darvin, 2019). Additionally, L2MR and related research [e.g. identity] began moving away from notions of environmental generalisability (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Interestingly, despite the intention of becoming relevant to educators, few research studies focused on the inner workings of classrooms (Csizér, 2017).

2.1.2.3. Process-oriented period

The third phase generated process-orientated views of motivation (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Researchers recognised that L2M was not static during the long L2 learning journey (Csizér, 2017). Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) introduced a process model of motivation that drew on the action control theory. The model tracked motivation from initial arousal to the evaluation of a completed action (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). The Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) model accounted for over 30 influential factors spread across three stages. The preactional stage covers wishes, desires, and opportunities. The actional stage relates to executive motivation during L2 learning. Many factors influence this phase, such as the learning experience quality, progress, autonomy, influence of teachers, parents, and the learner group, as well as sensitivity to aspects of the environment. In the final post-actional stage, learners evaluate their learning. They are influenced by their perceptions of their competence and performance history. Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) observed that in schools, understanding differences in learners' persistence requires the examination of executive motivation during the actional phase of learning. Process-oriented models facilitated the development of L2 motivational strategies (Dörnyei, 2001a). However, these were mostly linear (Dörnyei, 2020; Ushioda, 2003).

2.1.2.4. Current research interests

Current research interests include studies of positive psychology (Gregersen, 2019), complex dynamic systems theory, unconscious motivation, and the impacts of vision on long-term motivation (Dörnyei, 2020). Research in the past decade was undoubtedly shaped by the L2 motivational self system (L2MSS) introduced by Dörnyei (Boo et al., 2015; Mendoza & Phung, 2019). The L2MSS combines possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986), self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987, 1998) and prior L2MR findings. The main idea proposed by the L2MSS is borrowed from psychology. The model creates a link between the person's possible future self and their motivation to learn a language (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009a). A summary of the essence of the L2MSS was captured by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011). They explained that L2 motivation could emanate from the learner's vision of themselves as a competent L2 speaker, different social pressures from their environment, "and positive learning experiences" (p. 86).

Dörnyei's introduction of a self-based concept of L2 motivation created a flurry of interest in the role possible selves play in motivating language learners; the introduction of new L2 selves, and the development of other self-based models (Dörnyei, 2014; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009b; Lamb, 2012; Lanvers, 2016; Macintyre, Baker, & Sparling, 2017; Murray, 2011; Thompson, 2017; Zarrinabadi et al., 2019). The L2MSS was also used to examine religion's role in motivating language learning (Lepp-Kaethler & Dörnyei, 2013). Furthermore, the L2MSS is credited with finally providing traction for qualitative research (Ryan, 2019b). The L2MSS informs this thesis and is discussed in the following section.

2.1.3. The L2 motivational self system

Theories from psychology inspired the L2MSS, namely 'possible selves theory' and 'self-discrepancy theory'. By way of backgrounding the L2MSS, the central ideas of both theories are briefly outlined. Roshandel and Hudley (2018) explained that possible selves are "mental representations of the self in the future which are constructed from images of the self in the past and present" (p. 212). The person has a "collection of self-conceptions and self-images" (Markus & Nurius, 1986:957). These can "include the good selves (the ones we remember fondly), the bad selves (the ones we would just as soon forget), the hoped-for selves, the feared selves, the not-me selves, the ideal selves, the ought selves" (Markus & Nurius, 1986:957). The domain of possible selves relates to how we think of our potential and our future (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The future dimension of the self-concept is the

focus of the L2M researcher (Dörnyei, 2014). In other words, L2M researchers are less concerned with how people see themselves now, and more concerned with how people imagine themselves in the future (Dörnyei, 2014:7).

In possible selves theory, Markus and Nurius (1986) identified that individuals have various possible selves. These include ones they want to become (e.g. rich), ones they are scared of becoming (e.g. poor), and ones they could become (Markus & Nurius, 1986:954). Markus and Nurius (1986) explained that our “repertoire of possible selves can be viewed as the cognitive manifestation of enduring goals, aspirations, motives, fears, and threats” (p. 954). Possible selves incentivise future behaviour and conceptually link the individual’s cognition and motivation (Markus & Nurius, 1986). When future self-states, or possible selves, are projected, they have a strong motivational influence as explicated by self-discrepancy theory (Dörnyei, 2014:7).

In self-discrepancy theory, Higgins (1987) proposed that there are three self domains (actual/ideal/ought) and two standpoints on the self (own/other). The three domains and standpoints combine to form self-state representations (Higgins, 1987). Higgins explained that the actual self (represents attributes we believe we possess); the ideal self (represent attributes we would ideally like to possess, i.e. aspirations); and the ought self (represents attributes we believe we should possess, i.e. duties) (Higgins, 1987:320-321). The actual self represents one’s self-concept, whereas the other two selves function as future self-guides (Higgins, 1987). If we perceive a discrepancy between our actual self and our personally relevant self-guide (ideal or ought), we experience discomfort, which motivates us to take action to minimise the discrepancy (Higgins, 1987).

These central precepts informed the L2MSS. However, the L2MSS is also couched in the broader possible selves literature. Additionally, Dörnyei (2005) explained that decades of work in L2MR underpinned a need for a reconceptualisation of Gardner’s integrative motive (Gardner, 2019; Gardner & Lambert, 1959). It was necessary to make the integrative motive relevant to contexts where there are no accessible L2 communities that learners would wish to integrate into (Csizér, 2019; Dörnyei, 2005, 2009; Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017; Mackay, 2014). In the new model, the integrative motive was reconceptualised in terms of identification with one’s future self-concept (Csizér, 2019). The following section outlines the L2MSS.

2.1.3.1. A tripartite model of L2M

Dörnyei's tripartite model is comprised of: the ideal L2 self (IL2S), the ought-to L2 self (OL2S), and L2 learning experience (L2LE) (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009, 2010, 2019b; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). The first two components are possible selves (future-oriented self-concepts). The two selves (IL2S / OL2S) are future self-guides that can motivate learners. Or as Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009a) identified, the key hypothesis of the model is that "if proficiency in the target language is part and parcel of one's ideal or ought-to self, this will serve as a powerful motivator to learn the language because of our psychological desire to reduce the discrepancy between our current and possible future selves" (p. 4). The L2LE focuses on influential factors in the context of instructed learning. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) explained that this component was "added to represent the potential influence of the students' learning environment" (p. 86).

The components of the model are elaborated below:

- The ideal L2 self (IL2S) represents the L2 aspects of the ideal self we aspire to acquire. In other words, if the person we want to be in the future speaks an L2 (e.g. the person is associated with business travels), this could motivate us to learn the L2 (Dörnyei, 2014:8). The IL2S captures integrative and more internalised instrumental orientations (Dörnyei, Csizér, & Németh, 2006). It covers facets of motivation such as personal goals, desired levels of L2 competence or language-intrinsic goals (Dörnyei, 2005). A range of motives such as career goals, cultural interest, or a "desire to feel like an educated person" are captured by the IL2S (Olsen, 2017:20). "The hopes, wishes, and aspirations represented in ideal self-guides function like maximal goals" (Higgins, 1998:5).
- The ought-to L2 self (OL2S) is concerned with attributes that one believes they ought to possess (e.g. duties, obligations, responsibilities). These attributes are pursued to avoid potential adverse outcomes (Dörnyei, 2005) or to meet expectations (Dörnyei, 2009) defined by others (Lamb, 2012). The OL2S encapsulates less internalised instrumental orientations and extrinsic motives (Dörnyei et al., 2006). The OL2S also captures social environment pressures that impress upon a learner the need to learn the L2 (Dörnyei, 2014). The OL2S functions more in terms of minimal goals (Higgins, 1998). Minimal goals are ones that "a person must attain or standards that must be met" (Higgins, 1998:5). Minimal goals are thought to be "less likely to sustain engagement in learning and enthusiasm about it in the long run" (Al-Hoorie, 2018:737).
- The L2 learning experience (L2LE) is conceptualised differently from the other two self components (Dörnyei, 2009). It focuses on executive motives related to aspects

of the immediate learning experience, such as the teacher, curriculum, peers, sense of success (Dörnyei, 2010), positive learning history (Dörnyei, 2005), or enjoyable quality of the language program (Dörnyei, 2014). This component assumes that the learner's motivational levels are influenced by various factors related to the actual process and experience of language learning (Olsen, 2017). Generally, positive L2LE are expected to generate higher motivation than negative L2LE (Olsen, 2017).

To summarise, this new conception of L2 motivation suggests that our motivated behaviour “is guided by the visions we have of our future selves” (IL2S) or by the “vision that others have for us” (OL2S) (Mackay, 2014:377). If the self-guides work together under optimal conditions, it is assumed that they initiate a need or desire to maintain our efforts in the pursuit of a goal (or an attribute) represented in the future self (Mackay, 2014). The third component suggests that one's learning experiences will also influence one's L2M.

2.1.3.2. Limitations of the L2MSS

The L2MSS is the most dominant model in the field currently, as demonstrated by the massive influence it has had on the field's research trajectory (Boo et al., 2015). Its dominance is powered by (1) the confirmation of its validity by several large-scale studies; (2) its flexibility and openness to innovation (Boo et al., 2015:153); (3) its methodological diversity (Mendoza & Phung, 2019); (4) its potential for generating innovative motivational interventions (Dörnyei, 2020); and (5) its simplicity when compared to other models of L2 motivation (Olsen, 2017). These reasons influenced the decision to use the L2MSS to inform this thesis. However, the limitations of the model were also considered.

Olsen (2017) explained that some studies “found one or more elements of the system to have no significant role in determining learners' motivation levels” (p. 27). Olsen also stated that other studies that confirmed aspects of the model “found its explanatory power”, or parts of it weak (p.27). Moreover, Jung and McCormick (2010) explained that motivation theories differ in terms of the degrees “to which, they introduce or omit personal, social, contextual, developmental, individual/group, and cultural factors that may influence motivation” (p. 442). Jung and McCormick's statement means that the L2MSS might not possess the power, or components, to explain L2M in all situations.

Seven possible limitations of the model are acknowledged:

- Firstly, the development of the model was mainly informed by research focused on learning English as a second language (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017). Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie (2017) conceded that aspects of the L2MSS might need to be examined in

connection with the learning of languages other than English (LOTE). For instance, it is important to examine the interaction between the “English- and LOTE-related self-images” (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017:455). Therefore, the model might not fully explain motivation to learn other languages (Lanvers, 2016). Additionally, few research studies examined the validity of the L2MSS in situations where English-speakers learn other languages (Olsen, 2017). In other words, the English-research base of the L2MSS could limit its explanatory power when examining the motivation to learn languages other than English in an English-dominant context (e.g. Arabic in Australia).

- Secondly, the extent to which the model can account for learners’ discontinuing their L2 learning is unclear (Olsen, 2017). The L2MSS acknowledges that a future self-image needs to be in harmony with a learner’s social environment (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017). However, model does not seem to account for factors that could undermine learning more marginalised languages in an English-dominant context (Olsen, 2017). This positive outlook probably derives from the English-research-base of the model.
- Thirdly, Dörnyei (2019a) conceded that the L2LE dimension of the L2MSS might not be “sufficiently compatible with the other two self-based dimensions” (p. 48). Additionally, Ushioda (2011a) argued that how L2LE “interact with the development of possible future selves remains to some extent less clearly theorized” (p. 201). Dörnyei (2019b) noted that using engagement to investigate L2LE might “establish a platform for creating links between concrete aspects of actual student engagement and concrete aspects of future student aspirations” (p. 27).
- Fourthly, the sources of external expectations captured by the OL2S need to be clearly outlined. For example, Lanvers (2016) distinguished between known others (e.g. parents) and unknown others (e.g. national community). The possibility of internalising expectations also requires more explication. In self-discrepancy theory, there were two perspectives on each of the self domains: own and others (Higgins, 1987). Al-Hoorie (2018) argued that the OL2S “should be bifurcated into obligations one would like to perform and obligations others expect one to perform” (p. 724).
- Fifthly, the model lacks a component that captures the dynamic interface between the learner’s agency and the pressures of their wider context. Therefore, Thompson (2017) introduced the anti-ought-to self to explain learners’ “resistance against societal expectations” in L2 learning (p. 39).
- Sixthly, the age of participants might have implications for the effectiveness of the L2MSS. Djigunović and Nikolov (2019) stated that it remains unclear when younger learners develop their possible L2 selves, and research using the L2MSS with younger learners is rare and inconclusive. Psychological research suggests that (1) an ability to ponder multiple perspectives on the self emerges in adolescence; (2) but that selves remain unstable until late adolescence (around 17 years); and (3) that

parallels exist between parents' and children's selves due to transfer processes (Zentner & Renaud, 2007). Therefore, Dörnyei (2009) noted that the L2MSS might "not be appropriate for pre-secondary students" (p. 38).

- Finally, some vagueness surrounds the alignment of instrumental motives (Kormos & Csizér, 2008). Some instrumental motives can be associated with the ideal L2 self (promotion: e.g. professional advancement), and others with the ought-to L2 self (prevention: e.g. not failing a test) (Dörnyei, 2005).

The possible limitations of the L2MSS are not flaws that preclude its use. Rather they are important considerations that a researcher should consider during the design of their specific research. For instance, despite the concern about age implications, a few studies used the L2MSS to study motivation in pre-secondary (Kim, 2009, 2012; Lamb, 2012; Yetkin & Ekin, 2018). If anything, these limitations are spurring greater research and theorisation. In this thesis, these limitations underpinned the articulation of a theoretical framework focused on Arabic learning by adolescents in a controlled educational setting.

2.1.3.3. Future research directions

The L2LE is central to the theoretical framework of this thesis and is discussed in the following section. However, it is essential to note that the L2LE was earmarked as a future research direction. Dörnyei conceded that the L2LE is an under-theorised component of the L2MSS that was introduced as a placeholder to acknowledge previous L2MR findings (Dörnyei, 2019b). The first two components of the L2MSS eclipsed the L2LE (Csizér, 2019), but Csizér (2018) noted that the L2LE is starting to attract more research attention. This growing attention is evident in the recent publication of a special journal edition focused on L2LE (Csizér & Kálmán, 2019a, 2019b).

Interestingly, L2LE often emerged as a strong predictor of motivated behaviour in empirical findings gained using the L2MSS (Dörnyei, 2019b). For example, Lamb (2012) studied motivation to learn English by 13-14-year-old students in three Indonesian contexts using the L2MSS. Lamb found that a "positive view of the experience of learning English was the strongest predictor of both motivated learning behavior and L2 proficiency" (p. 997). A recent meta-analysis of L2MR indicated a strong correlation between L2LE and learners' intended effort (Al-Hoorie, 2018). Given the influence of experiences on learners' motivated behaviours and the lower research in this area, this thesis aspires to contribute to the topic's literature.

2.1.4. Thesis theoretical framework

The exploratory nature of research can occasionally overrule using a theoretical framework (Collins & Stockton, 2018). However, all research emanates from an implicit or explicit theory of the phenomenon to be investigated (Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009). Collins and Stockton (2018) emphasised that even a researcher's "belief that preconceived notions do not exist or impact a study is, in fact, a theoretical disposition" (p. 2). Troudi (2014) explained that a theoretical framework is akin to a purposely-designed set of lenses through which the world is viewed in a specific way (p. 2). In the design and execution of a thesis, the theoretical framework provides guidance (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). The theoretical framework also facilitates data interpretation in light of existing scholarly knowledge (Kivunja, 2018).

The central premise informing the thesis is that adolescent school-goers' L2M is influenced by their L2LE. However, other theories informed the theoretical framework for several reasons. Firstly, attaining integrated theoretical analysis requires relating L2M to the learner's global system "of motivations, experiences, goals and priorities" (Ushioda, 2012:17). Secondly, adolescents' possible selves are highly susceptible to their social environments and messages originating in the wider milieu (Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, & Hart-Johnson, 2004). Thirdly, the mandated nature of school learning can influence adolescent learners' L2 selves (Taylor, 2013). Fourthly, the English-language context of learning can complicate L2M for learning languages other than English (Lamb, 2019). Fifthly, these issues are likely to overlap with L2M (negative or positive) derived from the L2LE. Finally, L2M cannot be comprehensively explained by one theoretical conception (Ryan, 2019a).

The theoretical framework is discussed in the next sections.

2.1.4.1. L2LE: L2 learning experience

Given its ongoing theorisation, researchers have operationalised the L2LE component in several ways (Csizér, 2019; Mendoza & Phung, 2019). Dörnyei (2005) initially conceived of L2LE as a causal dimension concerned with "situation-specific motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience" (p. 106). He argued that prior research provided "evidence of the pervasive influence of executive motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience" (p. 106). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) stated that for

some L2 learners, L2M might stem from successful L2 learning processes. Dörnyei (2019b) recently proposed defining L2LE in terms of learners' engagement with the learning process. Examining engagement is vital because L2M seldom flows unimpeded into action (Henry & Thorsen, 2020).

Martin, Ginns, and Papworth (2017) explained that while motivation is an internal factor with "an energizing impetus", engagement is "represented as a factor reflecting more observable, evident, or external constructs" (p. 152). Dörnyei defined engagement as "active participation and involvement in certain behaviors" (Dörnyei, 2019b:24). He further described engagement as "the amount of actual learning behaviors a student displays through their observable actions" (Dörnyei, 2019b:24). However, engagement has internal aspects (cognitive or emotional) in addition to the external (behavioural) aspects (Sinatra, Heddy, & Lombardi, 2015). Dörnyei seems focused on the external aspect, as he suggested defining L2LE "as the perceived quality of the learners' engagement with various aspects of the language learning process" (p. 25).

An exclusive focus on the external behavioural dimension of engagement could be problematic. Firstly, because students could "go through the motions," that is, they might participate in the task but "without involving themselves at the level of thought or affect" (Dörnyei, 2019b: 24). Secondly, because focusing on the external perspective only is bound to frame students from the researchers' perspective as engaged or disengaged (Erickson & Shultz, 1992) without understanding their reasons. Therefore, it is important to use observations of engagement to stimulate discussions with participants and to improve our understanding of their perspectives. Dörnyei (2019b) proposed several aspects of engagement that are suited to discussion with participants. For example, we can explore the extent to which they adopt school norms (e.g. schools' reasons for introducing Arabic), or their interest in the content (e.g. the texts they read), or the harmony between the curriculum and students' needs (Dörnyei, 2019b:25).

Moreover, Csizér and Kálmán (2019b) recognized two natures of L2LE. Firstly, L2LE can refer to concurrent perceptions of "cognitive and emotional processes, as well as external stimuli and circumstances that the learner experiences during the course of learning a foreign language in and outside the classroom" (p. 226). Secondly, L2LE can refer to "retrospective contemplation that may continuously evolve after the actual language learning has taken place" (p. 226). Csizér and Kálmán (2019b) noted that both the concurrent and retrospective

natures of L2LE are likely to be salient in L2M. Ryan (2019a) also conceived of two aspects of L2LE, the first being learners' internal appraisals of past successes and failures, and the second being learners' evaluations of immediate situational factors. Given the exploratory nature of this thesis, L2LE is defined in the broadest sense (Csizér & Kálmán, 2019b), so students can describe any facets of L2LE that they deem salient.

In education, research of students' experiences seeks to uncover and describe "students' thoughts, feelings, and actions in classrooms and schools" (Thiessen, 2007:6). Therefore, researchers "delve more deeply into the importance of student voice" and often "examine the nature of student engagement" (Thiessen, 2007:53). Privileging student voice is motivated by a need to create space for underrepresented voices (Thiessen, 2007). The importance of student voice is emphasised because soliciting students' perspectives can increase their commitment to learning (Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007). Attention to student voice is central to this research because students' motivation and meaning-making are underpinned by their subjective interpretations of experiences and events (Gregersen, 2019). The emphasis on student voice in this thesis necessitates qualitative approaches that can yield richer understandings of subjectivities (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Ushioda, 1994, 2008, 2016, 2019a).

2.1.4.2. Considerations for adolescents

Ideas about the motivation of younger learners (or adolescents) inform this thesis. Firstly, the idea that the L2M of young learners (YL) (up to 15 years)⁴ is a specific phenomenon (Djigunović & Nikolov, 2019). YL are more sensitive to the motivational effects of instruction and learning experiences than adults (Djigunović & Nikolov, 2019). YL are more susceptible to demotivation when they encounter "early negative experiences" (Djigunović & Nikolov, 2019: 516). YL are also vulnerable to the influences of teachers and peers. The teacher can play a critical motivational role if they are likeable and capable of initiating and maintaining students' L2M with "meaningful, interesting and challenging classroom activities" (Djigunović & Nikolov, 2019:521). Peers can influence an individual student's L2M substantially. Negative classroom dynamics can change a cohort's motivation into demotivation or boredom (Ushioda, 2003). If negative dynamics evolve into rebellion

⁴ It is anticipated that a big proportion of participants will be 11-15 years of age.

or “counter-cultures defined by rejection of educational aims and values” (Ushioda, 2003: 94), this influences individual learners.

Secondly, the idea that social relations beyond the classroom influence the L2M of YL. For learners “wanting (or not wanting) to learn, or wanting (or not wanting) to speak the target language, is inextricably bound up with their relationships with their teacher and fellow learners, as well as significant others outside the immediate classroom context” (Ushioda, 2003: 90). Thus, situated examinations of motivation should consider the complex social relationships that inform the students’ perspectives and motivation. Djigunović and Nikolov (2019) explained that when parents show interest in their child’s language education, this impacts their motivation, self-concept, and language learning achievements (p. 520). However, they noted that the influence of parents is reduced when YL (around the age of 11) start relying on their peers for motivational support (p. 521). These influences need to be considered when examining how the AIS context influences a-MLA motivation.

Thirdly, learners’ socio-cultural backgrounds influence their motivation. Markus and Nurius (1984) explained that children’s backgrounds also determine how much of “their behavior is a result of their own goals, knowledge, skills, and expectations and how much is controlled by the constraints provided by others” (p. 150-1). They, therefore, stressed that we should locate “children within their relevant social environments” before we contemplate the influence of self-concept, self-definition, and self-understanding (p.151). For instance, in a Hungarian study, the OL2S was found to have little impact on students (13-14 years of age) (Dörnyei et al., 2006). The same study argued that for Arab or Asian adolescents, the OL2S might have a greater impact because family expectations are powerful motives in these cultures (Dörnyei et al., 2006). Markus and Nurius (1986) explained that an “individual is free to create any variety of possible selves”, but that the range of selves deemed ‘possible’ derives from (1) “the categories made salient by the individual's particular sociocultural and historical context”; (2) “the models, images, and symbols provided by the media”; or (3) the individuals’ “social experiences” (p. 954).

Fourthly, schools often impose several educational goals on students, which lessens the weight of the *choice* aspect of motivation and increases the weight of the *maintenance* aspect of motivation (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998). Ushioda (2012) noted that from a learner’s perspective, motivation is understood in terms of “their day-to-day learning experiences in the classroom and across different subjects of study” (p. 16). Dörnyei and Ottó (1998)

identified that formal educational contexts of L2 learning “highlight the importance of motivational influences that affect action during goal implementation” (p. 45). Additionally, Ushioda (2012) explained that when exploring L2M from students’ experiential perspective, we should consider theories, such as “self-efficacy (i.e. beliefs in one’s ability to perform a task)” or “attributions (i.e. internal explanations for performance outcomes)” (p. 16). Ushioda (2003) also clarified that intrinsic motivation declines as students progress through school. Students learn “not because they want to (in the sense of “motivation from within”), but because they are submitting to the dictates of teachers, parents, curricula, competitive peer pressures and other social forces” (p. 94). Therefore, we need to explore students’ interests rather than assume that they are harmonised with school decisions. We also need to relate learning experiences to their interests. However, ‘choice’ is not entirely eliminated in schools; students often make choices in secondary school about whether or not to study certain subjects or languages (Dörnyei et al., 2006). Therefore, it is also important to explore a-MLA choices for senior secondary and their explanations where possible.

Finally, there are various ethical and design challenges involved in working with young participants that need to be considered (Djigunović & Nikolov, 2019). The pertinent challenges are discussed in the next chapter (methodology). However, it is important to note that these issues often discourage researchers from working with school students.

2.1.4.3. Flexibility to respond to Arabic

L2M theories are mainly based on the empirical findings of learning English as an L2, which means that flexibility is required to explain Arabic-specific issues if they emerge. A distinctive feature of Arabic is that it is a language of both communication and faith. For Muslim learners, religious beliefs could be a reason for learning. Faith can be a powerful motivator in L2 learning (Lepp-Kaethler & Dörnyei, 2013:174). However, the role it can play in “the learner’s personal progress and motivation” has been largely ignored (Lepp-Kaethler & Dörnyei, 2013:174). Abu Bakar, Sulaiman, and Razaai (2010) used SDT to examine Malaysian university students’ AL2M. Interestingly, they found that religious motivation is a category unto itself that transcends intrinsic and extrinsic boundaries (Abu Bakar et al., 2010).

In the absence of sufficient research on the interplay between religion and L2M, using existing theories creates conceptual challenges and differences in opinion. For example, defining faith-inspired motivation as “self-determined” is problematic because it stems from

a belief in God (Ushioda, 2013:225). It is difficult to classify faith-inspired motivation as “intrinsic or extrinsic in a traditional sense” (Ushioda, 2013:225). However, Ushioda argued that the L2MSS could circumvent these conceptual issues because it is “theorized in terms of the individual’s self-related beliefs, visions, and aspirations and, hence, conceptually speaking, it can accommodate personal beliefs in divine sources of motivation” (Ushioda, 2013:225). Using the self components of L2MSS could prove useful in explaining religious interests in Arabic if religious orientations emerge in the data.

2.1.4.4. Relating L2LE to other factors

The thesis needs to take a relational view of motivation and ground the L2MSS in possible selves literature about adolescents for three main reasons. Firstly, to link L2LE to the learners’ global system of motivation, goals, priorities, experiences (Ushioda, 2012). Secondly, to describe other contextual influences that influence adolescents. Thirdly, to link the L2LE to the self components of the L2MSS (Ushioda, 2011a).

2.1.4.4.1. Taking a relational view

Dörnyei (2020) noted that accounting for motivational contexts is a challenge for L2MR. Dörnyei (2020) identified that one of the innovative means of accounting for context is the ‘person-in-context relational view of motivation, self and identity’ (PICRV) proposed by Ushioda (2009). The PICRV conceives of L2M as “emergent from relations between real persons, with particular social identities, and the unfolding cultural context of activity” (Ushioda, 2009:215). Ushioda asserted that learners are not theoretical abstractions; that context is not a background variable; and that the relationship between the learner and their context/s is neither linear nor one-directional (Ushioda, 2009). The PICRV recognizes the “complex system of social relations, activities, experiences and multiple micro- and macro-contexts in which the person is embedded” and emphasises taking a relational view to explain them (Ushioda, 2009:220).

In this thesis, the PICRV could illuminate how “learners’ current experiences and self-states” (captured and represented by the L2LE in the L2MSS) might “facilitate or constrain their engagement with future possible selves” (Ushioda, 2009:225). It can also relate possible selves to learners’ present selves, which are embedded in their specific contexts (Ushioda, 2009). However, this entails analytical difficulties related to the (1) separation of the learner and context/s; (2) definition of the internal, external, and temporal boundaries of

the learners' context/s; (3) and delimitation of the myriad of possible influential variables (Ushioda, 2015). Therefore, using the PICRV entails pragmatic choices about the nested levels of analysis (Ushioda, 2015:49).

2.1.4.4.2. Contexts of possibility

Possible selves (PS) literature emphasises the social aspect of the self and the influence of context/s. Markus and Nurius (1984) stated that the self-concept is a social phenomenon that can be seen as a "meeting ground of the individual and society" (p. 147). A person's PS are usually the outcome of "social comparisons in which the individual's own thoughts, feelings, characteristics, and behaviors have been contrasted to those of salient others" (Markus & Nurius, 1986:954). PS comprise self-knowledge that is susceptible to one's context (Markus & Nurius, 1986). One's PS are elaborated or depleted through interactions with their context/s (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Roshandel and Hudley (2018) explained that adolescents' PS are validated or invalidated through social interactions. Oyserman et al. (2004) identified that adolescents' self-concepts are receptive to the social feedback they obtain from parents, peers, media, or other adults (p. 132). Oyserman et al. (2015) stressed that motivation is powered by the 'fit' between the self and its context. The motivational power of the self is tied to perceptions of the likelihood of success (or failure) in a particular context (Oyserman, 2015); and the individual's socio-cultural and historical contexts (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

For a self to motivate, it must be plausible from the learner's perspective (Macintyre et al., 2009). The actual self (attributes a person believes they possess) is the base for comparisons with the future possible self (Higgins, 1987; Maroiu & Maricuțoiu, 2020). Oyserman et al. (2002) explained that adolescents synthesize "what they know about their traits and abilities and what they know of the skills needed to become various future selves" in their construction of possible selves (p. 313). The temporal distance (real or perceived) between the actual self and a possible self influences its relevance (Oyserman et al., 2015). PS also derive from past successes and failures (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006), self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1983, 2006), and a belief that action makes a difference (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). All of which are influenced by L2LE.

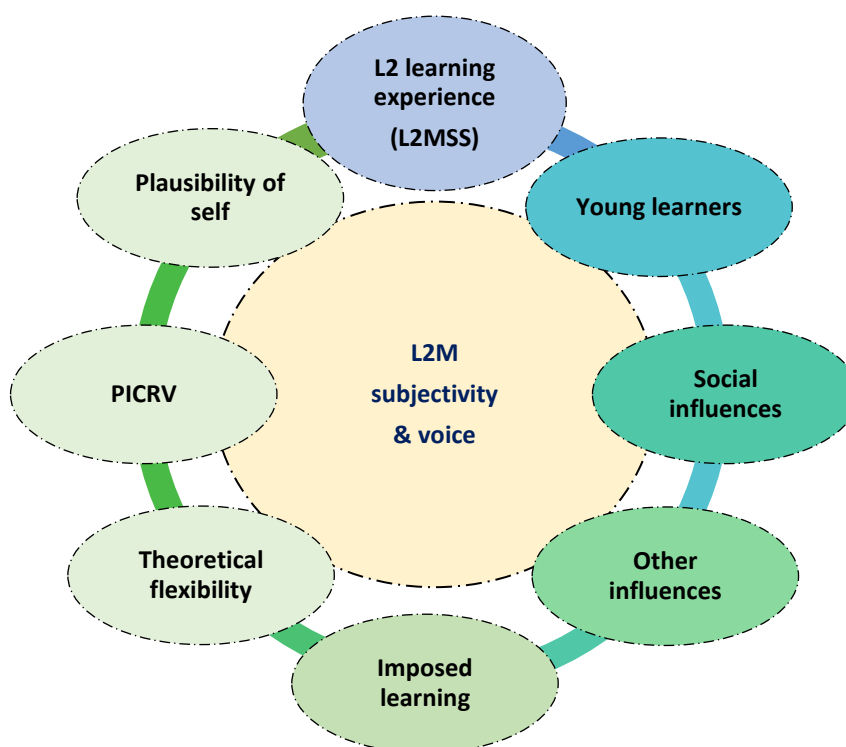
If a possible self is plausible, it possesses motivational power (Macintyre et al., 2009). However, if it is not, it might be dropped or retained to serve other purposes (e.g. optimism) (Oyserman et al., 2004). Roshandel and Hudley (2018) clearly explained plausibility by

differentiating between the hoped-for self (which could contain unrealistic goals) and the expected self (which is realistically attainable). If “a hoped-for self becomes perceived as attainable, specific scripts, plans and action strategies are developed to direct that self”, and it evolves “into an expected self” (Roshandel & Hudley, 2018:212). If a hoped-for self seems unattainable, “plans and motivational strategies do not develop” (Roshandel & Hudley, 2018:212). Accordingly, as Oyserman and Fryberg (2006) explained, adolescents’ expected possible selves “commonly focus on academic and interpersonal domains” and that there is evidence that the number of “academic possible selves declines across the transition to middle school and from middle to high school” (p. 17).

2.1.4.5. Summary of theoretical concepts

The theoretical framework is summarised in the following diagram.

Image 1 Theories and concepts informing research

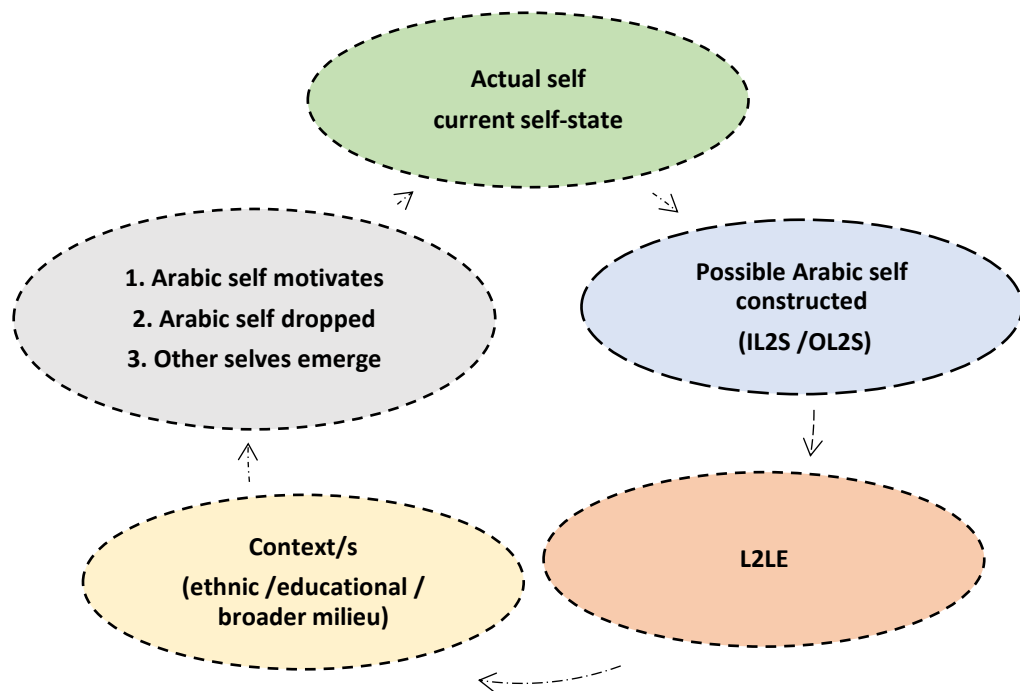


2.1.4.6. Conception of a-MLA motivation

Based on this review, the AL2M of adolescent MLA is conceptualised in terms of possible selves with a tentative capacity to motivate. Possible selves are representations of a learner’s L2 aspirations (ideal L2 self) or perceived duties and obligations (ought-to L2 self). The possible self’s motivational capacity is contingent upon perceptions of the affordances or constraints of the L2LE and the wider context/s in which a learner is embedded.

Construction, maintenance, or abandonment of PS is an ongoing process that derives from the learner's interpretation of their situation (see Image 2). Firstly, a possible future self (ideal or ought-to) is constructed (or imposed by the schooling context). Secondly, the self is assessed for plausibility based on the learner's actual self (e.g. self-appraisals of skills, social and contextual pressures, priorities, L2LE). If it is plausible, it is maintained and can motivate the learner. Motivation would manifest as engagement and persistence in attaining the desired Arabic self. If the possible self is unattainable, it is dropped or maintained for other reasons (e.g. optimism) (Oyserman et al., 2004). Thirdly, other selves might be constructed in response to the situation.

Image 2 Conception of a-MLA motivation



2.2. Muslims, Arabic, and motivation research

To Muslims, the Qur'an is a religious revelation and the true word of God (Saeed, 2004). Muslims need Arabic to complete their five daily prayers, to read and comprehend the Qur'an, as well as offer supplications. New converts acquire Arabic to meet the basic requirements of their daily practices. Dispensing Arabic literacy has been of critical importance to Muslims from the inception of Islam, and the earliest Arab Caliphs underscored the importance of learning Arabic. For example, Caliph Umar Ibn Al-Khattab (died 644 CE) decreed that no one could instruct learners in the Qur'an unless they were

fluent in Arabic; and Imam Ali (died 661 CE) ordered the codification of Arabic grammar (Selim, 2018b).

Consecutive scholars, both Arab and non-Arab, emphasized the importance of Arabic. Chejne (1969) noted that the Basran “grammarian Abu 'Amr Ibn 'Ala' (died 771) regarded the knowledge of Arabic as religion itself” (p.12). Chejne (1969) also noted that the Kufan “grammarian Ibn al-Farra' (died 822) considered the knowledge of grammar more valuable than that of jurisprudence (*fiqh*)” (p.12). Non-Arab Muslim scholars such as the Persian born Sibawayhi (died 796 CE) were major contributors to Arabic (Samarah, 2011). Versteegh (2006) explained that when Persian born scholar 'Ali al-Farisi (died 987 CE) was asked to compare Arabic to Persian, he said that Arabic “was far superior to Persian both aesthetically and rationally” (p. 5). Al-Tha'alibi (died 1038 CE) was a lexicographer from Nishapur (Orfali, 2009a, 2009b). He began one of his books with a proclamation that the love of Allah, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the Qur'an mandated love of Arabic and perseverance in its study (Selim, 2018b).

The dispensation of Arabic and Arabic literacy was not a simple endeavour (Chejne, 1969). We remain unsure of the educational approaches used during the early years of Arab expansion (Versteegh, 1984). However, various educational initiatives suggest that Arabic education was a priority. The first teachers were Qur'an reciters who were sent to the furthest outposts of the empire by Caliph Umar Ibn Al-Khattab (Hitti, 1970). Reading was taught in diverse ways. In some regions, students acquired literacy by learning full words (Lydon, 2010). In other regions, students acquired literacy by learning the letters of the alphabet (Lydon, 2010). The outcomes of these efforts were profound. Versteegh (2006) noted that by the time Muslims started institutionalising education, “Arabicization” had progressed to the extent that made providing L2 acquisition programs unnecessary (p. 4).

These dispensation efforts persisted and evolved. 10th-century educators were alarmed by students' waning enthusiasm for Arabic, so they simplified content to ensure that Arabic learning experiences did not turn learners away from the Qur'an (Selim, 2018b). Ibn Khaldun (died 1406) critiqued Arabic teaching in several parts of the Muslim empire and proposed a language acquisition theory (Abdellah & Haridy, 2017; Abdussalam, 1995; Ben-Ari, 2009; Dajani, 2015; Deymi-Gheriani, 2008; John, 1989; Osman, 2003; Selim, 2018b; Soraty, 1985). Ultimately, Arabic and theology were central to Islam's pedagogical message

(Lydon, 2010). Whenever “people came together to study Islamic science, the medium of instruction was Arabic” even where it was not the colloquial language (Versteegh, 2006:4).

2.2.1. Possible complexities in minorities

Given this religious and historical emphasis on Arabic learning, many Muslims worldwide still engage in the learning of Arabic, albeit to varying degrees of success and with variable levels of eagerness and motivation. However, complexities are emerging in modern English-majority multicultural contexts where Muslims (non-Arab and Arab) constitute heterogeneous immigrant minorities.

Jaspal and Coyle (2010) explored and examined the connections between language and religious identity construction by interviewing 12 British-born South Asians (including Muslims). They explained that Arabic is a marker of collective identity for Muslims, which motivates parents to invest in their children’s language education. Religious literacy, i.e. an ability to read Qur’anic Arabic, is akin to a rite of passage as it offers access to Islam and initiates young Muslims into the religious community. However, communities might only maintain ‘pretended bilingualism’. That is, they use Arabic for symbolic purposes only and use a community language for comprehension. The presence of Qur’an translations might suggest that Arabic is redundant. However, some Muslims might still feel that their access to Islam is diminished by reliance on a translation. Interestingly, Jaspal and Coyle (2010) found that while some Muslim participants sanctified Arabic because it is the language of the Qur’an and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), others sanctified Urdu or foregrounded their ethnolinguistic identities. They also found that those who feel that their lack of proficiency in the liturgical language impedes access to religion were susceptible to alienation.

In the UK, Rosowsky (2008) explained that members of the Muslim Mirpuri-speaking community invested in liturgical literacy. However, this liturgical literacy is described as the acquisition of decoding skills without comprehension (Rosowsky, 2019). That is, children can read the script, pronounce words, read religious texts with enhanced performance, but they do not understand what they read (Rosowsky, 2019). Liturgical literacy focuses more on performance than on “the referential content of what is being uttered” (Rosowsky, 2019:3). Interestingly, Rosowsky (2008) highlighted the emergence of intergenerational differences in conceptions of literacy. He explained that the younger community members were worried that liturgical literacy (void of comprehension) would alienate Muslim youth from mosque schools and Islam (Rosowsky, 2008).

In the USA, Temples (2013) studied investment in Arabic literacy and identity among students (in Years 6-8) at a public charter school.⁵ The students were of different ethnoreligious backgrounds. In her quest to develop a grounded theory, she surveyed students and parents, performed focal interviews with a few families, undertook classroom observations, and reviewed documents. The insights she gleaned from the focal interviews are the most relevant to this discussion. Temples (2013) highlighted a student named Hassan. He was from a Tamil-speaking Muslim family. Hassan was enrolled in the intermediate Arabic class at the school. His classmates were still learning to decode the script while he was a fluent decoder, having acquired religious literacy. Hassan also wanted to understand what he was reading. However, his mother kept him in the easy class to save his time for other studies. Hassan was under threat of becoming an uninvested learner because the class was too easy and because he found topics such as geography or famous Arab people irrelevant and boring. Temples (2013) described the situation of another Muslim family. The mother was a US-born convert to Islam, and the father was Syrian. Initially, the mother invested in comprehensive Arabic learning for herself and her children; however, as life pressures increased, the family prioritised religious literacy over communication. Temples concluded that the relationship between Islam and Arabic was complex. She argued that this complexity was implicated in (1) parental support; (2) the type of competence learners and parents invest in; (3) the experiences children bring to class; and (4) the definition of reading.

Recently, Sai (2017) conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents and performed observations at two Islamic schools in Ireland. With a focus on Years 4-5, Sai examined “the content of and approaches towards the teaching of Arabic and the views held by participants towards the learning of Arabic as part of Islamic religious education” (p. 442). The semi-structured interviews yielded diverse perspectives on the value of Arabic among teachers and parents. Some parents, “especially those from a non-Arabic-speaking background, viewed Arabic as unimportant when it came to constructing” their children's “religious identity” (p. 449). Sai (2017) explained that “some appeared to position themselves as the “Other” within the same Muslim community” (p. 449). He explained that one “Bengali parent, asserted that his native vernacular was more important than Arabic and openly rejected Arabic being taught as a compulsory subject” (p. 449). This parent believed

⁵ Charter schools in the USA first opened in Minnesota in 1992. They operate independently from local school districts. They are funded by taxpayer money and other sources of funding. They are exempted from some of the rules that traditional public schools must follow. They were originally established to give educators space for flexibility and innovation in their curriculum and instructional practices. Retrieved from: [Charter School Accountability | NEA](#)

that the only justifiable reason for learning Arabic was to learn how to recite the Qur'an. Another parent from Pakistan said that in "Ireland, there is no Arabic language and we are from Pakistan and speak Urdu and Arabic is not our language" (p. 449). These findings suggest that AL2M in the non-Arab Muslim community is not a given in migrant contexts where Arabic competes with community languages and English. Notably, Sai (2017) observed that Arabic was not taught to facilitate understanding of the Qur'an or to promote Islamic beliefs; instead, it was taught as a secular topic.

2.2.2. Research on Arabic L2 Motivation

The literature on Arabic learning in Australia does not offer much insight into the motivation of Muslim learners of Arabic (MLA) or the complexities of their relationship with Arabic. The research focused on Arabic in Australia is rare and has mostly focused on language maintenance in the Arab community (Abdelhadi, 2016, 2017; Cruickshank, 2008; Maadad & Thomas, 2013; Taft & Cahill, 1989). Research on Australian Muslims dealt with various issues but not their AL2M, the nature of their L2LE, or how L2LE interacts with their L2M. For instance, Muslim youth research mostly explored media stereotyping (Kabir, 2008a), identity issues (Kabir, 2008b, 2011, 2015), youth commitment to Islamic values (Abu-Rayya, Almoty, White, & Abu-Rayya, 2016). These themes permeate research focused on the education of Australian Muslims too. For instance, Mansouri and Wood (2008) investigated education, identity and belonging in Arab and Muslim youth. Recently, researchers have examined Muslim youths' perspectives on Islamic studies in Australian Islamic schools (Abdalla, 2018; Abdalla, Chown, & Memon, 2020). Fundamentally, Arabic studies remain limited in Australia, although their expansion was strongly encouraged in the 1990s (Campbell et al., 1993; Leal, 1991). Therefore, the following review draws on academic work from comparable multicultural contexts. That is, contexts in which English is the dominant national language and Muslim immigrant populations (non-Arab/Arab) constitute heterogeneous minorities. According to these parameters, the USA is considered a comparable context, but Malaysia is not.

2.2.2.1. Arabic L2MR literature review

Research on Arabic learning and its learners lags behind research on other languages. Much remains to be uncovered about the "instructional practices, learning outcomes, and linguistic variables that relate to this language" (Temples, 2013: 4). However, some headway was made in understanding what moves university students to take Arabic courses

(Abuhakema, 2012; Bouteldjoune, 2012; Brosh, 2013; Husseinali, 2005, 2006, 2012; Nichols, 2010, 2014; Taha, 2007; Winke & Weger-Guntharp, 2006). Far fewer studies have attempted to examine learners' motivation in K-12 schools. One study tackled motivation but focused on the Arab participants in the analysis (Kenny, 1992). A second case study outlined teaching strategies that motivated African-American adolescents considered resistant to learning (Moore & English, 1998). Some key findings are discussed here.

The most extensive sweep of students' motives was undertaken by Belnap (1987). He surveyed students in universities in the USA and Canada. The research investigated why students chose to learn Arabic, queried their criticisms and solicited suggestions for improvements. Surveys were sent out to the participating universities and the course coordinators administrated them to participants. In total, 568 surveys were returned. The questionnaire described possible orientations, or motives, for studying Arabic using statements like, "Literature and Culture", "For fun", "Have Arab friends", "To read the Qur'an/religious texts" and "Research: original sources" (p. 33). Students ranked the top three reasons for taking Arabic. Students were also given space to add other reasons. 16.7% ranked "To read the Qur'an/religious texts" in their top three reasons. Students requested more speaking and listening comprehension, dialects and culture; videos; and improvements to textbooks. However, the research focused on the outcomes of its statistical analytical methods and did not delve into the students' perspectives. Therefore, we do not learn much about their motivation or the nature of their L2LE.

Winke and Weger-Guntharp (2006) wanted to understand what brings students into Arabic tertiary programs in America. They were motivated by the change in the sociopolitical context with the advent of the "war on terror" discourse. Their research emphasised that motivation research needs to be recontextualised when necessary. In their study, they administered a questionnaire (which included an open-ended essay) and a proficiency test to 326 students at eleven institutions. They identified three groups of students: native English speakers (NES), Arab heritage learners (AHL), and native speakers of other languages (NSOL). They analysed responses thematically, defined eleven motivational categories, and concluded that motivation differed according to language background and proficiency. One of the motivational categories they identified was *religious motivation*. They found that NSOL were mainly learning Arabic for religious reasons,

whereas NES were not. 18% of 457 responses reflected religious purposes such as: “I want to learn more about Islam” and “... to read the Koran.” (p. 15)

Husseinali (2006) investigated the initial motivation of 120 university students in the USA. He identified three groups taking Arabic: Arabs, non-Arab Muslims, and learners of other backgrounds. He added Arabs and Muslims to a single heritage language learners (HLL) group based on their ties to Arabic. He deemed the remaining participants, foreign language learners (FLL). In the questionnaire, participants indicated their degree of agreement with 16 statements about their reasons for learning Arabic. These included statements like “Arabic Literature”, “My own Arab culture”, “My Islamic heritage”, “Sept 11 events”. Husseinali identified that HLL and non-HLL differed significantly in terms of instrumental and identification orientations. These differences have implications for course design. He stressed that not responding to students’ interests and needs would create frustrated learners. He also advised that different content should be offered to different learners. Interestingly Arabs constituted 19% of the sample, but 47.9% of the sample were interested in learning about “My own Arabic culture”. He suggested that this was due to Muslims’ ties to Arabic, stating that they use Arabic in prayers, in greetings, and that their names often have Arabic origins.

Husseinali (2005) conducted a qualitative case study of three Arabic students in a university course in the USA. The three students were observed and interviewed. Smith was described as a 20-year-old white male, Kate as a 32-year-old white female, and Donia as a 20-year-old Muslim female of Pakistani descent. Husseinali observed and interviewed the students, as well as analyzed their course results. He found that students’ motivation and L2 achievement were better if learning supported their language learning goals. Husseinali (2005) indicated that Donia was religiously motivated to learn Arabic, describing her motivation as “akin to spiritual” (p. 105). Husseinali (2005) explained that integrative motivation, like Donia’s appreciation of Arab culture, did not guarantee better achievement because Smith performed better than she did. His findings lent support to calls for considering the context of learning. Husseinali’s study was the first in which we hear a little from an MLA, as a few of Donia’s statements were included. Her statements suggest that she had been bothered by not understanding Arabic when she attended mosque as a child. Donia explained that she wanted to say her prayers in Arabic as a child and struggled with her Pakistani Ismaili Muslim identity. Donia elaborated that: “There is something (about

Arabic) that is ME” (Husseinali, 2005:106). It is noted that Donia was interested in learning “everyday expressions” (p. 106). Husseinali (2005) leaves these different facets of Donia’s interests in Arabic and her identification with it unresolved and does not relate her motives to her L2LE.

Nichols (2010) investigated why 19 American veterans who had been deployed to Iraq chose to learn Arabic upon their return to the USA. She used interviews, observations, questionnaires, and focus groups. Nichols (2010) argued that one “theory alone cannot entirely account for the myriad of experiences that motivate learning” (p. 21) and that L2M “is highly situational” (p. 28). Nichols used several concepts in her framework, including Dörnyei’s L2MSS. She investigated how overseas intercultural experiences influenced the veterans’ attitudes to Arabic, documented their previous training before deployment and their post-deployment learning. It emerged that their experiences in Iraq wielded considerable influence on their decision to learn Arabic and their present learning. She explained that a richer understanding of students’ experiences and their motivational implications could inform the design of Arabic materials that meet learners’ needs (p. 34). She emphasised that though enrolments in Arabic courses in the USA had nearly tripled, research on AL2M had not. Nichols (2010) stated that expanding “research is desperately needed.” (p. 213). Nichols (2014) argued that research of L2M needs to happen in students’ pedagogical contexts rather than merely draw on assumptions about the increased interest in Arabic learning. Three facets of Nichol’s work are very relevant. Firstly, her qualitative focus on one group of learners. Secondly, her use of the L2MSS. Thirdly, her effort to understand the influence of L2LE.

Husseinali (2012) investigated the L2M, expectations, competence, and engagement of HLL in learning Arabic at an American university. He used a quantitative survey approach. He also examined differences between Arabs and Muslims. Fifty (50) students participated in the study by responding to a four-part survey that used Likert scale items. Twenty-three (23) of the students were Arab, and the remaining 27 were Muslims from various ethnolinguistic backgrounds. Husseinali (2012) found that Arab HLL possessed strong community and identity motivations but that their instrumental motivation was weak. He found that Arabs were keen on improving their communication but not as interested in learning about cultural heritage. Arabs considered themselves more likely to attain oral proficiency. Muslims were interested in learning about Islam. There were significant

differences in identification motives. Muslim learners pursued religious identity connections. Therefore, Husseinali (2012) recommended that content be differentiated for the two groups.

Kenny (1992) examined AL2M among school students. He investigated the L2M and sociocultural backgrounds of students at an American high school. Kenny argued that understanding students' motives and learning about their backgrounds can help create relevant learning. He explained that if students are only interested in reading the Qur'an, they might find excerpts from a novel boring, and vice versa. Kenny piloted a questionnaire inspired by the work of Belnap (1987). In addition to orientation statements, like the ones used by Belnap, he included fill in the blanks and short answer questions (1-2 line answers). The short answer questions invited comments about the Arabic textbooks and favoured aspects of programs. Twenty-six (26) Arabs and two Pakistanis participated in the study, but the analysis was Arab-focused. Pakistanis were mainly discussed in the chapter notes. Kenny asserted that the research "focuses on high school TAFL⁶ students, in particular those from Lebanese backgrounds." (p. 161). He explained that Pakistani-Americans' data was "included in order to provide as complete a profile as possible of the whole group" (p. 158-9). However, their data was separated from the corpus when necessary "to illustrate a separate, Arab-American profile." (p. 158-9). Twenty-seven (27) students were Muslim and interested in reading the Qur'an, literature, and culture and speaking to Arabs and family.

Moore and English (1998) carried out a six-month case study with ten African-American male students learning Arabic. The 13-15 year-olds attended an inner-city school in a neighbourhood mainly populated by minorities and low socioeconomic families. The boys were considered resistant to academic achievement because of their absenteeism, suspensions, and marginal performance in other subjects. The study focused on uncovering teaching strategies that could engage these learners. Students met with their Arabic teacher three times a week for a total of 4 hours and 45 minutes. Arabic was chosen because (1) Africans speak it; (2) some students wanted to understand Islam then perhaps join the Black Muslims; and (3) because their African-American teacher was fluent in Arabic. The selected teaching strategies drew on discovery learning and synergistic learning styles. Students were permitted physical movement, experienced multisensorial activities, and partnered in planning learning and teaching. They were also given opportunities to meet Arabic speakers

⁶ Teaching Arabic as a foreign language

and use the language in authentic situations. The boys also used rap mixed with English to memorise vocabulary. A few quotes included in the report suggest that students' views were solicited. The strategies motivated the African-American boys and made them concentrate on tasks. The researchers concluded that their perceived "discipline problems" might be more aptly interpreted as acts of resistance (p. 352). The researchers stressed that teaching approaches need to be contextualised to better suit specific groups of minority learners. They suggested that their findings could be relevant to educators of other minorities.

2.2.2.2. Broadening L2MR on Arabic

The literature review on AL2M draws attention to some important issues, which underscore the need for contextualised qualitative studies of MLA motivation in schools.

- Firstly, Muslims' religious motivation seems to be recognized anecdotally, so religious orientations are incorporated in surveys. The parameters of motivation are thus predefined for Muslim participants. It is necessary to move beyond restrictive studies of orientations to situated studies which use qualitative methods. Using such approaches can generate new knowledge and reconcile theory with praxis. These gains resonate with the arguments of Alhawary (2018), who stated that Arabic teaching in second or foreign language contexts should adopt "practical theorizing", which draws from classroom-based studies (p. 416).
- Secondly, the pervasiveness of surveys has marginalised Arabic learners' voices. Aside from the work of Moore and English (1998), Nichols (2010) and Husseinali (2005) research reports excluded the voices of learners. This absence of the students' voices might have prompted Tinsley (2015) to remind educators to buy-in from various stakeholders in the design of Arabic learning.
- Thirdly, little attention is given to L2M from an experiential perspective. Therefore, few studies explored how learning might be improved to meet learners' needs. This paucity underscores the need for investment in research committed to better alternative futures (Pennycook, 2001).
- Fourthly, Moore and English (1998) showed that positive learning and cohort-specific instructional approaches positively influence adolescents. The literature suggested that contextualising Arabic L2MR is central to the creation of learning that meets learners' needs (Kenny, 1992; Nichols, 2014; Winke & Weger-Guntharp, 2006). However, research focused on young MLA L2M and experiences has not been undertaken.
- Finally, research on Arabic L2M seems rooted in the earlier stages of L2MR (see sections 2.1.2). It mostly uses survey instruments based on the AMTB introduced by Gardner (see section 2.1.2.1). Taylor (2013) argued that language learning

researchers should move “beyond an instrument designed more than 25 years ago for a very different population” (p. 33). Additionally, while L2MR is focused on selves and experiences, few studies considered such matters (Nichols, 2010, 2014).

2.2.2.3. The research questions

The review of research on AL2M suggests that situated examinations of group-specific motivation are needed. Additionally, transitioning to self-based approaches is important. Moreover, creating space for underrepresented a-MLA voices, describing Arabic L2LE, and moving beyond surveys of orientations is necessary. Accordingly, the thesis seeks to answer these research questions:

1. How do a-MLA in AIS make sense of Arabic learning?
2. What do a-MLA make of their L2 learning experiences?
3. How would a-MLA like their L2 learning experiences improved?

2.3. Conclusion: Chapter summary

In the first part of this literature review chapter, the need for examining young learners’ L2LE was discussed. The L2MR literature review demonstrated that further research on L2LE is needed. Consequently, the theoretical framework was outlined. In the second part of the chapter, a brief history of Muslims’ relationship with Arabic was presented. Consequently, some of the complexities that emerge in contexts like Australia were discussed. The literature on AL2M in contexts comparable to Australia was reviewed.

The next chapter discusses the methodology chosen to answer the research questions.

Chapter 3. *Methodology*

In the previous chapter, the gap in literature and research questions were identified. This chapter discusses the methodology and procedures used to answer these questions. To this end, the chapter is divided into several sections. The first discusses qualitative research approaches in L2MR and introduces the qualitative methodology used in this thesis. The second explains the considerations that informed the research with younger participants. The third covers the research sites, access protocols and introduces the participating schools. The fourth describes recruitment, informed consent, confidentiality and introduces the participants. The fifth discusses the research methods and trustworthiness of the research. The final section summarises the chapter.

3.1. Qualitative approaches in L2MR

L2MR started accepting the need for qualitative approaches (QA) in the 1990s (Ryan, 2019a). Ushioda (1994) argued that quantitative methods defined motivation “solely in terms of theoretical components which are quantifiable” (p.78). Dörnyei (2001b) observed that the rise of QA yielded new research directions and proffered “new slants on old questions” (p. 49). Presently, QA are encouraged (Ryan, 2019b) for several reasons. Firstly, QA generate rich data about learners as ‘real persons’ (Ushioda, 2011b, 2019a, 2019b). Secondly, they facilitate examinations of context; relational explanations of motivation; and insight into dynamics (Dörnyei, 2020; Ushioda, 2019a). Thirdly, teacher-researchers find the situated outcomes of QA more pedagogically relevant (Ryan, 2019b).

In contrast to positivist views, QA posit that individuals socially construct meaning as they interact with their world (Merriam, 2002b). Lather (1992) explains that there are three principal paradigms of postpositivist inquiry: understanding (such as interpretive, naturalistic, constructivist, phenomenological and hermeneutic), emancipating (such as critical, neo-Marxist and feminist), and deconstructing (such as post-structural and postmodern). L2M and meaning-making are underpinned by subjective interpretations of events (Gregersen, 2019); therefore, an interpretive approach is suited to understanding students’ subjective realities and experiences. Interpretive QA are “interested in how people

interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015:15).

There are six well-recognised QA (1) phenomenology; (2) grounded theory; (3) ethnography; (4) case study; (5) narrative analysis; and (6) the basic interpretive (Merriam, 2002b; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). QA generally share four features, according to Merriam (2002b) and Merriam and Tisdell (2015). Firstly, they seek an understanding of the emic perspective, that is, the insider’s perspective. Secondly, they rely on the human as a primary means of data gathering and analysis. The reliance on the human researcher entails strengths (such as flexibility, adaptiveness, and responsiveness) and shortcomings (such as biases). Thirdly, they do not postulate a hypothesis but build inductively from fieldwork. Finally, words and visuals explain what was learned about the phenomenon.

3.1.1. Selected qualitative approach

This thesis uses a basic interpretive qualitative approach (BIQA), also called: descriptive, noncategorical, inductive, and generic qualitative research (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003; Kahlke, 2014; Liu, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The BIQA is popular in applied disciplines such as education (Caelli et al., 2003; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). As Merriam and Grenier (2019) explained, the BIQA attempts to “understand a phenomenon, a process, the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved, or a combination of these” (p. 7). The BIQA is distinct because it pursues understanding without any further aims (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). BIQA studies do not explain culture, build theory, capture the essence of phenomena, or intensively study a single case (Liu, 2016; Merriam, 1998, 2002a; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Kahlke (2014) identifies that BIQA studies either fall outside of, or in between, the boundaries of more traditional approaches. Caelli et al. (2003) elaborate that BIQA studies do not focus the research through the lens of a single qualitative methodology. Instead, they might blend “several methodologies or approaches, or claim no particular methodological viewpoint at all” (Caelli et al., 2003:2). This flexibility allows BIQA studies to answer questions that “do not fit neatly within the confines of a single established methodology” (Kahlke, 2014:38). Flexibility is vital as the emphasis on methodologies instead of questions can detract from the focus on substantive findings of social reality (Liu, 2016). Though its label may discourage researchers, the BIQA is well-recognised (Merriam & Grenier, 2019)

and is especially suited to exploratory designs, such as this one (Liu, 2016). Achieving the purposes of this exploratory research required theoretical flexibility and focus on findings.

3.2. Research with young participants

This research recognises that we have ethical responsibilities when engaging with young people. The participants are entitled to express their views; and to be heard on matters that affect them (UN, 1989). Moreover, their best interests must be at the forefront of our interactions with them (UN, 1989). Additionally, the research process is known to influence participants (Dörnyei, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Ushioda, 2019a). If the researcher-participant interaction occurs during a learner's formative years, it can influence future educational preferences and qualitatively alter their motivation to learn a language (Ushioda, 2019a). To this end, self-reflexivity is crucial (Lamb, 2016) and should begin with design and continue throughout the process. Three key points are considered in this regard.

Firstly, we need to reflect upon the conception of the participants. Researchers can conceive of young people as the same as adults, completely different from adults, or similar but with different competencies (Fargas-Malet, McSherry, Larkin, & Robinson, 2010). Each conception has implications for research instrumentation choices. In this thesis, young learners are considered similar to adults but with different competencies (Kellett, 2011a). Accordingly, similar research instruments can be used with them. However, adaptations or innovations might be incorporated to respond to cognitive, psychological, and linguistic developmental differences (Djigunović & Nikolov, 2019; Fargas-Malet et al., 2010; Fischer & Bullock, 1984; Kellett, 2011a). Participants can also be viewed as objects of research, individuals with subjectivities, social actors, or co-researchers (Turek, 2013). In this thesis, the participants are considered autonomous social actors (Turek, 2013; Ushioda, 2009) and deemed experts on their L2M and L2LE (Lamb, 2009).

Secondly, we need to subject power dynamics to constant scrutiny during interactions with participants. Completely neutralising power dynamics might be impossible (Kellett, 2011a). However, confronting their existence entails researcher reflexivity, which can minimise their adverse impacts (Kellett, 2011a, 2011b; Lamb, 2016). For instance, if interviewing or observing participants, we must not intimidate, patronise, or underestimate them (Kellett, 2011a). Body language, tone of voice and use of complicated language can damage rapport or lead to the student shutting down (Kellett, 2011b). If power dynamics are

not kept in check, they can (1) undermine the validity and reliability of the research data; and (2) raise questions about ethics in practice (Ushioda, 2019a). For instance, if participants are anxious, they might tell the researcher what they wish to hear instead of opening up about their real feelings (Kellett, 2011b). Responsiveness in interactions with adolescents is vital. Adolescents enact their independence and develop sophisticated youth cultures and language, which mandates a readiness to interact with them on their terms (Kellett, 2011a).

Thirdly, student voice refers to an assortment of adult-student consultations and partnerships focused on improving educational experiences (Cook-Sather, 2006, 2018; Mitra & Gross, 2009; Pearce & Wood, 2019; Pekrul & Levin, 2007; Rudduck, 2007; Smyth, 2007). Most studies seek students' views and try to make their voices heard (Mitra & Gross, 2009). Researchers outside of the school system are sometimes more likely to urge students to voice their views (Mitra & Gross, 2009) and call for the changes that the students need (Woodward, 2018). In this thesis, 'student voice' refers to the students' perspectives, feelings and opinions (Woodward, 2018). The perspectives are honoured, and their voices are seen to be generative of knowledge (Chandler, Anstey, & Ross, 2015). The research design is mindful of the problems associated with speaking on people's behalf (Fielding, 2004).

3.3. Research sites: An overview

The section covers three points: (1) selecting locations, (2) access procedures, and (3) the overview of research sites.

3.3.1. Selecting locations

The selection of cities was based on data about the geographical distribution of Muslims in Australia. The 2016 census indicates that there are 604,200 Muslims in Australia, who constitute 2.6% of the population (ABS, 2017). Australian Muslims are a heterogeneous group, 37% were born in Australia, and the rest come from 183 countries (Hassan & Lester, 2018). The biggest group are from North Africa and the Middle East (36.6%); the next biggest group are from South and Central Asia (32.2%) (Hassan & Lester, 2018). The current migration patterns suggest that "the future face of Australian Islam is likely to be predominantly South Asian (from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Fiji and Afghanistan)" (Hassan & Lester, 2018: 18).

The majority of Australian Muslims live in state capitals, namely: Sydney (253,436), Melbourne (186,652), Perth (47,402), Brisbane (33,830), Adelaide (27,125), and Canberra (9,864) (Hassan & Lester, 2018). Notably, 78.3% of Muslims live in Sydney and Melbourne (Hassan & Lester, 2018). Between 2011-2016, Muslim populations in Sydney and Melbourne grew by 21.8% and 29.0%, respectively (Hassan & Lester, 2018). However, the populations of the other state capitals (Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, and Canberra) are growing more rapidly, with Adelaide witnessing the biggest increase (47.6%) (Hassan & Lester, 2018). The percentage of Muslim adolescents (10-19 years) is similar in Sydney (15.6%), Melbourne (15.4%), Brisbane (15.4%), Adelaide (15.6%), and Perth (15.3%) but slightly lower in Canberra (12.7%) (Hassan & Lester, 2018).

It was essential to select schools from bigger and smaller cities to get diverse perspectives from different Australian Muslim contexts. Accessing schools in Sydney or Melbourne was necessary because of their sizeable Muslim populations. These cities are home to some well-established communities and Islamic schools. Sydney is home to more Arabic-speakers than Melbourne (Mazbouh-Moussa & Ohtsuka, 2017). Therefore, Melbourne was a preferred research site given my focus on non-Arabs. Since Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, and Canberra are growth cities with changing Muslim demographics, it was essential to access schools in any of these cities. Adelaide was a preferred research site as it is the fastest-growing of these cities.

3.3.2. Access procedures

The first step in collecting data was gaining access to AIS. To this end, access request forms that explained the research purposes were developed and approved by the university's ethics committee. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) explained that gaining entry to a research site necessitates gaining "the confidence and permission of those who can approve the activity" (p. 142). "Gatekeepers" need to be convinced about the person and the research. Access to research sites can become difficult if the research appears to be critical in nature (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Recommendations and mutual contacts can help establish trust in the researcher and their intentions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

The selected schools were approached because my supervisor and I had met their principals or committee members at a few conferences. At these conferences, we networked with these gatekeepers. I explained the research purposes to them and encouraged them to participate. Subsequently, five Islamic schools in four cities (Melbourne, Adelaide,

Brisbane, and Sydney) were formally approached based on these initial verbal discussions. Access request forms were emailed to the principals. These forms explained the research in detail and assured the schools of their anonymity. After the signed forms were returned, it was possible to commence data gathering.

3.3.3. The research sites

Four of the approached Islamic schools agreed to participate in the research. The schools were based in Brisbane, Melbourne, and Adelaide. School 1 (Brisbane) was used for the pilot studies. The other three schools (one in Adelaide and two in Melbourne) were used for the main part of data collection. Three schools are well-established, given the life of the sector in Australia. As of 2020, the oldest school was established 25 years ago; and the newest has been in operation for 11 years.

3.3.3.1. The Schools' ethos

The schools upheld a visible Islamic ethos (Clyne, 2001). All students gathered for prayers, and female students wore veils. The schools taught the Qur'an, Islamic studies and Arabic. All schools were co-educational, but they dealt with gender segregation in high school differently. Schools 1,2,3 had co-educational campuses, but School 4 segregated high school campuses. The segregated campus I visited was for boys. The lessons were not segregated at School 1. At School 2, some lessons were, while others were not. At School 3, all lessons were segregated (see Table 2 in section 3.3.3.4).

3.3.3.2. The Arabic program

All of the schools were invested in the teaching of modern standard Arabic (MSA).⁷ However, there were subtle differences in programs (see Table 2 in section 3.3.3.4). There were five main differences:

- Firstly, all of the schools mandated L2 learning in Years 7-9. Schools 1, 2 and 3 offered Arabic only, but School 4 offered Arabic and Turkish. The Turkish program mainly attracted Turkish students at that school.

⁷ Modern standard Arabic (MSA) is the standardised literary form of Arabic. It is used in government documents, formal speech, newspapers, broadcasts, literature etc. It is not too dissimilar from classical Arabic (used in the Qur'an). In fact, many Arabic speakers think of them as two registers of the same language (fuS-ḥa al-'aSr and fuS-ḥa al-turath). According to Haywood and Nahmad (1965), while modern literary Arabic, or MSA, "varies in idiom and vocabulary from the Classical", the differences are minor when compared to the changes in European languages, "because Classical Arabic was hallowed as the vehicle of God's Revelation in the Qur'an, and was therefore not permitted to change to any marked extent" (p. 2). Owens (2013) goes further to say that fuS-ḥa "popularly known as Standard or Modern Standard Arabic—is by and large identical to the form of Arabic broadly described by the late 2nd-/8th-century grammarian Sibawaih" (p. 4).

- Secondly, the duration of learning varied. Schools 1, 2 and 4 had established early primary programs. School 3 started teaching Arabic in Year 5 (the early primary program began during my PhD research). In secondary school, Schools 1 and 3 offered Arabic from Years 7-9 (compulsory). School 4 offered Arabic from Years 7-10 (compulsory till Year 9). School 2 offered it from Years 7-12 (compulsory till Year 9).
- Thirdly, schools managed levels and level streaming differently. Schools 3 and 4 streamed students, but Schools 1 and 2 did not. Streamed students were assigned to three levels: beginners, intermediate and advanced. At School 3, students from different Years sometimes shared classes.
- Fourthly, the learning content varied. Schools 1 and 4 used a textbook series. School 1 used “Madinah Arabic Reader”, and School 4 used “Ta’alam Al-‘Arabiyyah (i.e. Learn Arabic)”. Schools 2 and 3 provided photocopied pages from textbooks.
- Finally, the time allocated to learning Arabic varied. Schools 1, 2, and 4 timetabled lessons in 45-minute blocks, and School 3 timetabled them in 75-minute blocks.
 - School 1 offered one lesson per week (45 minutes) in Years 7-9.
 - School 2 offered Arabic from Years 7-12. The school offered two lessons per week in Years 7-9 (45 minutes x2 = 90 minutes), three lessons per week in Years 10-11 (45 minutes x3 = 135 minutes), and five lessons per week in Year 12 (45 minutes x5 = 225 minutes).
 - School 3 offered one lesson per week (75 minutes) in Years 7-9.
 - School 4 offered two lessons per week (45 minutes x2 = 90 minutes) in Years 7-10.

3.3.3.3. Arabic teachers

In total, nine teachers taught Arabic at the schools. Four were registered teachers, and the other five were not.⁸

- At School 1, both teachers were imams who had received ‘permission to teach (PTT)’ Arabic at the school. One was non-Arab and had worked at the school for over a decade. The other was an Arab who had recently joined the school.
- At School 2, one registered teacher, who had worked there for more than a decade, taught all secondary classes. She was an Arab, with a post-graduate qualification in education.

⁸ In Australia, teachers must be registered by the state ‘teacher registration board’ (TRB). If a registered teacher cannot be found to fill a specialised position, the TRB might grant a restricted dispensation to teach this topic. The school applies on behalf of the prospective teacher, and must provide evidence of their attempts to find a fully registered teacher to fill the position. In Melbourne and in Brisbane, this dispensation is called a PTT. Please see: [Victoria PTT](#) and [Queensland PTT](#). In Adelaide, this dispensation is called a ‘special authority to teach’. Please see: [South Australia Special Authority](#). The PTT is temporary, and the teacher is expected to seek full registration by following their state pathways to registration (e.g. getting recognition for overseas qualifications, or enrolling in approved university-level teacher education programs).

- At School 3, all teachers were issued a PTT and were non-Arab. The female teacher had a Diploma in Arabic and was enrolled in a Master of Teaching program. The other two teachers had acquired several specialised Islamic qualifications, had studied Arabic during their religious qualification, and planned to enrol in a Master of Teaching program.
- At School 4, all three teachers were registered. One teacher was non-Arab. He had post-graduate qualifications in linguistics and teaching. The other two were Arabs one was a Maths teacher.⁹

3.3.3.4. Overview of schools

A summary of the previous discussion is shown below.

Table 2 Research sites overview

Capital City	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4
	Brisbane	Adelaide	Melbourne	Melbourne
Stage of research	Pilot 1 and 2	Main study	Main study	Main study
Coeducational School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Campus segregated	No	No	No	Yes
Campus K-12	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
No. of Arabic teachers	2	1	3	3
Registered teachers	0	1	0	3
Lesson time in minutes	45 minutes	45 minutes	75 minutes	45 minutes
Lessons in Years 7-9	One	Two	One	Two
Lessons in Years 10	0	Three	0	Two
Lessons in Years 11	0	Three	0	0
Lessons in Years 12	0	Five	0	0
Streamed by level	No	No	Yes	Yes
Textbooks/Resources	Textbook	Photocopies	Photocopies	Textbook
Modern Standard Arabic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

3.4. Participants: An overview

This research used non-random purposive sampling to recruit information-rich participants (Lawrence, 2014; Merriam, 2009). This approach does not seek statistical generalisability but requires establishing selection criteria linked to the research purposes (Merriam, 2009). It was estimated that 40-60 participants were needed for this exploratory research. This estimate was based on knowledge of popular sample sizes used in qualitative PhD studies (Mason, 2010) and the expected data quality (Morse, 2000). Ultimately, informational factors decided participant numbers; that is, recruitment ceased when

⁹ Once a teacher is fully registered, they can teach topics that they are not specialised in.

saturation was reached (Merriam, 2009). Saturation is a subjective judgment that gathering further data will not yield new insights about the emerging themes (Creswell, 2012).

3.4.1. Recruitment process

The purposive recruitment process involved:

- First, locating information-rich participants at AIS. In Brisbane and Adelaide, the research purposes were explained to students in assemblies, at gatherings before prayers, and during a few lessons. At the Melbourne schools, teachers informed the students about the research before my arrival.
- Secondly, selection criteria were set. Participants needed to be:
 - non-Arab Muslim Learners of Arabic at AIS.
 - adolescents in Years 7-12.
 - without access to spoken Arabic through one or both of their parents. Spoken Arabic is used as a boundary-setting criterion, as demonstrated by conceptions of ‘arab (as an in-group) and ‘ajam (as an out-group) (Suleiman, 2003). Using this parameter was necessary for a-MLA to be deemed L2 learners (Montrul, 2016; Turkistani, 2019).
- Thirdly, filtering volunteers ensured the maintenance of the selection criteria. Any variety of Arabic used at home contravened the conception of MLA used in this thesis. The most reliable means of assessing this criterion was students’ self-reports about home language use because parameters like ethnicity or country of migration proved complex for three reasons.
 - The first reason was the unprecedented levels of peoples' movement in an increasingly globalised and troubled world. For instance, two siblings were from the Tigrinya ethnolinguistic majority of Eritrea. In their interviews, they said that they spoke Sudanese Arabic at home because their parents learned Arabic in childhood as refugees to Sudan.
 - The second reason was the existence of ethnic minorities in Arab majority nations who often speak different languages. For instance, the Turkmen people of Northern Iraq maintain and speak a Turkish dialect despite the Arabization policies of Saddam Hussein (Büyüksaraç, 2017; MRG, 2017).
 - The third reason was that the memberships of some Arab League States such as Somalia, Djibouti and Comoros are disputed. For example, a Somali political analyst argued that Somalis are not Arabs (Hamza, 2014). He stressed that Somalis should not belong to an organisation requiring them to speak a language and embrace a culture that are alien to Somalia (Hamza, 2014).

3.4.2. Informed consent

Participant recruitment followed the university's ethical requirements, which entails attaining parental consent before the execution of the research. However, honouring the

conception of students as autonomous social actors (Turek, 2013) required the acquisition of students' consent. Students who volunteered were given a recruitment form, which briefly explained the research and required their signature. They were given two additional consent forms. The first consent form was addressed to both the student and their guardian and required both their signatures. It used simple language to explain the research, the procedures, and the participants' rights. The second consent form was addressed to the guardian. It included a more elaborate explanation of what participation entailed for their dependent. The second form required only the guardian's signature.

3.4.3. Confidentiality

Students' identities are confidential. Protecting student confidentiality is part of the ethical agreement made with students and their guardians in the informed consent procedure. It is essential to protect student's confidentiality so that they are not subjected to any harm if their opinions are controversial or critical of the schools and teachers. To protect students' confidentiality, they are not referred to by name or described in ways that make them identifiable. Instead, they are referred to using alphanumeric codes.

3.4.4. The participants

Forty (40) a-MLA participated in the research. Efforts to balance gender in recruitment were made. Ultimately, the interviews of 18 males and 22 females who met the selection criteria were included in the data set. Their ages ranged from 11-17. The majority were 12-14 years of age, with the mean age being 13.6 years. Students' ages are shown in Table 2. All of the participants were in Years 7-10. None of the students in Years 11-12 chose to participate. Students' disinterest in Arabic in the senior secondary years was discussed by Jones (2013) and is a likely explanation of this. Table 4 shows that the number of participants decreased as the Years of study progressed.

Table 3 The ages of participants

Ages	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Total
No. of participants	1	9	7	13	6	3	1	40

Table 4 The participants' Year of study

Year	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
No. of participants	15	12	8	5	0	0	40

The participants were from different Australian-Muslim backgrounds. Mirroring Australian Muslims' demographic profile (see section 3.3.1), the majority were from South Asian backgrounds. A small minority were from other regions (e.g. Europe). A few students' had parents that were of different backgrounds. For instance, one student's father was Italian Australian, and her mother was Afghani Australian. A minority of South Asian participants' parents spoke different regional dialects or languages. The socioeconomic backgrounds were hard to ascertain. The students' backgrounds are shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Backgrounds of the participants

Backgrounds	No. of participants
Afghani	3
Afghani / Italian	1
Bosnian	2
Fijian	2
Ghanaian	1
Indian	1
Malaysian	2
Pakistani	13
Pakistani / Australian	1
Pakistani / Mauritian	1
Singaporean	2
Somali	8
Sri Lankan	1
Turkmen	1
Turkish	1
Total	40

The majority of students reported that they used English alongside their respective home language/s. Most reported English dominance, whereby they had developed receptive skills in their home language/s but would reply to their parents in English. Some considered themselves fluent speakers of their home language but used English with their siblings. A minority explained that they could not speak their home language at all. That is, as background learners of their home languages, they possessed a range of proficiency levels. The represented home languages in descending order were Urdu (17), Somali (8), Malay (4) and Farsi (3). Also represented were Dari (2), Turkish (2), Bosnian (2), Hindko, Italian, Punjabi, Sindi, Sinhala, Tamil. Only one girl from Ghana had no exposure to any languages other than English at home.

On average, participants had spent 3.5 years learning Arabic at AIS.¹⁰ Ten students had spent 6-9 years studying Arabic. A few had learnt Arabic at only one AIS, while others had moved around. Some had moved to AIS from government schools where they had not studied Arabic. The number of years some students had spent studying Arabic was determined by when schools had begun introducing the language. For instance, at School 3, Arabic was introduced in Year 5, so the Year 7 students I interviewed had only spent two years studying Arabic. Additionally, some students had recently arrived in Australia. Table 6 shows a summary of years of Arabic study at AIS.

Table 6 Average years of study

No. of participants	5	1	2	2	1	3	6	1	6	2	6	5	Average Years of study
Years of study	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2.5	2	1.5	1	0.5	3.5

3.5. Design and instruments

In this section, I discuss several points. Initially, I explain how using a triangulated design served the research's purposes and fostered reliability. I follow by outlining the importance of the conducted pilot studies. Subsequently, the research tools and data analysis approach are detailed. Finally, a summary of the steps taken to assure the trustworthiness of the research is presented.

3.5.1. Triangulated design

L2MR often relies on students' self-report data (Ryan, 2019b; Ushioda, 2019a), but exclusive use of self-report data might lead to reliability issues (Ushioda, 2019a). In qualitative research, triangulation can be used to resolve reliability issues (Merriam, 1995; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Triangulation is a process of confirming emerging findings (Merriam, 1998). It can be achieved in several ways, one of which is using multiple data collection instruments (Merriam, 1998). However, such tools need to serve the purposes of the research as well as facilitate understanding internal and the external factors that influence motivation and L2LE. Dörnyei (2007) explained that we can learn about people in two

¹⁰ The average school year is 40 weeks long. If schools allocate one 45-minute lesson per week to Arabic, that is around 30 contact hours per year. If they offer two 45-minute lessons that is 90 minutes per week and about 60 contact hours per year. Please see for example: [Providing the Australian Curriculum in Prep to Year 10 in Queensland State Schools from 2017](#). A student who has studied Arabic for 3 years (at 90 minutes per week) will have experienced 180 contact hours of Arabic (3 x 60 contact hours = 180 contact hours).

fundamental ways: “(a) through self-report, that is, through the individuals' own accounts” and “(b) through external observation of the individual” (p. 173). Therefore, in this thesis semi-structured interviews and classroom observations were used. These are among the commonly used tools in research with young learners (Kellett, 2011b). Combining interviews with observational data strengthened the research (Dörnyei, 2007).

3.5.2. Two-phase pilot study

The importance of pilot studies is recognized in research methods literature. The term pilot study can refer to a trial run of the research undertaken in preparation for the major study or a pre-test of a particular research instrument (Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002). In this thesis, a small-scale trial run of the research was undertaken. Trialling the research was important because pilot studies increase the likelihood of the research's success (Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002) and improve the quality of outcomes (Dörnyei, 2007; Lawrence, 2014).

As the primary means of data gathering in qualitative research is the human researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), pilot studies were used to refine my technique and skills (Dörnyei, 2007). In interview studies, questions need to be trialled to reveal which ones might require rewording, which might yield meaningless data, and which need to be added (Merriam, 1998). Furthermore, trialling the interview procedure allows the researcher to practice interviewing (Merriam, 1998). In observation studies, it is important to practice being a careful observer and to familiarise with the phenomenon to be observed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

A two-phase pilot study was conducted at a school in Brisbane. In the pilot study, I interviewed 13 students and conducted three classroom observations. During the first stage of the pilot, I trialled the interview prompts and technique and natural observations. Seven students were recruited for interviews, and three observations were conducted at this stage. Interviews were transcribed to see how the process might be refined to improve the depth of data collected. Observational data were used to delineate focal points and narrow the scope of the classroom observation process. The focal observational points were incorporated into an observational guide. In the second stage, I trialled the revised interview prompts and the improved interviewing technique with an additional six students. The revised prompts and techniques were further refined and used in the main study. I met with the Arabic teachers and engaged in informal discussions about their experiences of teaching Arabic.

3.5.3. Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews are a means of understanding people's feelings and interpretations of the world (Merriam, 2009). They are highly structured, semi-structured or unstructured (Merriam, 2009). Following the trends in qualitative L2MR (Ushioda, 2019a) and applied linguistics (Dörnyei, 2007), this thesis used semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews use a mix of structured and less structured questions. The researcher uses some "pre-prepared guiding questions and prompts", but the format remains "open-ended and the interviewee is encouraged to elaborate on the issues raised in an exploratory manner" (Dörnyei, 2007: 136).

The order and wording of questions were not strictly predefined (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Adams (2015) noted that in such interviews, a researcher conversationally meanders around topics instead of "adhering slavishly to verbatim questions" as in a standardized survey (p. 493). Drawing from the literature on interviews presented by Merriam and Tisdell (2015) and refinements from the pilot study, the final semi-structured interview questions were of eight types (see Table 7). Probes explored students' responses further.

Table 7 Types of interview questions

Type of Question	Example
1. Experience and behaviour questions	What do you normally do in your lesson?
2. Opinion and values questions	Why do you think that the school teaches you Arabic?
3. Feeling questions	How do you feel about that?
4. Knowledge questions	What book do you use?
5. Background/demographic questions	How old are you?
6. Hypothetical questions	What if they increased the lessons?
7. Devil's advocate questions	Some people have said that Arabic is boring
8. Ideal position questions	What if you could change the program to make it suit you?

Using a flexible, guided approach was essential for three reasons. Firstly, it permitted catering for differences in participants' cognitive, psychological, linguistic developmental differences (Djigunović & Nikolov, 2019; Fischer & Bullock, 1984; Kellett, 2011a; Markus & Nurius, 1984). High school students' ages range from 11-18 years, and their abilities are different. For example, 10-12-year-olds can manage some tasks that require hypothetical reasoning, whereas 14-16-year-olds can relate abstractions and postulate new hypotheses (Fischer & Bullock, 1984). Using this flexible approach meant that questions could be reworded and recast if younger students did not understand them. Secondly, it left space for students to raise unforeseen issues (Adams, 2015). This allowed me to respond to the

situation, the “emerging worldview of the respondent” or “new ideas on the topic” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015:111). Thirdly, flexibility enabled me to learn youth language and then use it in the following interviews (Kellett, 2011a).

Interviews were expected to take 30-45 minutes. They generally lasted around 40-45 minutes. With a few senior girls, they lasted around 60 minutes and with a few junior boys, they were just shy of 30 minutes. I took some notes during interviews, but I mostly focused on listening to students attentively. I used audio-recordings to ensure that I could transcribe all discussions and analyse them later (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Some students felt self-conscious at the beginning of the interviews but relaxed as the interview progressed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The following steps were taken to build rapport:

- First, students were positioned as experts sharing their knowledge. Students were told this and given a form to complete. The form asked about the languages they had exposure to and the value they placed on them. It also asked them to assess their language proficiency in these languages (for an example, please see Image 3). I assisted them if they were confused. However, if they asked how they should score themselves, I reminded them that it was their decision. This process allowed them to reflect on Arabic and to feel in control before discussing their L2LE.
- Second, I was conscious of the balance of power. I was older than the interviewees, and I was doing the interviewing. Therefore, I joked with the students to take the edge off the interaction. I welcomed students’ attempts to address what they still perceived to be an imbalance of power. For instance, one student asked: “I don’t know why we’re only talking about me” before saying, “it is your turn now”. I obliged by telling her about myself.
- Third, I stated my neutrality at the beginning of the interview. I maintained a neutral attitude throughout the interview process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Being neutral meant that I took extra care to avoid showing or expressing judgement of their thoughts, opinions, or statements.
- Fourth, I showed interest in the students’ interests. For instance, two boys were keen soccer players, so we discussed their roles in the school team and their favourite players or teams.
- Fifth, I showed empathy. For instance, a girl had a bandaged finger, so I asked her about it and showed pain when she said: “My finger was jammed in the door.”
- Sixth, throughout the interview, I complimented or commended participants on their feedback or on things that they shared proudly.

- Finally, if a student showed that they were tired or concerned in any way, I reminded them of their right to stop. I also stressed that nothing they said would be attributed to them directly in ways that might cause them harm.

Image 3 Self-assessment tool

LANGUAGE	RANK IMPORTANCE TO YOU	READING (W/ UNDERSTANDING)	LISTENING (W/ UNDERSTANDING)	WRITING (IN YOUR WORDS)	SPEAKING (EXPRESS YOURSELF)	OVERALL (OVERALL SCORE)
HOME LANGUAGE <u>ARABIC</u>	1	10	10	10	10	10
ENGLISH	3	9	6	10	10	9
ARABIC	2	1	1	2	0	1
OTHER LANGUAGE/S _____						

On a few occasions, students were reluctant to discuss certain points while being recorded but relayed them after the recording ceased. In these few instances, I wrote down what they said in my field notes. However, evidence that the interview procedure was well executed manifested in several ways. Sometimes, the student would mention immediately after the interview that they found me easy to talk to. On other occasions, students would catch up to me in the schoolyard and greet me or have short informal chats during recess. One senior student invited me to a school open day event at which she would be managing a stall. Most importantly, students shared their experience with others. On occasion, this led to more students volunteering.

Sixty-two (62) semi-structured interviews were conducted (including thirteen pilot stage interviews). Forty-nine (49) interviews were conducted during the main research study, at which point it was clear that no additional information was being gained. Nine interviews were removed because the participants did not meet the selection criteria. As the remaining forty (40) interviews had returned sufficient data, no replacement interviews were needed.

3.5.4. Classroom Observations

Observations happen where the phenomenon naturally occurs and give the researcher a direct encounter with it (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Classroom observations (CO) examine the learning environment and context (Dörnyei, 2007). They proffer insight into the observable aspects of students' engagement (Dörnyei, 2019b), impacts of the teacher on L2LE (Csizér, 2019), and classroom dynamics (Ushioda, 2003). CO can inform interviews and offer insights into points students raise (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). CO can be highly structured or unstructured (Dörnyei, 2007). If highly structured, CO categories are predefined before the fieldwork and tallied to complete the protocol (Dörnyei, 2007). If unstructured, the researcher observes first, then decides the significance of what they observe (Dörnyei, 2007). As in other studies, this thesis used a compromise between the two types (Dörnyei, 2007).

A less-structured approach was used to capture significant issues that emerge organically; however, focal points guided observation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The theoretical framework informed both classroom observations and the selection of focal points. The focal points were: (1) *the external facets of students' engagement* (Dörnyei, 2019b); (2) *the classroom dynamic* (students' interactions with their teacher and their peers) (Ushioda, 2003); (3) *the learning process* (teacher and their methods; the content) (Csizér, 2017); and (4) *the physical aspects of the learning space*. Following the pilot studies, a classroom observation guide was used to systemise observations (Merriam, 2009). The observation guide was loosely-defined and provided space for noting unanticipated observable data as they were witnessed.

Observers can be involved with the group being observed to varying extents (Merriam, 1998). Depending on their level of involvement in the group, an observer can be a 'participant-observer' or a 'nonparticipant-observer' (Dörnyei, 2007). A participant-observer becomes a member of the group and participates in its activities (Dörnyei, 2007). In keeping with CO, I remained uninvolved as a nonparticipant-observer (Dörnyei, 2007: 179). My activities and presence were known to the students and teachers (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I was passive, unobtrusive, but friendly. I sat at the back of the class when desks were organised in rows. If desks were organised in a U-shape, I sat at the farthest end of the U.

I was aware of the Hawthorne effect (Dörnyei, 2007), whereby observation can lead to greater formality in the setting, or regulated behaviours by the observed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). However, field researchers often find that while their presence might invite “more polite, formal, or guarded behavior”, this cannot be maintained and “the social setting returns to its typical functioning” (Dörnyei, 2007:148). I found this to be very true. Many incidents indicated that my presence had minimal impact on the typical behaviour patterns, if any. For example, in one of the lessons, the students were an absolute riot, moving chairs around, kicking around a football and yelling to each other across the room. The teacher sat at their desk with four students revising work, totally disregarding the other students and myself for most of the lesson. In another instance, a teacher openly asked students to be on their best behaviour for my benefit. The pretence fell apart in under five minutes as the teacher had not prepared for the lesson. While he was trying to get organised, the students became disruptive.

In total, 24 CO were undertaken. The students were comfortable with my presence in the classes, and some engaged in casual chats and pleasantries even if they were not part of the study. Students I had interviewed before the CO would glance my way when the points they had raised emerged during the lesson. For instance, one of the Year 9 students complained that his teacher shouts in class, and when this happened in my presence, he turned to me with an exasperated look. Another Year 7 student, who said he liked his teacher, would look at me and smile to affirm that he was enjoying his lesson.

3.5.5. Data analysis procedure

The purpose of the analysis process is to make sense of what interviewees said and what the researcher observed by consolidating, reducing, and interpreting raw data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Analysis is a complicated stage of the research that is greatly mediated by a researcher’s judgements (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). Therefore, generating credible and meaningful research outcomes requires systematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). A well-explained analytical process permits evaluation, comparison and synthesis with other studies on the topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A thematic analytical approach was used in this BIQA (Percy, Kostere, & Kostere, 2015). This is a data-driven analytical method (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017) that identifies the recurring patterns in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis was inductive, whereby I set presumptions aside and built from the data before me

(Percy et al., 2015). The approach borrows from the constant comparative method developed for building grounded theories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). However, its users “need not subscribe to the implicit theoretical commitments of grounded theory if they do not wish to produce a fully worked-up grounded-theory analysis” (Braun & Clarke, 2006:81). The analysis was concurrent with data collection (Nowell et al., 2017), starting at the pilot stage and intensifying after all data were in (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

It is essential to decide if a description of the entire data set or a particular aspect of it is the desired outcome of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This analysis pursued a description of the whole data set because this is “particularly” useful when “investigating an under-researched area” or “working with participants whose views on the topic are not known” (Braun & Clarke, 2006:83). Thematic analysis is usually done at the semantic or latent level (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Semantic analysis examines surface meanings and focuses on participants’ explicit statements (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Latent analysis delves into “underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations - and ideologies - that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006:84). This thesis used semantic analysis to show patterns and proffer explanations of meanings and possible implications (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The six-step process introduced by Braun and Clarke (2006) and refined by Nowell et al. (2017) was used to ensure that analysis was systematic (a summary is shown in Table 8).

- Firstly, raw data were organised and stored. I transcribed interviews verbatim to familiarize myself with the data and protect participant confidentiality. I read the transcripts several times, added notes and highlighted data segments. I recorded my initial ideas in Microsoft Word and Xcel. I then built a data inventory within the NVivo software. Observation data were organised, read, and compared to interviews for triangulation.
- Secondly, initial codes were added to significant segments of interview transcripts. Peer debriefing was incorporated into the analysis by asking my supervisors to review the generated codes.
- Thirdly, I began determining themes, which capture vital aspects of the data or reflect a level of “patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006:82). Codes were, therefore, organised into possible themes, and data relevant to them were collated. I used the NVivo software capabilities to do this. Features such as word clouds, diagrams, and maps helped visualise key ideas and create connections between them.

- Fourthly, themes were checked and verified against the data. The coded data were organised into categories, which are abstractions that capture the recurring themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).
- Fifthly, emergent themes were examined to ensure that they were well-defined. It was essential to ensure that themes represented the data and told a cohesive story.
- Finally, the analysis was inherent in the process of selecting quotes; and relating findings to the research purposes while drafting the thesis.

Table 8 Data analysis framework

Data analysis steps	Detailed procedures
1. Familiarizing with data:	• Raw data were organised and stored. • Data were transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were read and reread. The initial ideas were noted down. • Data were triangulated by reviewing and comparing data from the semi-structured interviews and classroom observations.
2. Generating initial codes:	• Essential features of the data were coded across the entire data set. • Peer debriefing was incorporated into the process by reviewing the initial codes with my supervisor.
3. Searching for themes:	• Codes were organised into possible themes, and all of the data that were relevant to these potential themes were collated. • NVivo Software capacities for word clouds were used to make sense of theme connections
4. Reviewing themes:	• The themes were checked to see if they were relevant to the data. • My supervisor verified themes.
5. Naming and defining themes:	• The specifics of the themes were subjected to further analysis to ensure that the story the analysis tells is cohesive and that the names and definitions of the themes are clear. • Peer debriefing was incorporated by showing the analysis and themes to my supervisor.
6. Producing the report:	• The final stages of analysis occurred during the writing of the thesis. In this stage, excerpts and compelling examples were selected. The analysis was related to research purposes and questions. • Supervisors reviewed thesis drafts to incorporate peer review.

3.5.6. The researcher's bias

The reliance on the researcher as the primary means of data collection and analysis in qualitative research renders it susceptible to researcher bias (Dörnyei, 2007). Bias can lead researchers to project onto data, read into it, or mediate presentation in ways that serve the

researcher's interests. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) highlighted that researchers must think about their biases. They differentiated biases from the concepts or theories that are used to inform an epistemological or theoretical framework (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). They explain that biases are ideas that researchers project "onto the data" because of their "beliefs", "life experience", or "positionality" (p. 208). Such biases can manifest in the analysis and presentation of findings. It would be naïve to assume that mediation does not happen when researchers select parts of the participant's statements and incorporate them into the written research report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, the production of reliable research requires that researchers identify their biases; and then monitor "how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of data" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015:6). This process is dependent on the researcher's professional self-reflexivity and integrity (Dörnyei, 2007).

My ultimate objective is to protect and enhance participation in Arabic learning in Australia (see Section 1.2). However, my objective does not give me cause to misrepresent students' views deliberately. Additionally, all of the possible research findings are beneficial. If data reveal positive L2LE and motivation, success stories can be used to inform other educators. If students' views reflect negative L2LE or demotivation, findings can inform future remedial interventions. If discussions reveal a range of positions, this can provide a foundation for using nuanced approaches. Moreover, I am influenced by critical, ethical, and student voice work in applied linguistics and education (see section 1.2). My orientation inspired me to undertake this research and motivates me to represent the students' realities and words faithfully because I want to serve their needs.

3.5.7. Trustworthiness

Researchers aspire to generate reliable knowledge. Reliability is vital to professionals in applied areas because findings are often used to design interventions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Reliability requires paying attention to research conceptualisation, data gathering, and analysis because researchers must demonstrate that their conclusion is logical (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Qualitative research has strategies by which trustworthiness is established and assessed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this thesis, Guba's framework was used to ensure credible, dependable, transferable, and confirmable research was generated (Guba, 1981; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Shenton, 2004). The steps taken are shown in Table 9.

Table 9 Trustworthiness of the research

Criteria	Strategies employed
Credibility	• Conducting pilot studies to familiarise myself with the research setting. • Using appropriate methods to develop in-depth data records. • Triangulating the data using different research methods (semi-structured interviews and classroom observations). • Reviewing interview questions and the observation guide with supervisors to assure clarity and consistency with research aims. • Observing participants in different settings, as well.
Transferability	• Offering detailed information about the context of the research and its participants to increase the transferability of findings for others who work with a-MLA in similar contexts. • Offering rich, thick, detailed descriptions of the research procedures.
Dependability	• Giving transcribed data from interviews to supervisors to check for validity. • Using NVivo software to offer organized and detailed information about the data gathered.
Confirmability	• Using questions and interview settings that can engage authentically with students' voices, as previously described.

3.5.8. The findings

The findings are a combination of themes that emerged and the data from which they were derived (Merriam, 2002a). The results were also mediated by the theoretical framework or disciplinary perspective (Merriam, 2002a; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Two positions informed the presentation of this exploratory research data:

- Firstly, the need to empower students to speak for themselves (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006) with minimal mediation by the researcher (Ushioda, 2008). By placing greater importance on students' words, results are believed to be more representative of their realities (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006). Therefore, verbatim quotations and excerpts from student interviews are afforded generous space in the results chapters (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006). Some hesitations were removed, some quotes were shortened, and where this was done, ellipses (...) are shown. These quotes were woven into a narrative that explains the themes that emerged from data. Maintaining the narrative flow required the insertion of some words; these are shown in square brackets [...].
- Secondly, the need to refrain from frequency counts in qualitative research. Such counts can be problematic (Landrum & Garza, 2015) because they pursue a type of objectivity that contravenes the subjectivities that QA seek (Chivanga, 2016). Counts can lead a researcher to equate unit value with the frequency of its occurrence (Maxwell, 2010). As Braun and Clarke (2006) explain, a bigger number of instances does not entail greater importance. The value of a theme is dependent "on whether it

captures something important in relation to the overall research question” (p. 82). Landrum and Garza (2015) explain that when we start counting themes, we are neither conducting qualitative nor quantitative research. Therefore, analysis and presentation were not influenced by counts, and minority views are presented faithfully (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fielding, 2004). However, to indicate the prevalence of opinions, statements are qualified with phrases like ‘many’, ‘a minority’, and ‘the majority’.

3.6. Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the qualitative method and design used to answer the three research questions. Firstly, the appropriateness of qualitative approaches in the design of motivation and L2LE research was examined. Secondly, considerations for research with younger participants were discussed. The research recognised that participants are individuals who have rights. The chapter discussed how participants were conceptualised and how their conceptualisation influenced the research design. Young participants were deemed similar to adults, so adapted research instruments were used. Beliefs about student voice and safeguards against power dynamics were factored into the design. Thirdly, the chapter detailed how schools were selected and accessed. This section also provided information about the research sites. Fourthly, the chapter explained how research participants were recruited and provided information about the participants. Finally, the chapter described the triangulated design, pilot study, methodology, analysis, and addressed researcher bias, trustworthiness, and the presentation of findings.

The following three chapters present the research findings. The next chapter discusses the themes that emerged in relation to RQ1: **How do adolescent MLA in Australian Islamic schools make sense of Arabic learning?**

Chapter 4. ***Making sense of Arabic***

The previous chapter discussed the methodology used to answer the research questions. This chapter presents the results/findings related to RQ1: **How do a-MLA in AIS make sense of Arabic learning?** The themes that emerged vis-à-vis this question present a broad understanding of the phenomenon. Students' perspectives were organised into four main sections. The first section describes the participants' perceptions of the schools' reasons for introducing Arabic learning. The second section focuses on what the students' expected from the L2 learning process. The third section discusses students' L2 motivational orientations (or underlying interests). The fourth section uncovers views on overt resistance and disengagement.

4.1. Perceptions of AIS programs

Students were mostly agreeable to the introduction of Arabic learning at AIS. They made sense of the schools' decision to teach them Arabic in three ways. Firstly, Arabic programs were seen to be a manifestation of the Muslim identity of schools. Secondly, schools were perceived to be educationally motivated (mainly by religious goals). Thirdly, schools were seen to be accommodating Arab majorities. Students who harboured the first two views were mostly positive about the intended purposes of programs. In contrast, the minority which harboured the third view seemed less positive. The following subsections elaborate on these perceptions.

4.1.1. Schools' Muslim identity

Some students felt that the introduction of Arabic was a manifestation of the Muslim identity of the school. Several students believed that the introduction of Arabic was a natural state of affairs. Male student (M35) said: "it is a[n] Islamic school, so it wouldn't actually make sense to have an Islamic school without speaking Arabic". He explained that the school attracts "people that don't speak Arabic, so maybe they will learn the language eventually, and maybe read the Qur'an". Female student (M26) felt that: "it is important to learn Arabic because it's an Islamic school". Likewise, female student (M16) said: "Arabic is a big part of Islam, and it's an Islamic school". Female student (A2) reiterated: "it's important to us, and since it's Islamic school". Male student (M15) said: "because it's an Islamic school".

However, female student (M12) sounded more sceptical when she cautiously hinted that her school offered Arabic to keep pace with other AIS. She said: “like, umm ... every single Islamic school has it. Probably they wanted to ...”.

A few students believed schools were obliged to teach a language other than English and deemed Arabic a logical choice given the schools' Muslim identity. Male student (M14) explained that “in most schools, we have another language, other than English. But in this school, since it's an Islamic school,” we have “Arabic. I think it's to promote the feeling that you can actually understand the Qur'an and things like that.” Male student (M36) felt that Arabic was a logical choice, saying: “like, it's an Islamic school, so they're not gonna teach us like, uhh ... like, it'd be very unlikely that they teach us Chinese or something”. He added: “we need Arabic not just to ... speak, but to like learn Qur'an and other, other, like other ... other things that can help us”. Male student (M33) said: “because, first, it's a Muslim school, so, like ... and Arabic is the language of the Qur'an”. Female student (M20) said: “we're an Islamic school”. She also showed internalisation of the school goal, saying: “I think they chose, *we chose Arabic* because, as I said, it is the language of the Qur'an and it is the language of Islam”.

4.1.2. Educational purposes

Many students felt that the introduction of Arabic programs was motivated by specific educational purposes. Students outlined four main educational goals. Three of these goals were religious, and one was not.

Firstly, schools wanted to develop students' ability to comprehend the Qur'an. Female student (M22) said: “as an Islamic school, they would teach me Arabic to understand deeply what the Qur'an is about”. Female student (M26) had similar perceptions and said: “because it's an Islamic school, and you have to understand Arabic to pray and read the Qur'an. That's part of Islam”. Female student (A4) felt that the school was “obviously” teaching Arabic “because it's the language of the Qur'an”. Male student (M34) said: “so we can learn the Qur'an and know what it means”. Female student (A8) said: “since this is an Islamic school, umm ... I mostly think it's because of the Qur'an”. Female student (A6) said: “I think we're learning Arabic because that's the language of the Qur'an”. Female student (A2) said: “I think we need to know how to read Qur'an”. Female student (A1) also said that: “the school is teaching ... to like, read the Qur'an”. Female student (A11) explained: “[they] teach us Arabic because it's a really important language ... it's the language of Qur'an”.

Secondly, schools were preparing students for the Hereafter. Female student (A1) felt the school taught Arabic: “so we can success [succeed] in our Hereafter”. Male student (M19) said he was being taught Arabic because: “in Jannah,¹¹ so there, so the language over there's Arabic, that's why”. Similarly, male student (M28) suggested hesitantly that the school taught Arabic: “because maybe they're training us for, I don't why, but maybe in the judgement day we're gonna need it”.

Thirdly, schools were encouraging the emulation of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Male student (M31) said: “they want us to learn Arabic because that's what the Prophet used to speak”. Male student (M21) felt that the school also taught Arabic because it is “what the Prophet ... spoke”.

Fourthly, a small minority of students believed that schools were preparing them for potential communication with Arabs. Female student (A8) said: “Muslims, if you can, you have to go to Hajj, and that's in [an] Arab country. Maybe they teach it to you to help you understand what people are saying.” Female student (A9) said: “they teach you how to write it, and what's the meaning of it, so if you ... talk to someone, you will know the meaning of it”. Male student (A7) said: “I think firstly, the school's teaching us Arabic so, like, we can like have conversations with other people in other languages”.

4.1.3. To oblige majorities

A minority felt that Arabic was taught to accommodate Arab majorities in the student cohort. Female student (A3) said: “I think because ... uhh ... it's [an] Arabic school first” and added that: “most students are Arabic”. Male student (M31) explained that: “half the school is from Arabic, Arabic countries, so we should know Arabic, like, yeah”. Another male student (M33) concurred, “there's also a lot of Arab students at this school”. He supported his logic by discussing the other language offered at the school. He said: “I think they teach Turkish because there's a lot of Turkish students at school”. Male student (M29) was quite convinced that the majority dictated the offering of the program more than anything else. He said: “like, majority of the students here are Arabic or Turkish speaking, and that's probably the case”. He contemplated momentarily: “and probably [because] of [the] Qur'an, well, I don't ... but most likely, because of the majority of students are, some Arabs and Turkish ... so these are the two main languages.”

¹¹ Jannah: Heaven

4.2. Students' motivational orientations

The majority of students seemed open to learning Arabic. Different orientations emerged. Orientations are sets of reasons for learning an L2 that are categorised thematically to represent activities or goals that can be accomplished by learning the language (see section 2.1.2.1). Orientations are antecedents of L2 motivation (Ortega, 2009). An overwhelming majority of participants showed a religious orientation to learning Arabic. A small subset of these students introduced a few other orientations. As Ortega (2009) explained: “reasons are not antithetical or mutually exclusive, and therefore a given individual may exhibit several orientations at once” (p. 173).

4.2.1. Religious Orientations

Students introduced seven religious orientations. Some were held by majorities, others were held by small minorities or even a single student. However, these orientations provide a richer understanding of the various religious reasons that can initiate interest in learning Arabic among a-MLA.

4.2.1.1. Enlightenment orientation

Preoccupation with answering Allah's Call emerged. Male student (M39) said passionately: “Yes, I want to learn Arabic. I wanna learn Arabic with all my heart. So, I wanna fully know it. Everything, In sha Allah!¹² I'll study my best, In sha Allah”. He added: “Arabic is a good language, and it's the language that was chosen by Allah”. He revealed that he was a Ḥafīz,¹³ and then added that: “Allah could have chosen a number of languages, but He chose this specific language, and like, I wanna study it, and I wanna learn it, and I wanna understand what He is trying to tell us in the Qur'an”.

4.2.1.2. Sacred text orientation

Comprehending the meaning of sacred texts was a major interest for the overwhelming majority of students. The Qur'an was a central focus. Female student (M25) said: “my goal is, to one day, to be able to ... understand the Qur'an just by reading it”. Male student (M21) explained: “I wanna be able to understand it [Qur'an] with the Arabic, not like the

¹² In sha Allah: God Willing.

¹³ Ḥafīz: is someone who has committed the entire Qur'an to memory. The memorisation of the Qur'an is an important religious practice. However, it can be done without comprehension.

translations. The Arabic would be, it'd be like, it would give a different meaning, or it would feel different to know it". Male student (M34) echoed these sentiments, saying: "to know what the Qur'an means". Female student (M20) said: "I want to understand what the Qur'an says". Female student (M27) was more emphatic, saying: "I really wanna pick up on what the Qur'an is trying to say" instead of reading translations. She elaborated: "it makes me more emotional when I actually know some words in Arabic and understand it." Male student (M28) said: "I want to learn Arabic because ... when I read the Qur'an I can understand ... I can understand the Qur'an ... you know?" Female student (A5) said she wanted to learn Arabic so she "can like, read the Qur'an" and "properly, like understand it." Male student (M37) explained: "if I learn Arabic, I can learn the meaning of the Qur'an". Female student (M13) said she intended to reach the stage of "understanding the Qur'an, instead of just reading it". Female student (M24) said: "there is no exact ... translation of the Qur'an or the Ḥadīth.¹⁴ They'll be like assumptions, but there isn't any exact. So, to know the exact, you have to know Arabic." Female student (M18) said: "to understand the Qur'an more correctly, that would be one point of interest".

4.2.1.3. Ritual orientation

The desire to enhance the experiences of ritualistic religious practices was also important. Female student (M26) said: "I want to learn Arabic because I want to understand what I'm saying like when I pray". Female student (M27) wanted to understand sermons. She said: "on Fridays, for Jumu'ah prayer,¹⁵ umm ... our school they talk in Arabic". She elaborated: "When I listen to the stories, I can like connect some words with each other, and I understand which story they are talking about, and ... that still gets me emotional."

4.2.1.4. Obligation orientation

A sense of 'duty' or 'obligation' emerged as a reason to learn for a few students. Female student (M25) explained: "I feel like it's my responsibility to learn Arabic". Female student (M24) said: "because we are Muslims, and like, many things told to us in our religion are in Arabic". Male student (M33) emphatically stated that: "it's important in the religion to learn. That's the only reason. I don't really ... wanna learn it for the fun of it". He said: "I don't want to learn any languages just for fun. Like, there has to be a purpose behind it".

¹⁴ Ḥadīth: Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

¹⁵ Jumu'ah: Friday prayer.

4.2.1.5. Preservation orientation

Concern for the preservation of the Arabic language was also a reason for learning. Female student (24) said: “if Arabic finishes in our country, in our world, will the Prophet be happy? No, because, this language, they sacrificed so much for this language, so much for us, and we don't even value their language.” She stressed, “I don't want Arabic to finish in this world. I'm gonna learn it. I'm gonna teach future generations if I can.” She clarified why, saying: “because I want to continue this Arabic. Even if one person knows it in the entire world, it's gonna make a big difference!”

4.2.1.6. Transmission orientation

Aspirations to share religious learning and transmit religious knowledge were evident. Female student (M24) said: “for me, being able to read Arabic is, gonna be something really, like, big!” She explained herself, saying: “I can like help my mum more, as compared to like knowing, like, just reading the translated version. And there are some people in my country, back home, some of my family members even, that wanna learn more about their religion, but they aren't getting like good umm, facilities like me.” Male student (M39) said: “I wanna grow up to be a Qur'an teacher ... and teach them the Arabic, the aḥkam,¹⁶ the rules of that, Qur'an, so I need to like know the meanings”.

4.2.1.7. Afterlife orientation

For some students, Arabic was essential for navigating the Hereafter. Female student (A11) said that after we die, on the Day of Judgement, “God is gonna, like, say to us ‘As-salaamu Alaykum!’¹⁷ ... and like, stuff like that. And then we're gonna be speaking Arabic, and stuff!”. Male student (M32) said: “when you die, In sha Allah we all go to Heaven, you speak Arabic there”. Female student (M27) indicated that she had internalised this motive from her teacher. She said: “One of the other reasons, I wanna learn Arabic, is it would help me in my Hereafter too ... ‘cause my teacher he said, that ... we'll be speaking in Arabic over there, so I'm like, Okay!” Likewise, female student (M25) said: “Arabic is important, in terms of religion as well, ‘cause that's what you speak in Jannah”.

¹⁶ Aḥkam: Religious rules.

¹⁷ Arabic greeting: Peace be upon you.

4.2.2. Other L2 orientations

For a small minority of students, a subclass of five orientations emerged. These were held alongside the dominant religious interests. These were:

4.2.2.1. Language/Cultural orientation

Affinity for Arabic and its cultural products emerged. Female student (A8) explained: “I just like, I like the language”. Male student (M14) said: “I like, the thing, I like the language”. Female student (A4) said: “I really like it”, “I used to watch [laughs], like shows and stuff in Arabic”. Female student (M18) said: “the poetry is ‘real’ nice, yeah?, So that’s, like, another reason”.

4.2.2.2. Travel orientation

Travel orientation: Interest in using Arabic when travelling to the Arab world. Male student (M21) said: “In sha Allah when I go to Ḥajj¹⁸ ... it will help me to communicate with other people”. Female student (M18) explained: “I’m thinking of doing ... medicine and philanthropy”, so “if I learn Arabic, I could go to ... Middle Eastern countries, and I wouldn’t need a translator to be sitting beside me. I can just like converse with them.”

4.2.2.3. Friendship orientation

A desire to improve relationships with Arab friends. Female student (M23) said Arabic was important “because most of the people I know ... they’re from an Arabic background”. Female student (M16) said: “I have friends also living in other countries, like Dubai and stuff ... so, it’ll be easier to communicate”. Female student (M27) emphasized social inclusion: “my friends speak in Arabic, and I don’t understand what they’re saying. So, it kind of feels really awkward next to them.” She added: “It’s kind of something, like, excluding.”

4.2.2.4. Instrumental orientation

The possible utility of Arabic was apparent. Male student (M36) said: “it can help me hugely”, “I can do a lot of stuff with, you know, reading and writing, and understanding Arabic”. Male student (M38) explained: “I think it would be good for my... studies, for me to learn a third language, and Arabic is the language that is the most important, I think”.

¹⁸ Ḥajj: Pilgrimage to ‘Makkah al-Mukarramah’ (Mecca) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

4.2.2.5. Recognition orientation

A desire to impress others emerged. Male student (M37) said: “I’ll be the only one in my house to learn”. Female student (M20) said she wanted to “impress teachers”. Female student (M24) wanted to silence detractors and inspire others. She said: “if I’m able to do this and impress my parents, the other people will be impressed.” She added: “some people actually wanna do this, but they’re afraid, so maybe this will also encourage them.”

4.3. Definitions of expected learning

The students defined their expectations of the L2 learning process. The vast majority believed that L2 learning should facilitate (1) the acquisition of the four language macro-skills (reading, listening, speaking, writing); and (2) comprehensive literacy (reading with comprehension). Expectations were akin to general benchmarks of quality, but at times they were also very personal goals.

4.3.1. Acquiring all L2 macro-skills

The majority of students expected that Arabic learning would yield acquisition of all the language macro-skills. Many perceived a connection or correlation between the four skills. Female student (M25) said: “*it has to be* reading and writing, as well as speaking. I feel like *you have to have the whole*, you know?” She added: “you need to be able to communicate fluently; you need to be able to, like, understand when reading a text. Like, when you hear somebody, like, you have to know what the words are.” Male student (M28) said that: “*all skills* are very important”, and male student (M29) said defined learning as “a combination of all things”. Female student (A8) said that all skills were necessary: “*because with all four them* that’s what really helps you understand what’s going on in Arabic”. Female student (M12) said skills are interdependent: “without learning to read it, you won’t be able to speak it”. Female student (M24) also said: “knowing one skill isn’t gonna help you as much as knowing all of them”. She added: “some people are, like, deaf, they can’t hear, so they’ll like, umm ... you’ll have to write it. Some people can’t speak so ... they’ll write it down, and then you have to read it. So, like, different skills help you with different things. So, knowing all of them is the best”. Several students emphasised their interests. Male student (M34) said: “*I would like to learn everything about Arabic*”. Female student (A2) explained that: “the pronunciation, and the writing sentences down, I think they all relate to it.” She added: “*I want to learn everything about Arabic*”.

A minority of students further emphasised effective communication as a goal. Female student (A11) said that learning: “means like, you can speak to your teacher in Arabic. And, like, in public you can, like, if someone comes and asks you, like, where they should go, like, you will understand that language.” She added, “I’m planning to become a doctor ... so ... if I, like, learn Arabic then ... if, like, Arabs come ... then I would understand what they say.” Male student (M14) said: “they’re all important. But, like, the thing is ... I still need to progress on to the stage where I can actually speak it nicely myself, understanding the words, what I say and stuff”. He added: “I want to be able to, like, be one of those Arabs, you know, just talk naturally”. Male student (A7) stated: “I wanna, like, be able to speak and understand what the other person’s saying”.

One student emphasised that from an instructional perspective, L2 oral skills should be introduced first. Female student (M26) said: “when I think of learning a language, I think of speaking and understanding it. Not more so reading and writing. *That’s the next step*”.

4.3.2. Reading and understanding

Most students’ expectation of learning to read entailed; successfully decoding script, reading text fluently, and understanding its meaning. Reading is to “say them and understand them”, according to male student (M15). Male student (35) affirmed: “Yeah, [I] think of reading where you would understand.” Female student (A10) defined reading as: “pronouncing and understanding”. Female student (A1) expected to learn the “Arabic letters, and understanding what I’m reading, and everything!” It was also vital to demonstrate comprehension, according to female student (A6). She said: “you are able to read and understand what you’re reading, and to show ... that you can understand. Like, you know, what you’re reading”.

Students recognised the notion of rudimentary religious literacy (capacity to decode, with enhanced performance, but without comprehension). However, they wanted more than this. Male student (M24) said frankly: “*I don’t like it ... I wanna learn. I want to understand it.*” Male student (M14) described his aspirations, saying: “the reading where, I can recite nicely, without the other person having to stop me and ask [me] what I said, and then at the same time, I can understand myself what I’m reading”. Female student (M18) said: “so, *Qur’anic reading*, I can read it, but, like, I don’t understand what I’m reading. I probably have to go back to the translation”. She added: “I can already read, but *to understand it* would be better.” She wanted to acquire sophisticated literacy skills to read Arabic poetry.

She said: “it will be better, like, if I learn like, the normal Arabic script without the ḥarakat and stuff.”¹⁹ ‘Cause like, that's like, interesting, you know? Like, how I was saying, like, about poetry. Like, if I can learn that that'd be, like, awesome!”. Female student (A4) described her literacy skills. She said: “in Arabic, it's more [about] just being able to sound out the words like how to read it ... but, I don't understand it all that much”. She said she wants to be: “reading and understanding. ‘Cause then it makes more sense”.

Many students underscored comprehension as a critical outcome of learning to read. Female student (M13) said: “*it's not really reading* if you can't understand what you're reading”. Female student (M26) said: “I wanna read it, but also understand what I'm reading, yeap. *You can't just read something and not know what you're reading*”. Female student (M17) said: “the most important thing is understanding. ‘Cause if you can't understand it, then there's no point in learning it”. Female student (M20) said: “I want to be able to understand, like, words”. She elaborated: “I want to be able to understand the reading, or the writing, just to understand what's being said.” Male student (M15) said: “I want to understand it”. Similarly, female student (M27) said: “*there's no point of me reading then if I don't understand the text*”.

Many students pitched their literacy goals against their reality or learning progress. For instance, male student (M21) said: “*it means to me, to read and to understand it.*” He added: “But most of the time”, “I can, like, read the words, but I won't really understand it”. Likewise, male student (M37) said: “I want to read and understand”. He clarified: “like, I can read some, and I can't understand it”. Female student (A2) said: “I want to ... translate stuff on my own, not the teacher translating it for me.” Female student (A3) stated: “understand. [To] understand is better because ... it's for myself, so, I just want to understand the thing ... what I'm doing”.

Female student (A5) discussed the personal nature of literacy goals. She said: “When I hear someone say: ‘I'm learning Arabic’, I would mostly think they are learning how to read, or write, or understand”. She added that her situation was different. She said: “I would think of myself as, like, learning the letters, knowing the ḥarakat, learning how to join all of

¹⁹ Ḥarakat: are diacritical markers used to denote short vowels. Arabic follows an impure Abjad system wherein short consonants and long vowels are represented by letters, but short vowels are not typically written down. Ḥarakat are an integral part of the Qur'anic text because they ensure accurate pronunciation and recitation. They are also added to children's books to facilitate their acquisition of childhood literacy.

the letters.” She stressed: “like, it's completely different for people when they think about how they learn Arabic.”

4.4. Resistance and disengagement

Discussions revealed that the interest in learning Arabic was not universal among all interviewees. A small minority stated that they do not want to learn Arabic at all and gave explanations for this. It also emerged that orientations did not entail motivated behaviours in students who were open to Arabic learning. That is, the data suggest that the a-MLA orientations (reasons for learning an L2) are distinct from their motivation (active effort to learn the L2, or goal-oriented behaviour) (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Shenk, 2011). Prominent disengagement emerged in classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. Various factors influenced the students' disengagement.

4.4.1. Overt resistance

A minority of students explicitly stated that they did not want to learn Arabic. That is, when asked if they wanted to learn Arabic, these students said “no”. Some felt comfortable enough to say that immediately. A couple revealed this position as they grew comfortable with the interview process and felt assured of my non-judgemental attitude. Some students who were not explicitly resistant weighed in on some of these issues. Four primary explanations of resistance emerged.

4.4.1.1. Ethnolinguistic priorities

For a minority of students, there was a greater urgency associated with learning their ethnic language. Female student (M17) explained: “I'm already bad at my own language. So, first I need to learn that, and then I can learn a different language”. Female student (M23) said: “I would rather learn my home language, like, Urdu, and like stay good at English first. And then, maybe if I'm really good at Urdu, then I would go to Arabic. But I think I want to know Urdu first than Arabic”.

One student alluded to the possible internal motives behind this focus. He felt an embarrassment-inducing discrepancy between his actual and ideal selves (Higgins, 1987). Male student (M31) regretfully said: “I used to speak very good Urdu when I was a kid. But now, yeah, ‘cause I came to Australia, so ...” He added: “Urdu, I feel like it's more important

to me than Arabic, because, everyone that I know, or like all my relatives they speak Urdu, and like ... pretty much, like, I'm one of the only ones that don't, so *it feels embarrassing*".

One student described his attempt to root for learning his ethnic language at school and what drove him to do this. Male student (M30) explained that his school "gave all Year 9 students a slip of the elective[s] for [the] next year, and there was Urdu." He said: "I chose Urdu ... but I didn't get [get] that" because few selected it. He explained, "my mother, as I said, only knows a little bit [of English] and umm ... and possibly me speaking in Urdu will ... would basically help both of us".

4.4.1.2. Recurring failures in L2LE

A couple of students were demotivated by their repeated failures to learn the language. These students were also convinced that they did not possess the ability to learn Arabic or that Arabic was not for them. For instance, male student (M31) said: "I *wanted* ... I want to learn Arabic, and because that's what the Prophet used to speak, and that's what I should know as a Muslim". I probed his use of the word "wanted". He explained: "I can't catch on to Arabic because I don't ... I'm not sure why, but it's, like ... *a very hard language to learn, for me*". When probed about sounding like he had given up, he affirmed: "I don't know, it's very hard to learn. So, I just ... *yeah, kind of*". Similarly, male student (M30) said: "learning Arabic is not for me, even though it is good to know multiple languages, I ... I guess Arabic is not [the] one for me". He revealed that he had "lived in Saudi Arabia for 11 or more years". In Australia, he "went to three schools". However, he never "really got the full understanding of it." Two of the schools he accounted for were his current AIS and the junior campus of the same school.

4.4.1.3. Narrow religious interest

A small minority of students were either narrowly focused on religious learning or had settled for liturgical literacy void of comprehension. Female student (M17) hypothesized dismissively about why the school was teaching Arabic. She said: "I think it's [to] understand the Qur'an and to communicate with others ... *stuff*". When asked if any of that was of interest to her, she replied nervously "no" and laughed. She added: "except for the Qur'an". Later she stated: "first we should read the Qur'an. I don't think we should even have the Arabic subject". She added that the school should "just, like, merge Qur'an, Islamic studies

and Arabic together”. She elaborated: “Let's say we read one Surah²⁰ of the Quran, yeah? That's the Qur'an part. And the Islamic studies part would be, like, the story behind it. And then the Arabic part would be trying to, like, understand the exact words itself”. While not openly resistant, female student (M22) revealed that she had found Arabic very difficult (she dropped it) and that she and her peers felt that “we don't really need to learn Arabic, we've read the Qur'an, and that's enough”.

4.4.1.4. Rebellion and alienation

Rebellion and alienation also emerged as explanations. Female student (M12) rebelled against the emphasis on Arabic at school, at home, and in the Muslim community. Her rejection of Arabic was quite strong and drew from various sources of frustration. She said Arabic was hard and added: “I don't really need to learn it”. She explained: “I'm like, not used to having it like in my life”. She added: “Like, people, it's their choice if they wanna do it or not. Like, no one has to force someone, say that ‘Oh, you have to do this. You have to do that’. And I think, like, when you get into high school, I think you should like have an opinion, like if you wanna do this subject or not”. She added: “high school already, like, puts you into pressure. Like, with all that homework, all those subjects, and the complex[ity] of everything”. When probed, she said: “that's what like people tell me to do, they say like, umm ... you have to learn Arabic if you're a Muslim ... ‘cause it's part of your deen,²¹ and all that”. I recast the question to confirm that she does not feel that Arabic is important because she is Muslim; she nodded in agreement

Rumblings of the alienation described by Jaspal and Coyle (2010) was evident. Female student (A1) was not openly resistant but said: “I think it's *more people are expecting me to learn*, but I don't think so”. She added that: “there's Qur'an in English translation”, thereby guardedly suggesting the redundancy of Arabic learning. When asked about the relationship between Muslims and Arabic, female student (M23) said: “*I don't think all Muslims are that connected with Arabic*. Not all Muslims! ‘Cause some ... some people don't even know any words in Arabic. Some Muslims [are].” She added when asked about herself: “I can read Qur'an, but I don't really, I don't understand it. I'm not [connected].” When probed about feeling any affinity towards Arabic on account of being Muslim, she said: “Not really. No.”

²⁰ Surah: Chapter of the Qur'an.

²¹ Deen: Religion.

4.4.2. Disengagement

Disengaged behaviours were observed and described by students. It was as if students' interests operated at a cognitive level only, rather than at both the cognitive and affective levels (Kim, 2012). Disengagement was not universal but extremely prominent in the cohort. Discussions generated good insights into both the external and internal dimensions of disengagement, so this section focuses on what students said (rather than my observations). Students also offered five primary explanations of disengagement.

4.4.2.1. External disengagement

Male student (M32) explained that students: “*wag*, which means that they don't come to the class for a long time”. The lessons are “sometimes chaotic”, according to male student (M30). Additionally, male student (M33) said: “*100% there's a lot of mucking around in the class*”. According to male student (M38): “the back row always gets in trouble, and they always take up our learning time”. Female student (M26) said that “*people just sit there, listening but not really listening*”. She added: “lots of students just disobey. They don't do work most of the time. When the teacher says something, they just sit there, talking or doing nothing”. She added: “or they'd be like, on their iPads, [playing] games, *watching movies, listening to music*. Like they put [their] headphones under their scarves”. Male student (M21) said that: “[Some] will be on the iPads doing whatever they want. Then, some will just be talking. And during the answering of questions, some will ... [They] just won't do it. They'll just leave it to the last minute. Just sleep the rest of the class”.

Several students alluded to their own disengaged behaviours. Female student (M17) said: “well, me and one of my friends, we really just talk and stuff”. Female student (A10) said: “sometimes, we're a bit reckless, so some of us will be very noisy”. Male student (M35) said there are: “students who *just play on their iPads*, like, sometimes I used to play on my iPad, but there's other students who resort to, you know, *jumping out of windows, running out of class*”. Female student (M22) dropped Arabic in Year 10. She reflected on Year 9, saying: “we annoyed Mr ... I think that's why he gave us so much ... demerits, and *we didn't even care*”. She elaborated that they wasted lesson time deliberately. “I said something wrong, and like for the rest of the 75 minutes, they tried to make me say that thing correctly”. She explained that they did this to entertain themselves. She said this “made it really fun, instead of like, really boring.”

4.4.2.2. Internal disengagement

Some students described internal disengagement. Male student (A7) said that students: “*don't have the motivation to, actually, do work*”. Female student (M18) said: “students think of Arabic, just like a course ... that you got to learn all the stuff until the exams, and then after you're gonna forget it”. She added: “most of the people I've seen they don't have a real connection to Arabic. Like, like in this school, like outside, *I don't see any real connection*”. Female student (M26) said: “*they just don't care*. They have no purpose for learning it”. Female student (M24) said: “they take the teacher for granted, and they aren't that passionate about it”. Male student (M29) conceded: “*I don't pay too much attention to Arabic*”, adding that “it's actually because of me as well because I was never into Arabic from the first”. Female student (M23) concurred: “no one in my class really cares about Arabic”. She explained that her disengagement impedes her learning, saying: “I don't know, I just get bored in class, I don't really pay attention. That's why I don't learn, I don't learn much”.

4.4.2.3. Possible explanations

Discussions revealed several possible explanations of students' disengagement, English primacy; future planning; parental attitudes; countercultures; and negative L2LE. Students were, at times, disengaged for several reasons. Therefore, it is important to note that these explanations were, at times, overlapping.

4.4.2.3.1. English primacy

The dominance of English emerged as an explanation of students' lack of focus or disinterest in Arabic. This dominance of English manifested in different ways across participants. Primarily, English competed with learners' home languages and with Arabic. Female student (M13) captured this. She said of her Fijian parents: “they usually *speak Australian*. I mean English.” Female student (M23) explained: “at home, I just speak English because my mum was brought up in Australia”. Female student (M18) introduced the priority of the Australian-English identity, saying: “I am an Australian, with a Pakistani background”. She explained that: “growing up in this society. Like, I'm not saying the society is bad. *But I feel like it affects us indirectly*. So, like, we kind of lose that religious and Arabic link.”

Male student (M35) said: “We go to school, and we live in like *a world where English is a main language*”. Female student (A11) encapsulated the ensuing irrelevance of Arabic

to her life: “[At home] I speak English and Turkmen. Most of the time English,” but at school “English only”. Male student (M33) said: “When I use Arabic? Never.” When probed about using it with Arab friends at school, he said: “No, I won't lie.” Female student (M25) reflected on her peers: “English is like, the main language we all speak. So, I think like ... I think like, for some of them they don't feel like Arabic would be as important to them as English”. Female student (M10) said: “they will go for lessons, but when we talk, we don't speak in that language ... we speak in like, English”. Female student (A5) also explained: “they don't speak Arabic [at] home. They don't speak Arabic [at] school. So, they're like, ‘I don't wanna’ ...”.

Students discussions suggested that most students are English-dominant (*vis-à-vis* their home language) or monolinguals. I furnish a few illustrative examples here. Female student (A6) said she speaks: “English. Only English”. Female student (A8) said: “I speak Urdu with my family, but not as much as I speak English in Australia”. Similarly, female student (M22) said: “I understand English better than all the other languages”. Some students said their parents attempted to use their home language with them. Male student (A7) said: “We usually speak English at home, but like, my parents [do] speak Malay to us. But then we just speak back in English”. Some attached higher status to English. For instance, male student (M39) wanted to learn Arabic ‘with all his heart’ but ranked English as more important. He said hesitantly: “I know *Arabic should be*, but eh English it's... [more important]”.

English overshadowed language learning at school. Male student (M36) said: “a lot of people that I know take other subjects seriously”, but “when it comes to LOTE,²² they're a new person. It's just, it's never serious in LOTE”. Male student (M40) affirmed: “English is kind of like, a main subject here”. He added: “if my main subject is Arabic, and I knew how important it was ... ‘cause ... then, it would be different”. He added, “we have a subject: ‘LOTE’, and then we have: ‘English’. LOTE is like, *other languages*. So, English is like ... a more important subject. That's all”. He also said: “you *have to* learn English, you know, to go through our school. But Arabic? You can like, pick other languages. You can learn other languages!” This happened literally when the ‘English as an additional language [EAL/D]’ program²³ clashed with the Arabic program. Two of the boys I interviewed were taken out

²² LOTE: Language other than English = Arabic subject

²³ Please see: [English as an additional language or dialect](#).

of Arabic to do EAL. Male student (M15) said: “[I took Arabic for] three months, and then I got this [EAL].” When probed about returning to the Arabic program, he said: “there's quite a chance that I will not. ‘Cause I'm still weak in English”. Male student (M19) said: “Arabic, I don't do it.” He added: “I used to do it, but then, they put me with something else”. He clarified: “I do EAL”.

4.4.2.3.2. Future planning

Students generally could not relate Arabic to their plans. Many were unsure about the distant future; some shared several aspirations. For instance, female student (M13) said: “I haven't really thought about it ... I think I want to do teaching. Or else I wanna be a therapist or psycho ... wait! What's the difference between therapist and psychologist?” Irrespective of the clarity of their future goals, the vast majority could not locate Arabic in their future or relate it to immediate academic plans. Female student (M18) explained that she had dropped Arabic because: “Maths, English, Science, Humanities; all those are the most important subjects. ‘Cause they're gonna help you later in life”. She added: “I didn't see any connection that it would have to me in the future”. Female student (M26) had shown religious interest in Arabic but later said: “I wouldn't base my career in Arabic because I want a fun job, and Arabic is not really my type of fun”. Female student (M27) felt she would not pursue Arabic learning formally beyond school: “because I wouldn't become an Arabic teacher. Or like, I wouldn't have anything involved around Arabic, other than reading the Qur'an”. However, interestingly when probed about studying Arabic at university. She said: “I don't think so ... but, I never knew, to be honest, that there was [were] Arabic courses”. Female student (M25) said: “my goals, in terms of what I wanna be, are quite different”. When asked where Arabic might fit into his future, male student (M29) said: “I don't think anywhere”. He added, laughing: “I'm not taking it”. Male student (M40) said: “no, it's gone, I didn't choose it”.

Academic priorities influenced students. A school culture focused on core learning was evident. When female student (M22) was asked if she would pursue Arabic further at school, she said: “No. I think I'd focus more on what I need for my future”. Male student (M31) said: “I think like, right now for me ... the other subjects are more important”. Female student (M12) said: “I'd be more worried about my English, for example. Like, the major one that I will be needing in life”. Female student (M20) said: “you should be careful about what subjects you choose in Year 10”. Male student (M14) confirmed this, saying: “Arabic

is not viewed as an important subject. Like the four main ones are: English, Maths, Science, and Humanities”. Male student (M36) concurred and added that: “LOTE would be like, close to the end of that row”. Female student (M17) said she would not select Arabic: “because, I don't know, more important subjects I guess, such as, umm ... I guess Science and like, History and stuff”. It seemed that the educational context reinforced these opinions. Female student (A8) suggested that curriculum structure implies that Arabic is not essential. She said: “I think that Arabic is there for a reason. But since it's not the main lesson, *I'm pretty sure there's a reason to why that is*. And that's because of ... like English, Maths, and stuff like that, so you have more time [to study those subjects]”.

Nonetheless, a small minority of students left the door of possibility open, albeit noncommittally. Male student (M21) smiled in an uncommitted way and said: “it's just maybe”. Male student (M33) said: “*I might learn it one day*”, but “I don't think it's gonna happen while I'm in school”. Male student (M38) explained that he wants to become “maybe a surgeon or doctor, like that”. He then added that: “people [go] to learn in Arabic for careers and that, but ... for [what] I'm going for, I don't... *I'm not sure*”. He added: “*if I would pick up another language*, I would really like to do Arabic for another language”. Female student (A5) said: “*if I did have the free time*, I would go. I would like, spend some time doing Arabic ... when I'm done with what I actually wanna do in the future”.

4.4.2.3.3. Negative parental attitudes

Some parents' attitudes surfaced as an adverse negative influence. Some parents showed indifference to their children's Arabic learning. Male student (M36) said: “I reckon most parents wouldn't care about your LOTE marks, so then *if your parents don't care, then I think you wouldn't care*, and you wouldn't, you know, try”. Male student (M15) said his parents did not help him with his Arabic work: “because they think that Arabic is not important to my learning”. Male student (M35) said that parents do not discipline their children: “their parents get called up five ... six times in the term, and they don't really do anything. It's all the parents' fault”. Similarly, female student (M26) blamed parents: “it's also the family. Some of the parents [say], ‘I don't care about my child, whatever!’ ...” Female student (M22) endorsed these views by focusing on herself. She said: “I don't think they [parents] would force me to [learn it]” because “as long as I know how to read Qur'an, I think that's practically all right with them”. She stressed, “I don't think they really care, actually”. She said that she and her peers: “we're just like OK, it's Arabic!”. She added: “I

don't think we took it as seriously as we could.” She then explained that: “we did muck around a lot” and made the “teacher's life miserable”. Female student (M12) explained that her parents held different views and that she subscribed to the indifferent view that suited her resistant attitude. She said: “my mum she's, she's like, you got to memorise both [Arabic and other subjects]”, but “my dad he's just umm ... he's worried about Qur'an but, not with Arabic. He just worries about the main subjects that make me pass Year 7”.

Other parents prioritised the children's ethnic language at the expense of Arabic. For instance, male student (M21) said: “I think so, they'll want me to speak more of Urdu than uhh ... Arabic”. Another parent expressed hostility to Arabic when it entered the home domain. Female student (27) said: “When I'm learning Arabic at home, like, if I say some ... like, you know how *um-mee*²⁴ is mom? So, when I say ummee, mom won't respond to me. ‘Cause, she doesn't know what it is, and I tell her. And then she's like, ‘but *we speak Turkish at home*, don't speak in Arabic to me!’ ...”.

4.4.2.3.4. Countercultures

Interviews revealed emergent interest in European languages. Male student (M29) neither wanted to learn Arabic nor his home language (Urdu), he said: “I would like to do French or something, like those kinds of languages. I don't know why”. These interests seemed to be part of an emergent counterculture of opposition to Arabic. Female student (M20) stated that among girls: “French and Spanish is just trending”. She elaborates: “it's more like, other schools are doing it, why can't we?” Male student (M40) reflected on his own interest in European languages. He said: “I wanna learn Arabic, but I'd like to try other subjects, uhh ... other languages”. He added: “like, Italian” ... “I feel like it would be more enjoyable to speak another language” rather than doing “the same thing every time”. Female student (M26) explained that if European languages were introduced, “it would make a difference [to disengaged behaviours], I mean they would want to learn it more than they would care about Arabic.” She elaborated: “it's a little bit about the religion, but I don't know, they just like Spanish and French.” She said: “if you said ... ‘Oh, we're gonna change Arabic into French’, they would be way happier.”

²⁴ Um-mee: Arabic for “my mother”.

4.4.2.3.5. Negative L2LE

Negative L2LE emerged as a key cause of disengagement. Female student (M17) said: “I remember every time we had Arabic, in the day, everybody was just *depressed*”. Male student (M35) elaborated that: “when everyone finds out we have LOTE, it's like everyone's in a jazzy mood ... drowsy, like, everyone just gets depressed”. Male student (M36) said: “[learning] *wasn't very effective*, to be honest, yeah. Didn't learn much since I started school”. He explained: “I didn't really learn anything in primary, to be honest, up until grade 6” “like Arabic wasn't serious, it was *just not serious*”. He added: “maybe the fact that it wasn't serious made me not believe that it was serious”, emphasising that Arabic “became like a whole joke!”

This sense of failure was pervasive. Female student (A10) said students: “don't really like Arabic. ‘Cause *they know they're not good at it*. So, they don't really, like ... They don't really try.” Female student (A2) said that students “just wanna get out” because “they *don't know what they're learning*”. She expressed her frustration, saying: “they expect me to just get a random piece of text I don't really understand, [and] I don't know anything about and start reading it”. Female student (A6) added: “the ones that don't understand Arabic, don't like, don't have much interest in Arabic”. About herself, she said: “it's not easy for me to learn Arabic. *I've tried it. It does not work!*” When probed about having given up, she said: “yeah ... ‘cause I feel like if I try, it's not gonna ... *it's not gonna happen*”. Female student (M13) said: “honestly, like, for every other subject, I understand it better than Arabic”. Female student (M26) illuminated peer sentiments: “if the school didn't have Arabic, they wouldn't really ask for anything. *They would rather be happy!*”

Most students said Arabic was a hard language. Female student (A10) said Arabic is a “very hard language”. Female student (M16) explained: “hard for me to learn some things in it”. Female student (A11) said: “it's pretty difficult”. Female student (A3) specified that: “meaning and understanding is difficult, yes”. Male student (M28) said: “it's quite difficult, in my opinion”. Female student (M22) gave a broader perspective saying: “it's a difficult language to understand, to learn, to implement in life. Actually, no. It's easy to implement in life, but it's difficult to understand the words.” Female student (M25) offered more in-depth insight saying: “for me, I realise that most of the things I learnt, it is hard to recall them”. Male student (M32) also explained: “it's hard to learn ‘cause I do not understand it, and I don't know how, yeah”. A minority linked perceptions of difficulty directly to L2LE. For

instance, male student (M40) explained that: “*the way they teach the language, makes it hard*”. Negative L2LE are elaborated in the subsequent chapter focused on how students make sense of their L2LE.

4.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings for RQ1: **How do a-MLA in AIS make sense of Arabic learning?** Firstly, students’ views about school goals were presented. Students felt that the Islamic identity of the school underpinned offerings. The schools’ educational goals were perceived to be mostly religious. Some students believed programs were merely a form of acquiescence to the needs of student majorities. Secondly, the chapter revealed students’ orientations. The majority of the students were predominantly religiously oriented. Thirdly, the students explained what they expected from learning. They expected to attain proficiency in all language macro-skills and comprehend the texts they read. Fourthly, evidence emerged of both resistance and disengagement. Explicit resistance was confined to a small minority. Disengagement was pervasive. A common explanation of both phenomena was the failure to learn Arabic. Students’ perceptions of their L2LE suggested that acquiring Arabic was improbable.

The following chapter presents the findings related to RQ2: **What do a-MLA make of their L2 learning experiences?**

Chapter 5. *Arabic learning experiences*

The previous chapter presented the results related to the first research question. It presented students' perceptions of school purposes, then described their L2 expectations, orientations and L2 motivation. The exploration uncovered resistance and disengagement, and negative L2LE emerged as an explanation of both phenomena. This chapter presents the results related to RQ2: **What do a-MLA make of their L2 learning experiences?** To this end, the chapter is divided into four sections. The first section briefly presents students' self-assessments to set the scene for their discussions. The second presents students' appraisals of Arabic programs. The third section focuses on senior students' reasons for dropping Arabic. The fourth section outlines the nature of students' L2LE.

5.1. Students' self-assessments

Self-assessments of proficiency are highly subjective but are used in research and teaching as they can serve several purposes (Blanche, 1988; Oscarson, 1989; Papanthymou & Darra, 2019; Tina & Peter, 2009). In this thesis, a self-assessment tool was incorporated in the rapport building part of the semi-structured interviews to give students a sense of control over the interview process and position them as experts (see sections 3.2 and 3.5.3). The scores are neither reliable measures of their proficiency nor free of inconsistencies. However, they provide insight into the participants' overall mood and sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1983). The averaged scores are shown in Table 10.

Table 10 Self-assessment results

Average scores out of 10	Arabic Self-assessment results (scored out of 10)				
	Reading & understanding	Listening & understanding	Writing in your words	Speaking to express yourself	Overall
	3.6	4.4	2.9	4.2	3.8

The students' perceptions of their language skills were poor. An overall score of 3.8 out of 10 suggests that a-MLA felt that they had not acquired *satisfactory* proficiency in Arabic. This outcome is likely to be disheartening, given their desire to acquire proficiency in all language macro-skills. The low reading score is a concern given the emphasis placed on reading with comprehension and the pervading sacred text orientation. Disappointment with L2LE will probably be amplified as students had studied Arabic for 3.5 years on

average (10 students had spent 6-9 years studying Arabic).²⁵ Attaining low levels of proficiency after a significant period of study can result in poor self-efficacy beliefs. This would lead students to believe they cannot learn Arabic (Bandura, 1983; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Poor self-efficacy beliefs can contribute to poor participation in Years 10-12.

5.2. Appraisals of AIS programs

The vast majority of students found the Arabic programs ineffective. Male student (M38) said: “*it's not that effective*”. Female student (A6) said: “I feel like it doesn't [help].” Female student (A2) said: “I still haven't learned anything”. Male student (M31) complained: “I just don't learn anything from it. *Nothing!*” Female student (M23) said: “I keep repeating it, but I'm not learning anything”. Male student (M35) reflected on inefficiencies. He said: “I would be in that classroom for a week, and we don't learn anything, to be honest.” He reiterated: “*We didn't learn anything*”. He added: “I can't remember what I did [in] term two this year because it was that process. *It was just information being fed to us*”.

Many felt that their goals were elusive. Female student (M16) said they were not taught language “you would use in your everyday conversations and stuff. So, it doesn't really like, help me”. Female student (M18) said the program: “*hasn't really added to my goals*”. She said: “I already learnt how to read Qur'an like, when I was a child”, and the learning “didn't really direct me towards like, any other goals”. Male student (M29) explained: “*the Qur'an meaning, that's the ... main reason I'm doing Arabic. But I'm not getting anything out of it*”. Male student (M21) said that Arabic is “simpler than English”, but “I think the way it's taught ... makes it difficult for the students to learn”. He added: “I don't think it's really helping me. But I just learn new words that's all. Like, it doesn't help me like, read and understand”.

These negativities fostered helplessness in some students. For instance, female student (M17) disparaged herself, saying: “*every year I go dumber in Arabic*, ‘cause I don't understand”. Male student (M32) said that Arabic was: “hard to learn ‘cause I do not understand it, and I don't know how [to]”. Likewise, male student (M15) said that Arabic was: “hard because *we don't know how to learn it properly*”. Male student (M40) said: “Since I've been at [School 4], it's ... hard”. Male student (M38) said: “*We always keep doing the same thing over and over*”, and “not anything [nothing] has changed”.

²⁵ Three years of study could lead to experiences of around 90 – 180 contact hours of Arabic depending on whether a school offers Arabic for one lesson (45 minutes) or two lessons (90 minutes) per week. Please see: [Providing the Australian Curriculum in Prep to Year 10 in Queensland State Schools from 2017](#).

5.3. Attrition in senior secondary

Except for one Year 9 girl,²⁶ all the students I spoke to from Years 9 -10 had dropped Arabic or intended to do so. There are various possible reasons for this, but students' negative L2LE were implicated in their decisions to drop Arabic in Years 10-12. Students were frustrated with their progress and bored with Arabic by Year 9. Pragmatism guided the selection of matriculation subjects, and dislike for Arabic teachers influenced their preference for other electives. Poor perceptions of self-efficacy permeated discussions.

Disillusionment with L2LE and dislike for teachers pushed some students to drop Arabic. Male student (M33) said: "whatever you do, like, as hard as you work at school, I don't think you can come out learning Arabic". Male student (M38) said: "for the few years I've been doing Arabic, I haven't really learnt that much", he added: "maybe because of the teachers. Maybe it's because of the people distracting [us]. But ... I'm not really sure if I would choose Arabic". Male student (M40) said: "*I don't know if it's the way they taught it to me, that I started to not like it.*" He added: "as we went on, it kind of like, was the same thing. I kind of got bored of it. So, why do I want to keep doing it when I have the choice to stop?" He added: "many of my mates dropped it. Not many of my mates, everyone!" Female student (A1) said the Year 10 electives were "art and woodwork, or Arabic", "so, I'm picking art 'cause she's a really good teacher out of all of them".

Self-efficacy beliefs also influenced decisions to drop Arabic. Students did not feel they had attained the levels needed for taking Arabic as a matriculation subject and believed that pursuing Arabic was ill-advised. The introduction of new courses also influenced students. Female student (M20) explained that: "there were so many subjects we haven't done before. It just looks so appealing, so interesting to try something else" because "I was like, 'I'm not learning that much, and if I continue with it in Year 10, I'm gonna have to do the VCE [Arabic]. I'm already poor in it, and I don't want to do VCE'..."²⁷ Male student (M33) explained: "because there's just a lot of other subjects", that "would help me in VCE." Female student (M22) said: "After a few lessons, I'm just like, '*I'm never gonna learn this language!*', 'It's gonna be so hard for me to learn it!', 'There's so much to do!' and I just

²⁶ She said: "we had Arabic as an election and I picked it, but it didn't get accepted." This occurs when insufficient numbers select a particular topic. (Her case is discussed at the end of section 5.3)

²⁷ VCE: Victorian certificate of education (VCE) is the certificate that students in the state of Victoria receive upon the satisfactory completion of their secondary education.

kind of gave up.” She added: “I thought to myself, I can't understand it, so what's the point of me trying?” Female student (A4) said: “I didn't think I would be able to do it or be that good at it.” She expanded: “I also thought you had to write assignments. You have to write essays in Arabic, and I was like, ‘I can't do that!’... And also, the teacher, I get annoyed easily from the teacher”.

With numbers falling, all but one school stopped offering Arabic in senior secondary. Schools 1 and 3 stopped Arabic after Year 9, and School 4 stopped it after Year 10. This lack of continuity potentially disappoints the small MLA minority who wanted to take Arabic in Year 10. Female student (M27) had intended to take Arabic in Year 10 and said: “it doesn't feel nice, to be honest.” She elaborated: “you know, like, when you go shopping, and you see chocolate, and you really want it? and how you can't buy it” because “like, someone in your family doesn't allow you?” She then said: “I mean like, you're really eager, [but] it just never happens!”.

5.4. The L2 learning experiences

Students’ reflections on L2LE can be divided into three major areas of concern. These are the (1) structure of programs; (2) descriptions of L2LE; (3) appraisals of teachers and reactions to teachers’ natures. Several points of discussion emerged about each of these areas of concern.

5.4.1. The structure of programs

Students were mainly concerned with three structural facets of their Arabic programs: (1) timetabling; (2) level management; (3) and learning with Arabs.

5.4.1.1. Timetabling lessons

Many students were dissatisfied with the number of lessons allocated to Arabic and with how they were timetabled.²⁸ A few felt allocations were grossly inadequate for meaningful L2 learning to take place. Male student (M33) said: “to be honest; you don't really learn the whole language” because “it can't be done at school. There's not enough lessons”. He added: “there's not really enough time for Arabic”. He said that they took Arabic twice a week: “you can't learn like that!” He stressed that: “if you come, and you don't know

²⁸ In Years 7-9, Schools 2 and 4 offered Arabic twice a week (2 lessons x 45 minutes) and School 3 offered Arabic only once a week (1 x 75 minutes).

any Arabic”, then “I think it's impossible for you to leave, just from the school, knowing Arabic.”

Many students felt that two lessons per week were insufficient, progress was slow, and that timetabling was poor. Female student (A5) said: “we only have two lessons a week. Out of all, like, seven lessons a day, five days a week. We only have two lessons [out] of all those lessons!” Female student (A10) said we have: “two lessons per week. But like, the time it's not enough”. She added that progress was: “a bit slower than usual”. Male student (M40) said that they take: “LOTE just twice a week” on “Monday[s] and Tuesdays”, adding: “but I think they're too close”.

Students who had one lesson per week faced further challenges. Female student (M25) said: “One lesson per week seems a bit sparse”, “I forget” because “there's a week difference”. Female student (M27) said: “time passes”, “like, seven days, you forget somethings that you learnt.” Female student (M13) asserted: “we're surrounded by English a lot” that is, “we hear it a lot. So, if we hear ... Arabic a lot, then yeah, I guess it would stick.” Female student (M27) protested timetable clashes: “we see Arabic once a week, which I don't really like. Because on Mondays, we have like, some like yoga sessions, or we have different kind of things or excursions, and we get like, we miss out on it.” She added: “last term, I missed out on last week of Arabic. Since then it's been like four weeks. I still didn't enter Arabic, except this Monday, which was pretty bad.”

5.4.1.2. Managing L2 levels

Where schools attempted to stream students (School 3 and 4), many felt that levels were incorrectly assessed. Female student (M11) said: “in Year 7, I struggled a lot.” She added: “*I don't know why the teacher put me into the highest group*”, “I didn't understand a word they were saying”. Female student (M23) said that she was in the intermediate level but: “I think I need to be in beginners”. Male student (M30) said: “I'm struggling hard” when “it would make sense for me to be in beginners”. Male student (M31) said: “I'm in [the] advanced class, so. I don't know why I'm in [the] advanced class, but yeah”. He added: “*it's very hard for me*”. Female student (M17) felt that the beginner level was pitched at a higher level than she expected. She said, “I'm like, in the lowest group in Arabic but, I wish there was a lower one.” Female student (M18) said: “When I was in Year 8, I feel like a lot of people were [there] that shouldn't have been.” She added: “there were only like, one or two people, who really understood what was going on”. She elaborated: “*In Year 9, I went back*

to like, the beginners level where like they teach you simple stuff, like conversations and all that. So, that was a bit better. But like, I still feel like that was not ‘beginner’. Like, *it was ‘beginner’ for Arab people*, you hear me?”

Some students were sceptical of the assessments being used. Female student (M23) reflected: “I’ve been doing Arabic for two years”, so “they probably think that I’m up to that level now”. Male student (M31) felt that being in the advanced class was well-beyond his ability when probed about the logic behind this, he laughed and said: “I don’t know: my behaviour!” Female student (M13) suggested that the teacher used test results. She said: “the way your exam turned out. Like, the way you did the work and how it reflected. It would put you in that class.”

Where schools did not stream the students (School 2), significant disparities were notable in the same class. All students said that there were three levels of ability. Female student (A5) said: “some are fluent. They understand. They know how to speak, like, have a conversation [in] Arabic. Some of them just know how to read. And then, like, *then there’s us, that like, don’t know that much about reading or speaking or any of that.*” Male student (A7) confirmed: “yes, *three different levels*”. He explained that: “some of them still don’t know their alphabets” whereas “some of them can speak Arabic like, fluently”. He reflected on his class of 25 students: “more than half would be in the can’t read [group]”. Female student (A8) said there are: “people that don’t know how to read”; people who “like, read and understand by reading”; and “people who are not sure they know what’s going on”. None of the students indicated that there were remedial classes, but female student (A6) said the teacher tried to differentiate by outlining different expectations. The “beginners I think they write a couple [of] sentences”, “the ones that are in the middle write a bit more”, and then “I think the advanced write like, stories”.

5.4.1.3. Learning with Arabs

Many students perceived a significant difference in ability between Arabs and non-Arabs. Male student (M36) said: “I reckon, you know about the advantage thing. I reckon they kind of [do]”. Female student (A11) said: “*some of them are like really high levels, ‘cause like some are Arabs.* But like, most of them are like from other countries so, they don’t really know how to speak Arabic fluently”. She added: “I think like, the ones which are in a high level, I don’t think they need to like practice Arabic because they understand, firstly. Secondly, they know how to read it, and they speak it”. Male student (M29) said that

Arabs might not “know how to read. But they know the meaning.” He added: “if I read it to them, or the teacher reads it to them, they know the meaning”. Male student (M38) said: “Somali people they should really do beginners” but “Arab people they should” take higher levels because “*they.... speak that [Arabic] at home*”. He added: “sometimes, it's just too hard”. Male student (M30) believed that mixed classrooms created difficulties: “for [the] teacher and the student that's not from an Arab background” because the teacher has to focus “on the students that doesn't [do not] know much about Arabic, and have to explain it multiple times for them to get the memo”.

These notions influenced students' sense of self-efficacy. Male student (M15) said: “*everyone can understand it, except me, because they're Arabs*”. Female student (A2) said: “I always adore them. They speak amazing”, but “though they're speaking it really slow, and I'm trying to follow where they're reading, but *they just go way too fast, and I don't know where they're at*”. She added: “every time the teacher talks, they translate it” and “when the teacher says, ‘do a sentence’, they will write it” ... “like an English sentence for me. And, I'm there, still haven't written my first sentence yet”. She added that: “homework is really easy for them, while we take a while to understand it. So, *it's kind of intimidating*”. Female student (M25) said: “*because I'm not Arabic-speaking*, I find myself asking Arabic speakers, like, ‘can you help me out with this?’ ... So, I think *it is clear who's higher than who*.” She added: “Arabic-speakers, obviously, are much better than me”. Male student (M14) said there are: “only three people of not Arabic background in our class. You've seen our class and that. Anyway, so like, for the rest of us, we ... we'll have to work a bit hard to catch up”. Male student (M38) described his class of 20 students, saying there are: “*three non-Arabs, including myself*, and the rest are Arab”. Using distanced self-talk he added: “*non-Arabs, they don't really take the learning seriously*” because “*they can't learn it. Maybe, I think that it's just too hard for them*”.

Male student (M40) felt that lessons unfairly privileged Arabs. He said Arabs: “speak the language, so they kind of, like, understand it more. So, the teacher, is focusing ... like, *he would go to the next thing. But then just because they know it*”. He said that if a question is asked: “they would obviously put their hand up first. They would guess ‘cause they speak the language, and *they've heard of the word before*, so they'll just say it”. The teacher “would just say, ‘correct’ and go to the next”. He later added that: “*what kind of annoys me a bit*” is that “sometimes, if I don't do well, in that class like, they would do well. Like, *the teacher*

sees them doing well, and then they assume they know. They're more advanced. But like, if you think about it, they speak the language at home, so *it's like ten times easier.*" He emphasised: "If they taught Somali in class, I would like, want to see ... I want to see the exam in my language type of class, I wanna see how they go! Like, it could be completely different".

A small minority felt that sharing lessons with Arabs could be useful. Male student (M28) said: "if you need help like, you can just get [an] advanced student to come beside you and help you with some activities in the book". Female student (M13) said: "teachers, they would explain it from their perspective. But then the students will explain it from a different perspective". However, one of the students reflected on the downside of this potential benefit. Male student (A7) said: "it's a good thing in a way if you don't know anything you can go ask them. But then also *sometimes they think that they [are] too good for the other people.* And they're like, if you had a problem with them and you ask them for a bit of help, for like, your homework, then *they'll just try and like, bully you and stuff*".

Interestingly, another small minority believed that diglossia²⁹ reduced the head start Arab students had. Male student (M32) scoffed: "they don't know anything!" He added: "they know like, a bit of Arabic" as in "they understand a bit, and they can speak". Female student (M27) said that many Arabic-speakers were in the beginner group because: "they don't know how to write or speak [Arabic]" and if "they can speak it, they just don't know fuS-ḥa Arabic,³⁰ they speak slang". Male student (M36) said that: "they actually don't [have an advantage]. What they speak, you know, at home is completely different". He added: "we learn fuS-ḥa", but "most of them just speak slang Lebanese language". Male student (M39) said: "I thought it was a good idea at first pairing up with the Arabs. But, then once I realized like, I was better at [it] ... So, they weren't really helpful, really. If I would say something, they wouldn't understand what I'm trying to say".

5.4.2. The descriptions of L2LE

Concerning L2LE, students' described or discussed eight points: (1) their standard lessons; (2) prescribed reading texts; (3) the dearth of resources; (4) their reactions to

²⁹ Diglossia describes a "situation in which two languages (or two varieties of the same language) are used under different conditions within a community, often by the same speakers. The term is usually applied to languages with distinct 'high' and 'low' (colloquial) varieties, such as Arabic." Retrieved from: <https://www.lexico.com/definition/diglossia>

³⁰ Modern standard Arabic: Literary standard or 'high' variety of Arabic.

lessons; (5) regular disruptions; (6) lenient assessments; (7) rare experiences; and (8) their appraisals of teachers.

5.4.2.1. The standard lesson

Firstly, students explained that their lessons predominantly focused on reading, writing and translation. Male student (M14) said: “[he] gives us like, booklets, and then we normally uhh ... read that, and then we translate it together.” Female student (A6) said: “she'll read the Arabic [text], and then tell us the meaning of each word”. Male student (M28) explained that: “he teaches us to read and understand normally. He also teaches us to write”. Male student (M15) said: “they give us the passage, and we have to describe it. Describe the meaning”. Female student (A8) said: “first of all, we ... understand what the text is about, and then ... go through the booklet”. That is, do “different activities and questions”. Female student (A11) said: “every student gets to read a sentence out” from “the booklet yeah? And then the teacher like ... word by word, she starts like explaining what it means. And then we write it down”. Female student (M23): “[he] asks us to read like one line, then someone else reads” and, “he asks us if we know what it means and if we say no, he tells us. And then, some other times, he just reads the whole thing, and then he translates [it], and he tells us to write it down as he says it. And he also sometimes uses the projector to read out the text, and then he writes down the meanings on the board”. Male student (M33) said: “there was role-play in the book and like everyone had to act out the character. You didn't really act”, “the teacher assigns you to a character and then like, you just read whatever that character says”. Memorisation was part of their homework. Female student (A11) said: “she usually gives us homework”, “[to] read it and like, memorise it”.

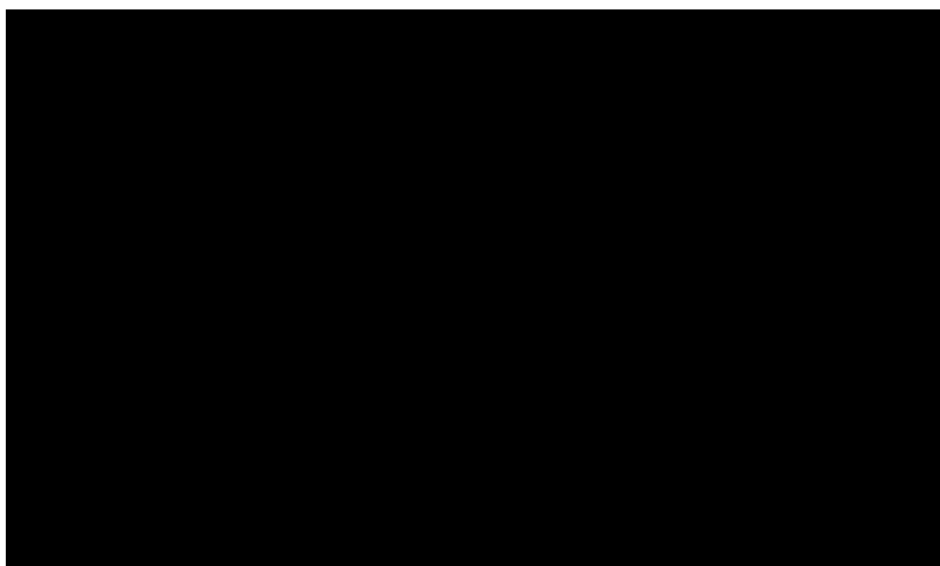
Secondly, some students described the teachers' emphasis on grammar, vocabulary, and spelling. Female student (M16) said: “let's say I have a sentence of ‘she was walking to the park’. Like, she would like, tell us each word, if it's like, a noun, [or] a verb, how you use it in different sentences for male, [or] for a female. And then we would like, she would make us ... make our own sentences using those words. And then she'd explain the sentence to us and how to use it in ... our paragraphs. Stuff like that, and yeah. And we would learn, like, the meaning of the word, and the origin of the word, and a word similar to it, and stuff like that”. Female student (A10) said: we “read at least one or two lines, then she will translate it back to English, and where she thinks that we should know about this word, vocabulary or grammar, she will point it out.” She elaborated: “in each text, there was like a

vocabulary word she will be like, ‘OK this is a vocabulary word and there is another meaning to it’, she will say like that. And then she will show an example on the board.” She elaborated: “and she will just put it in a small sentence. Like, this is for this type of questions, or something.” Female student (A4) said: “we did like, spelling tests”. Female student (M26) said: “she’d come to the person and test them on all of the words”. Female student (M25) said: “after every lesson, he’ll read out a sentence, and we just have to try and spell it out, without looking at the paper. So, that’s to help with the spelling, I think”. Female student (M13) said: “[We] have half of the [note]book would be for vocab. So, then Arabic word, English word, it would all be in that book”.

5.4.2.2. Prescribed readings

Students explained that the texts were prescribed and that teachers led and directed reading. Informal conversations with teachers indicate that they tried to relate these readings or units of work to the national Arabic curriculum released by ACARA, which is pitched to Arab background learners (Selim, 2019b). Observations suggest that the nature of the Arabic reading texts was secular or general. Most students received photocopied texts from various sources (see Image 4) or had to copy text off the board.

Image 4 Photocopies with student notes



Male student (M19) said we: “get booklets”, “like ... this thick [gestures]”, “I don’t know. 10 sheets, 20 sheets, like that”. He said: “before, they used to do it on the board, and then we were supposed to do it. Like, write it down in the [note]book”. Female student (M24) said: “they print it off textbooks”, “they give us the black and white [copies], but then during

the lesson, our teacher, he puts the coloured image on the board". Female student (M16) explained that "we don't really have textbooks. We have a normal notebook that we take down notes." She added: "our teacher just gives us worksheets" with some "reading exercises". Female student (A8) said: "it could be dialogue. It could be like, paragraphs. It could be like, a story." Female student (A6) said: "We write things in our [note]books and then we have folders where we keep like papers and stuff". Female student (M27) explained that the teacher "usually makes us write in our books", "she puts it up on the board, and then we would write in our books, and then write the English translation".

Students did not particularly like these booklets and found the content irrelevant. For instance, male student (M14) said: "it's all right. It's part of learning." When asked if he enjoyed these, he said: "... 'enjoy' would be a bit too far". Female student (M18) said: "it doesn't relate to you. You'd learn the conversation. You'd learn ... how to order food. But like, you wouldn't really do that". She added: "like buying and selling things, or like ordering food, that could be helpful, but you wouldn't remember it. Like you want to learn something that you remember like later on". Female student (A1) said: "it's just random stuff".

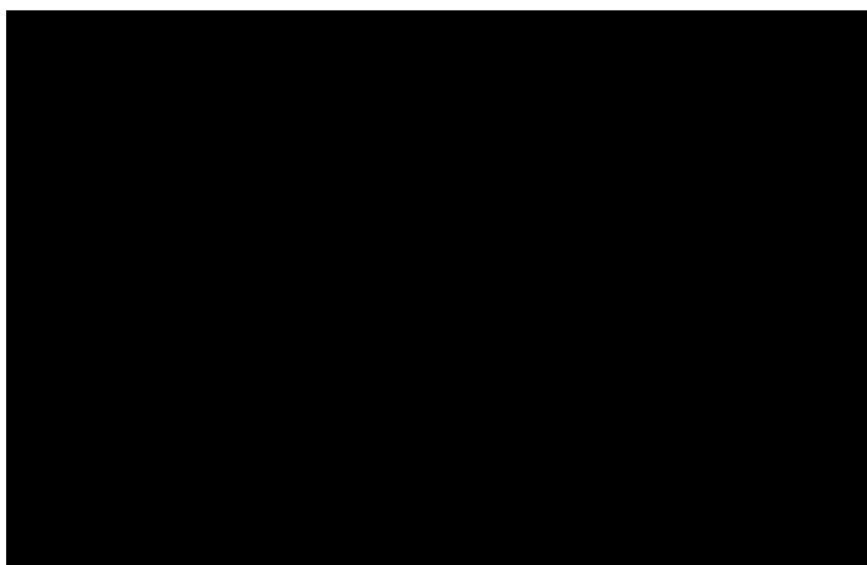
A few students found the process unstructured and deemed keeping track of all the sheets cumbersome. Female student (M27) said about learning: "actually, feels random." She said: "it feels like everything is, jumbled up, especially studying for exams for Arabic exams or tests. It's just ... It makes me grow white hair on my head". Female student (M22) said: "I would always lose those booklets, and I would never be able to find them. So, I would always be so annoyed". Female student (M23) confirmed: "I lost my booklet", "I think it's at home somewhere."

Many found the readings too difficult and relied on the teacher's translations. Female student (A5) said: "lesson is 45 minutes, and as I said, half of it goes towards our translating the words and translating the questions". Female student (M13) said the booklet: "tells us what we need to do. So then per page it has like a reading thing, and then it has the question things." She added: "he gives us the translations, everything, so we can understand it." When asked if she could manage without the translation, she said: "no, I think I'd be struggling a lot". Female student (A10) said: "she will ask us to answer questions they give", and "we have to answer back in Arabic. But, obviously, she will translate it back in English to us, so that we know how to write it back." Female student (A6) said: "I don't feel like worksheets help me. I feel like practising, like, separate words help. 'Cause, I get so confused in Arabic,

like, putting sentences ‘cause it's all jumbled up”. She added: “for some of them, it's easy ‘cause they already know Arabic. But then like, for the rest of us, like, some people who don't know, it's like, sometimes confusing. ‘Cause, we don't understand, like, how to do it”.

At School 4, students used a textbook called: *Ta-'al-lam Al-'Arabiyyah* [Learn Arabic: ICO].³¹ Students at different levels had different books from the series. The series came with the main textbook and a workbook (see Image 5). The students knew that the books were developed and printed overseas. Male student (M35) said: “the books that we have, for example, this one [shows me the book]. We actually researched it. They're, they're from Saudi Arabia”. Male student (M27) explained that there are multiple levels in the series. He said: “they're both pink!”. He added: “next year we might have other colours”, “but for now, they're kind of the beginner books”. He elaborated: “it says a number one on them. They show us that it's the first book. It's beginner. So, maybe next year we might have different books, I hope. Yeah, I don't like pink!”

Image 5 Student's textbook, workbook, and notes



Opinions of the book were mixed. Male student (M27) believed that the textbooks structured their learning. He said: “the books are helping me improve a lot. Like, the teacher grabs information from the book to teach us in class. And technically, *without the books, we'd be like, doomed* all right!” However, books were generally considered hard. Male student (M36) said: “it's a good textbook. You will learn from it. But I reckon *it's too hard for our level, to be honest*”. Male student (M38) said: “[they are] all in Arabic. So, sometimes

³¹ Please see: <https://www.iconetwork.com/product-category/arabic-learning-textbooks/>

that's the negative part about it. But overall, I think it's just half-half". He said: "they're not really interactive books. They're just like plain old textbook[s]". Likewise, male student (M31) said: "I don't know what it's called. I like the book, yeah. It's colourful, it has a lot of pictures. It's all Arabic, that's the only thing I hate about it". Male student (M36) stated that: "they look pretty good. Colourful and nice, with pictures. A lot of pictures, and it helps you understand".

Students explained how the books were used. Male student (M39) said: "[the] main book ... has all the topics in it, and you learn it, and you discuss it". The other book: "you answer questions". Male student (M36) said: "we study with two books". The "homework book ... we haven't touched the book, to be honest". He emphasised: "We haven't ever used umm ... the classwork book. We have chapters that we do. Like, I reckon we do two or three of them a term". He explained that: "there's one CD in the back page that comes with the book. So, you can watch it. Maybe it could help", "if you're a visual learner". He said: "Nah, I don't, I don't use it, I'm fine with the textbooks, yeah".

Interestingly, male student (M29) said: "half the students don't even have their textbooks". He explained that the teacher pushes students to bring their books, but that students do not. He said: "he was like, 'Oh I'll give you ... detention', or something, but no one still got it. He used to do that, throughout the whole year but no one still ... No one still had it." He explained that the books cost: "like, 15 dollars or something, I don't remember the price" but students do not buy them: "... 'cause they don't like Arabic".

5.4.2.3. Resources and activities

Most students described learning as lacking in supplemental resources and activities. Male student (M36) said: "No pair work. No fun games. No presentations. He doesn't even prepare slides!" Female student (A8) said: "just verbal explanation, sometimes on the board, but not videos and PowerPoints and stuff". Male student (M37) said: "not PowerPoint slides. He ... writes it down for us". Female student (M23) said: "We don't do any other activities or anything". Female student (A10) added: "We don't, really, play games, and she doesn't, really, have a PowerPoint. She will just say it on the spot". Female student (A5) explained: "We haven't done any role-play. She hasn't mentioned that we're gonna do any, like role-plays, or things like that".

On the rare occasion that resources were introduced, the objective was lost on students. "We had to watch this Arabic video" and "explain the difference," said female student

(M27). She added: “there's like, few types of Arabic. Like, I don't know. I really can't explain it. But like, we're watching a video [about] how a guy was in the car and all that” She then added that there are “many kinds of Arab people, apparently. And we needed to find the difference of the speaking and the difference of Arabic people. But I didn't find the purpose of it.” She explained, “it was in English first of all, and secondly, watching the video, I couldn't differentiate anything. But if there was [were] two videos [of] the same thing [but] different, you know, words, then I would have [understood]. ‘Cause like, I'm not an Arab I don't understand anything that's going on.”

The majority of students said that learning rarely included conversational activities or collaborative work. Female student (A5) said: “We haven't done anything that's like group work”. In response to my examples of group activities, female student (A10) said: “We haven't done such things. We only have the booklet.” Female student (M22) said: “We mainly listen to Mr, and try to converse with him instead of like, each other”. Male student (M33) said: “no, he lets us talk to each other while we're doing our work to help each other out. But like, we don't just, uh ... he doesn't just say, ‘Oh! talk to each other in Arabic language’ and stuff!” Male student (M39) said: “Nah, sometimes we just do it with our partner next to us”. Female student (M27) said: “We hardly ever do. We used blocks once or twice. It was just Arabic letters.” Male student (M21) said: “*two terms ago ... we had a conversation*, that you would speak conversation ... between you and a partner”.

5.4.2.4. Reactions to lessons

Students found their lessons boring and ineffective. Male student (M21) said that he likes: “to do activities in class, you know?” rather than just “sit there all the time. *It gets boring, and then I just doze off sometimes*”. Female student (A1) said: “so boring! She just talks the whole time! And like, we get so annoyed, so we like, start talking too and she gets angry”. Female student (M17) said: “last year, the teacher was like beyond!” ... “She would just stand there, and talk, and talk, and talk”. Male student (M39) said he liked trying out: “different things, so it could help us. But he always used to do the same.” “It was always like, the same [I] got a little bored of it”. Male student (M32): “just the book, it's boring, [we] just have to keep reading off it”. Female student (A10) explained: “it's boring for us” because “every day, the whole day we are doing reading and writing.” She added: “there's not one time where she played us a video, or let us listen to some of the Arabic”. Male student (A7) said: “We haven't done much of acting, role-plays, PowerPoints, we haven't done much

of any of those. It makes it, the lesson, if I could say, a bit boring” and “it doesn't have that excitement of going to Arabic”. Female student (M27) said: “I find these Arabic classes really boring, ‘cause I'm more of a person who likes hands-on activity. Like, I like colourful things. I like to do puzzles. I like to play games. Have more fun in class maybe.” Female student (A2): “she's doing everything daily, like, the same thing, writing down, and just reading. So, I think they're just like getting kind of bored of it; we're not doing any activities like speaking to each other”. She added lessons are: “not really helping me with my learning”, “they help me learn little words, that's basically all. We just learnt feminine [and] masculine words in Arabic. And I don't understand it”. Female student (M20) said: “whenever we would have a dentist appointment or something, I would ask my mum to put it on that day when we had Arabic, ‘cause I didn't want to go for Arabic”.

5.4.2.5. Regular disruptions

Students described their learning as frequently disrupted. Male student (M36) said in primary: “like grade 3, grade 4”, Arabic lessons “were rowdy. Everyone was just reckless, and the teacher's trying to get attention.” He added: “sometimes they spent the whole lesson trying to get attention”. However, secondary school classes were not much better. Female student (M22) said laughing: “I think you know the answer to that already. I'm gonna be straight out. Like, let's be honest! There was a lot of mucking around!” Male student (M30) described unruly lessons in which “most of the students [were] yelling in Arabic”. Male student (M19) said: “basically, the other kids they distract [the class]”. Students “act up, and they start being silly, and they misbehave,” said female student (A5). Male student (M19) said: “Basically, they will do one joke, and the whole class will start laughing”. Female student (M23) said: “some of them just start talking and laughing with each other, but then Ustaz³² moves us. So, they still talk across the room.” Male student (M15) said: “sometimes, they behave if there's a task or something. And if they get a demerit they'll behave,” otherwise they “continue disrupting the class”.

Several students complained that frequent disruptions compromised their learning. Male student (A7) said: “half the time, the people that wanna learn they don't really get to learn because the teachers ... are telling the other people off for being too noisy, or disrupting the class”. Female student (M27) stated: “it gets annoying because every time she stops, it

³² Ustaz: Teacher

like, cuts off like two minutes of our learning”. Female student (M23) said that out of the 75-minute lesson: “fifteen to twenty minutes [are] lost”. Male student (M39) said: “I couldn't learn much ‘cause [there are] a lot of disruptions”. Female student (M24) said her peers: “start talking and stuff, and wasting time. So, like, people who want to learn they can't learn”. She complained that she could not get: “the exact education that I want.” She stressed that peers: “not only like, stop their learning but also ours”. She added: “I would prefer private tutoring from my teacher over [rather] than this”. Male student (M21) said: “I came to class to learn. If they keep on talking then no one will be able to learn. Teacher won't be able to teach. Teacher will get angry, then like, stop the whole class from learning”. Male student (M35) said: “[The previous year, in] term three, when a bunch of students” who were “misbehaving came to our class in LOTE” that “stuffed up my learning. That started to have a huge influence, you know. After that everything kind of went downhill.” He elaborated: “I don't know what happened in term four, I had trouble getting a C somehow”... “It was pretty shocking, ‘cause I didn't expect to do that bad in Arabic”.

Students emphasised boredom and the apparent pointlessness of learning as the main causes of these disruptions. Male student (M35) explained: “I'll be middle disruptive if I was in class. ‘Cause I get bored a little bit”. He said his peers act out because: “they find the subject boring so, they *want to create some drama*”. Male student (M39) said when students: “get, like, a bit bored”, “they start becoming disruptive and noisy”. Female student (M23) said: “[students] say it out loud, ‘Oh! This is boring. I'm bored!’ then Ustaz [Mr] says, ‘pay attention!’ and something like that.” Female student (M12) said: “[we] don't enjoy Arabic, but we just enjoy like, talking to one another”. Female student (M23) said: “the same reasons as me”, “they're just bored”, because “they're *not really making progress*”. Male student (M15) indicated that Arabic-speaking students: “find Arabic boring because they already know it”. Male student (M28) said his Arab peers: “know everything in Arab[ic]” so when the “teacher's explaining something they don't really listen”. Male student (M21) explained that he used to be disruptive: “I used to [be disruptive] ‘cause, I just felt like talking.” He explained: “I felt, as I wasn't learning anything, there wasn't any point of paying attention. Because *I wasn't learning anything, even when I was paying attention!*”

5.4.2.6. Lenient assessments

A few students explained that teachers ‘taught to the test’, gave away tests, or leniently assessed students. Male student (M29) said: “that was an easy test” because “he, basically,

gave the test from the book.” He elaborated: “he told us what's gonna be on the test and memorise that and that's all”. He emphasised: “he, basically, does the test in front of you on the board. And you take notes down like, everything”, “after like one week, he gives you the test and that's it!” Male student (M35) said because: “we sometimes don't understand it, [he] sometimes change dates”. He elaborated that: “if he doesn't change the date, everyone's gonna fail, you know?”

Male student (M32) expressed surprise at his results. He said: “I don't know, I don't fail on the tests.” He added: “I don't understand why I got an A”. He added: “We have projects”, “which I'm not doing ‘cause I cannot”. He said that although he does not do the work: “I have not failed, which is very weird”. Male student (A7) said: “at the end of like, the booklet we'll have like, a little test”, but, “she said she doesn't, really, 100% do her grades on the test.” He added: “she may do it on your effort, or what you do in your class. That makes the grade go up”. He said this was: “a good thing” otherwise “I would get E”. Female student (M24): “No one failed his classes. Even though they don't study or won't study. They never failed his classes.”

Female student (A2) said her assessment: “was to copy this text ... from our booklet and just do it in the test.” She added: “We had a story, and it was in Arabic, and she said, ‘to learn this and the last paragraph, and we’ll do [them] on the test’. So, all I thought was, ‘I'll just and try and memorise...[and] copy it down in the test’ ...”. She added: “but it didn't work out, because I didn't know what I was writing, and the translation was on the paper, but I still didn't know, and I got most of them wrong.” She said: “during the tests”, “like, it's in Arabic” so, “she translates it for us, but it's confusing”. When probed if the teacher was translating the test, she said: “yeah, she translated it for us. I still didn't understand it”. When asked to reflect on this, she said: “I don't think it was effective”.

5.4.2.7. The rare experiences

A small minority of students mentioned that a couple of primary teachers had tried to introduce extra activities and more interesting experiences. At School 3, a couple of students referred to Miss-X. This teacher only taught primary students. Female student (M23) said: “all the grade 6's were in one group” and “we were doing more hands-on work. Like: we'd laminate things, and we'd do more fun stuff”. She added: “we also had this app called Puppet Pals. And when we had a text, we had to record ourselves saying it without looking at it. We had to like kind of like memorize it. And then we'd send the recording” back to her, “and

she'd mark us on that". Female student (M12) explained that the teacher used to play games with them. She said: "we'd all be like, studying and everything, and then she'd be like, everyone stand up and then ... she would be saying words, and then you have to do the action." She said the teacher used to: "play us videos of how to learn". At School 2, a couple of students referred to Miss-Y. Male student (A7) said: "In Year 6, we used to make stories and talk about feelings in Arabic." He elaborated that she used to take them to the computer lab and that he enjoyed "typing in Arabic on computers". Female student (A1) said: "we'd do presentations, and go on computers and like, talk in Arabic and everything". This teacher had moved interstate.

A small minority of students described the use of supplemental resources and more interesting activities in secondary school. These students were taking Arabic with the headteacher at School 4 (Mr-X). Male student (M39) said the: "teacher puts a video on the board" and "we listen to it. Like, we try and understand it. We try to say the meanings ... We take dot points. Like, the words that you understand", and then "translate it together. And then, the words that you don't [know] the teacher writes it down for you, and then we understand, and we start again". He added that: "maybe at the end of the class, like around the last ten minutes we play like a Kahoot! game". Male student (M34): "we play games. We do role-plays. We have ... projects to do". He elaborated: "last term, we had to do a role-play about the shops" and "I was in a group of three with my two best friends" and "we did the project together". He added that Mr-X uses PowerPoint Slides: "about the things we're learning." He said they were learning about: "food, and then he made a PowerPoint about ... all the different foods and drinks." Male student (M29) said: "he used to make it fun. Like, he used to make activities, where you could, actually, memorise the words". Male student (M31) said: "sometimes we do Kahoot! yeah, so that's fun for me". Male student (M36) said: "Mr-X's classes, I have to admit we learnt a lot and it was pretty fun ... Mr-Y's classes there's no motivation. It's pretty boring, and that's probably because he doesn't put any effort into it". About Mr-X's classes, he emphasised: "his lessons are fun. Like ... you would wanna be there. It's not a lesson. 'Oh! It's that class again. It's Arabic class. I don't wanna be here!' it's, it's ... like, I used to look forward to his classes".

5.4.2.8. Student appraisals of teachers

Students held teachers responsible for the quality of their education, and data suggest that L2LE are inconsistent and teacher-dependent. Male student (M36) highlighted that: "*the*

teacher forms the class. If, if you have a good teacher, then you would have a good class. If you have a bad teacher, then you have a bad class”. Female student (A8) said learning: “depends on the way the teacher's teaching you”. Female student (M27) said: “in my old Arabic class, we used to do role-plays, but as I said, *it depends on the teacher*”. Male student (M36) said: “no fun things. Those things existed in (Mr-X)’s class, not in (Mr-Y)'s class.” Female student (M26) explained that there were: “lots of Arabic classes. Current one, it’s so-so. It's kind of okay. The before one not so quiet. So, *it depends on the teacher*.” She emphasised that like many other aspects of the L2LE, class management: “depends on like what type of power the teacher has.” In the following subsections, students’ observations about teachers’ methods and personalities are presented.

5.4.2.8.1. Teachers’ methods and skills

The students made four key observations about teachers’ methods and skills.

Firstly, students explained that teachers used teacher-centred approaches focused on reading and translating. Students did not state that teachers used a specific language teaching method. However, aspects of the grammar-translation method³³ are recognisable in their descriptions. Facets of the grammar-translation method were also seen in classroom observations. Female student (M24) said: “the methods: he talks to us; he puts it on the board [projects the prescribed text], and he writes on the board.” Male student (M14) said: “We have booklets in front of us, obviously, and then he projects onto the screen and then he writes in English on the side, yeah”. Female student (A2) said: “she just writes stuff on the board, we copy it down, and she explains it”. Female student (A1): “so she gives us the booklets, and then she tells us to read”. She added: “like, half of us don't know how to read. So, she starts reading herself. And then, she starts writing what she's reading on the board and explaining what it is. But no one really understands, and she'll be like, ‘this is’, I don't know, ‘feminine words thing’. And we don't really understand what that means!” Male student (M32) said: “he writes down what's on the whiteboard, like, what's the text is. And then he translates it and tells us to write it down. And then, he just does more of that”. Male student (M19) said: “they write in [on] the board, and then after that, they say like, you have to memorise it”. Female student (A10) said: “she will translate every word until we

³³ The grammar–translation method is a method of teaching foreign languages derived from the classical method of teaching Ancient Greek and Latin. Please see: <https://www.tefl.net/methods/grammar-translation.php> for a brief description of the method.

understand and then she will ask us to do our own work”. Male student (M38) reflected: “We had to read out of our textbooks, and it's difficult that way”.

Secondly, several students complained that teachers' explanations lacked clarity and that they did not focus on target L2 content. Female student (M17) said: “she goes to the board. She writes it down. It's like she doesn't explain clearly. It's ... like, *you still have some missingness*”. Male student (M21) wanted his Arabic teacher to be more like his Maths teacher, saying: “when he's explaining something, he just does it straight to the point, doesn't like start explaining something else, that's off topics. Stays on point”. Female student (M20) said: “[the] teacher that I have right now, umm ... yessish”. She elaborated: we're not learning that many words”. She added: “the other one felt like we were just cramming all the words. I wasn't even cramming it; I couldn't even remember one”. She added: “he would like, mostly write, and then we'd copy. And then we'd be confused. And then we'd copy some more. And then we'd be gone. And then we'd still copy more”.

Thirdly, it emerged that time management, lesson planning and organisation were an issue. Male student (M38) said: “I don't think they're, they're that organised from what they're learning [teaching]. They just come in and wait a little bit till the class is settled down.” Next, they “put the page on the projector, and ... learn [teach] off that”. Male student (M40) said: “sometimes we run out of time, actually. ‘Cause ... reading and answering questions. We don't finish the questions on time. So, I count that as, yeah, over time”. Male student (M36) explained: “like, I'd probably say a big difference why he's (Mr-X) probably more [much] better than (Mr-Y)” is that he “uses his time, more [much] better”.

Finally, many students complained that the teachers could not control the class. Male student (A7) said: “some of them go under the table, some of them scream at each other”, and the teacher “keep[s] telling them off”. He added that she: “just threatens to call parents” but “hasn't called any parents in our class, yet. She just threatened. And then like, for five minutes, then they'll be quiet. And then again, they'll start doing nonsense”. He said: “she also moves them to other places,” and, “she writes your name, umm ... if she puts three X's, then she will call your parents. But no one's really done that”. He added: “she doesn't really know how to control them, and how to manage their behaviours” and “they'll still just keep mucking around. And she won't do much about it”. Male student (M35) said: “a student jumped out of the window and was just playing basketball the whole period, then he didn't even turn up to LOTE”. He said: “the teacher might not take any action” He added: “one kid

was just behaving so bad”, and, “I told the teacher one day that he was playing basketball outside, and the teacher was so fed up, he was just like, ‘I don't even want him to come to my class, so I don't take responsibility. I don't care what he does’...”.

5.4.2.8.2. Reaction to teachers' natures

Data revealed that students were also influenced by the teacher's personality and apparent investment in the educational process and in the students. For example, students sensed insincerity. Female student (A4) said: “we've also known her for like so long” and “she tries to be very loving but uhh... *it comes across as fake*”. Male student (M36) said: “[when] students see that you're like, they see ... like you're almost fooling [around], they'll probably just not take you seriously”. He said: “you know the type of teachers where no one takes them seriously?” He added: “like, they *act* serious. But then like, everyone can see they're serious, but they don't take them seriously?” Students highlighted three significant negative traits, and one teacher was described in a positive light.

5.4.2.8.2.1. Negative characteristics

Firstly, students disliked unsupportive teachers. Female student (A5) said: “not all the teachers that I have had over the past three years were like, actually, like, good at teaching Arabic to me. They would just give us a worksheet, ‘Finish this, bring it back tomorrow.’ That's all they'd do.” She elaborated: “they weren't very helpful. When I asked for help, they'd be like, ‘just read the question again’, I'm like ... that doesn't explain anything to me!” Male student (M39) said: “I had ... like, a teacher last year that I didn't, like, understand much.” He added: “he didn't help me as much.” He added that the teacher: “didn't explain. He didn't find time for me. *I tried to find time with him, but he didn't find time with me*”. Therefore: “I wasn't like, to the best of my ability”. Male student (A7) said that his teacher did not care about the students: “you can see by the faces [of the students], that they don't know what it means” but “the teacher will look at them” and “then just keep talking”. He explained: “she knows Arabic, and she expects everybody to know Arabic too. Some of the kids don't know Arabic. So, like they just stay there in class and just wish for the class to end ‘cause, she won't really explain what it means to them”. He said: “if the kids also want to get extra help, for instance, [at] lunch, the teacher is not always in her room, and you don't usually know where she goes”.

Secondly, students disliked teachers who were uninvested. Male student (M29) said: “he’ll only follow the curriculum” and “he won’t do anything special.” He added: “*it’s like they’re forced to do it!* I don’t know why.” He stressed: “*they don’t enjoy teaching it, obviously.*” When probed, he affirmed: “yeah, the teacher doesn’t enjoy it.” He said: “I had him for Maths in Year 7, and he used to... like when he used to mark the test, he used to make a lot of mistakes. A lot!” He added: “some students don’t have books yet, so he takes pictures uhh ... during the class time, which takes about fifteen minutes. And he, he takes like, photos of every page and then he puts it on the board.” He laughed and said, “but it’s pretty good for us because we have free time during that time”. Male student (M36) said: “[he] is usually late ... one time, he came halfway. [The] period [had] almost finished”. He explained that when students see that a: “teacher’s not caring, they start to come late and then the class gets off like that”. He emphasised professionalism, saying: “he has a good heart. He’s a good man. And he like, he jokes around.” He added that: “he wants to let us learn. But he, just, *doesn’t do what he has to do*, [to] make us learn, yeah”. Male student (M36) said: “sometimes, he didn’t have the book even. He takes a picture of it on his iPad, and then he goes into class. And then he brings the iPad over to class ... plays it on that board there. And then just reads off that. Nothing! It’s, it’s been like that the whole year!”

Thirdly, students responded poorly to teachers who disrespected them, were unduly harsh, or excessively strict. Female student (M27) said: “for me it’s boring, ‘cause she treats us like, I don’t know, kids. I think because she’s a primary teacher too, and it’s annoying!”. She added: “for example, if you see an ant and someone takes it off, and you smile or laugh at it. They’ll tell you off like, so much. It just gets annoying!” Female student (M17) said: “the teacher has finished her everything then she sits down, and I don’t know correcting papers or whatever she does, and then if you cough, you die! She doesn’t let you breathe. *It’s our right to breathe!*” Male student (M36) said: “some teachers they see [us] as like *a student*, and some of the teachers see [us] as like more than a student. Or, just uhh, like a close person.” He rephrased saying: “Like, basically ... *some teachers* just like, *respect you more than others*”. Male student (M39) said: “the students never listened to him much, and, then he gets angry, he starts yelling. *Yelling!* And then we start the class like that. Like, it’s not a good way to start!” He added: “he gets angry and then for the rest of the class, like, a bit grumpy, and this affects the learning for us”. He expanded: “if you like, ask him a question, he might be like, didn’t you already know the answer!” Male student (M40) said: “if I ask him a question or that person asks me a question, he’ll just get you in trouble. You

just get in trouble, straight away.” He added: “if you ask ... then they would just point to like, ‘you weren’t listening, and then they’ll kick you out”. He added: “people get kicked out, [but] when I see it, I’m like they weren’t doing anything”.

5.4.2.8.2.2. Positive traits of Mr-X

Students responded well to the opposite positive traits. Mr-X manifested these positive traits. Only a few of his students participated in the research. Nonetheless, some useful explanations of his positive traits emerged. He was deemed supportive, caring, invested, and professional. In my observations of his lessons, I found that students responded well to him, were mostly respectful, and completed their work or participated in tasks.

Firstly, male student (M39) shed light on the supportive and caring attitude of Mr-X. He said: “if you need help or anything, he will help you straight away! And he will tell you like how to do. And he’ll discuss it with you”. He added: “he even finds time for us. Like ... maybe a lunch session or a recess. And he says he’ll ‘come a few minutes’, ‘I’ll explain it to you’. Yeah, that’s what I like, Alḥamdulillah”.³⁴ He elaborated: “that’s making my Arabic better”. Male student (M36) suggested that Mr-X’s caring attitude extended to the way he managed disruptions. He said: “he would actually deal with us,” or “escort us to the local manager’s office” whereas the other teacher “would just tell you to go there, and he wouldn’t care. He doesn’t care if they don’t come back for the whole lesson”.

Secondly, male student (M39) expanded on the efficiency and demeanour of Mr-X. He said: “We stand up for him, already, and he greets us, we greet him. We sit down, he marks the roll, and we get into it. No yelling”. He elaborated: “so, we start in a good manner, not grumpy, like uhh, not yelling”. He also explained that this teacher did not belittle or shame students: “if you don’t understand anything, he will tell us to raise your hand, like, ‘so don’t, don’t be afraid to like raise your hand, say what you don’t understand’. So, I feel like confident, like putting my hand up, and I don’t feel ashamed or anything”. Male student (M36) underscored his professionalism, saying: “Mr-X... is not the type of guy to like, joke around and stuff”. Rather, “Mr-X just walks in and starts doing stuff.” He added: “I can tell he prepared the lessons pretty well. And then he, he taught it to us pretty well. And for those who tried to, you know, misbehave, they didn’t”.

³⁴ Alḥamdulillah: Praise be to God

5.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings for RQ2: **What do a-MLA make of their L2 learning experiences?** Firstly, the findings suggested that the majority of students were unable to realise their goals or acquire meaningful proficiency. Secondly, data suggested that students' disillusionment and pragmatism guided matriculation choices, which led to the abandonment of Arabic in senior secondary. Thirdly, results revealed that students felt that the way programs were structured was not conducive to meaningful acquisition. Problematic aspects of structuring included timetabling, level management, and sharing lessons with more advanced Arabic-speakers. Students described their lessons and the nature of learning in great detail. Lessons focused on reading, writing and translation. Students found texts difficult and complained about the dearth of supplementary resources and activities. Students found Arabic lessons boring. A few students also described teachers' lenient assessments. A small minority of students described a few rare favourable experiences (such as watching videos, playing online quiz games, and doing activities). These were attributed to one secondary teacher. The students appraised the methods and skills of their teachers. They revealed that the teachers' personalities or attitudes influenced them as well.

The following chapter presents the findings for RQ3: **How would a-MLA like their L2 learning experiences improved?**

Chapter 6. *Students' recommended changes*

The previous chapter presented the findings related to students' L2LE. It showed that most of the participants were dissatisfied with their L2LE. This chapter presents findings for RQ3: **How would a-MLA like their L2 learning experiences improved?** To this end, the chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section outlines the recommendations made for the improvement of the structural aspects of programs. The second section explains how students want L2LE improved. The third section outlines students' recommendations for the improvement of the teachers' performance. The full spectrum of recommendations made by students constitutes a plan for change that can enhance AL2M.

6.1. Improving program structuring

Data revealed that the structuring of programs needs to be improved in three main ways: (1) allocating more lessons and spreading them out; (2) managing level streaming better and adding remedial classes; (3) making Arabic an elective subject. The following subsections explicate students' perspectives on these points.

6.1.1. More "spread out" lessons

Many students were frustrated with the minimal time allocated to Arabic, and with the way lessons were timetabled (see section 5.4.1.1). They indicated that the current situation hindered L2 acquisition. Many students wanted additional lessons, but their perspectives differed slightly depending on whether they were taking one or two lessons per week.

At School 3, students had a single 75-minutes long lesson of Arabic per week. Male student (M15) said that it should: "not [be] one [per] week". Likewise, female student (M24) stated: "I actually want more lessons, and we have like, one". She added: "I'm in love with Arabic! And I wanna learn more. And I'm passionate about it, but I can't like, get my resources." Other students were specific. Female student (M27) said: "We should see a teacher two or three times a week. And like, one week should be one topic. Or like, two weeks should be one topic. To understand what's actually going on." Female student (M16) said: "three times a week, or a little more. Because like when we go back to next lesson, it'd [be] easier for us to understand". She elaborated on the length of the lesson, saying it should be: "40 minutes [long], [so] we're not like, learning too much. We're learning the right thing.

So, it's like it would be easier for us to remember". Female student (M17) emphasised that: "if we did have a choice or something! Instead of having like a big block of 75 minutes continuously, [it would be better if] we broke it [up into] two times a week". Female student (M25) said: "I know it's a lot. Like the timetable is like a lot. But I mean if we can find time for more than just one lesson of Arabic per week that would be great". She added: "at least two". She explained: "Usually, the maximum of a subject I have is about three ... four". She added: "I get that the timetable is very... you know?" so, "at least two maybe" because "one per week", "doesn't really [help]".

At Schools 2 and 4, the Year 7-9 students took two Arabic lessons per week; each was 45-minutes long. Several students explained that more lessons were needed but emphasised that these should not fall on consecutive days. Male student (A7) said: "I'd say, three lessons a week, three to four lessons a week". He elaborated that lessons need to be: "like, one day apart. So, three: Monday, Wednesday and Friday". Female student (A5) said: "at least like three or four lessons a week. Or, like, maybe a double. Like, [a] double lesson. So, you get more time to actually like, at least progress. And it gives the teacher more time to focus on what you need to improve". Female student (A1) said: "Three or four". Male student (M40) said that he had two lessons, one on Monday the other on Tuesday. He said: "I think they're too close." He was open to more lessons but focused on the timetabling of lessons. He said: "Like, if there was [were] three, I don't mind" but "then Monday and like another day, not Monday, Tuesday". Female student (A10) explained: "it's not enough" because "she says she wants to do more with us, but there is not enough time. So, like, we feel sorry for her. So, we have to like, keep up [with] the work. So, we are doing it faster, and some of us are very lost!" Female student (A6) was open to after-hours lessons: "Saturday or Sunday classes. Yeah, we could do like, afterschool classes" to help students learn.

6.1.2. Managing students' levels

Many students indicated that they struggled to keep up with learning and with their Arab peers (see sections 5.4.1.2 and 5.4.1.3). Many students believed that they were assigned to the wrong level, and comparisons to Arab peers often led to negative self-concepts. Persistent learning struggles led to anxiety, frustration, and demotivation. Female student (A5) said: "They speak Arabic at home. So, I feel like ... they're not scared of going to a lesson". She added: "[but those who] don't know Arabic completely, they are like ... 'Oh! I don't think I got the homework right, I'm kind of scared to go in.'..." She explained: "I feel

like, *everyone has mixed feelings about Arabic*, because they all wanna learn”, but are like, “what if I can't do it?” Female student (A11) said: “for the ones which [who] know how to speak Arabic, it's not difficult for them. But like, for the ones which [who] don't, it's actually pretty difficult.” As for herself, she said: “I think Arabic is pretty hard”. Male student (M37) was doubted his abilities. He said: “it's difficult”. “I can read fluently” and “I can write”, but “understanding ... and speaking ... it's difficult for me”. When probed about improvements, he said: “I don't know if you can, but like, uhh ... In sha Allah I can learn something!”

A few students emphasised that the students' language ability should be the point of departure for program design and teaching. Female student (A2) said they should start: “from like, what the person is”. Female students (M17) explained that learning should start from what students know and also challenge them. She said: “like, I want something that I can understand, but then I need to do something to achieve the thing”. Female student (M18) said lessons should be structured logically from the most basic level of acquiring the script to the more complicated topics, such as grammar. She said: “for the beginners, you start off, like, just with the alphabet. They perfect that. Then like, the writing. You start perfecting that, and then like, you go on like slowly, slowly increasing. So, like explain to them like, there's masculine, there is feminine, there is this and that”.

A few students suggested solutions such as remedial lessons, separate classes for Arabs and MLA, and content differentiation. Several students combined these solutions. Female student (A3) said: “they should split the class”. She clarified: “[they should] take me in another class”. She added: “my level is lower than the other people in the class,” because “their Arabic is better than me [mine], and it was only my first term.” She said it is: “better if they just started from the beginning” and “put the people in the same level. So, they can do ... they can follow the instruction in the same level”. Female student (A8) felt that additional or separate classes would be useful. She said:

I think that actually might help because then the teacher can focus on one type of like, level. And so, if there were different classes, then the people who don't know Arabic very well, they just focus on letters, so, overall, they're like improving in that part of what they're doing. And people who already know Arabic they get to learn new things and then try to improve what they already know.

Female student (A4) said: “if you come from an Australian school and you come to Year 7, they're not gonna go back and say, ‘OK, you have to learn the alphabet now’. It's like, ‘read that word off the board’, and it's like you don't know.” She then suggested: “if

they had like, within a year level,” like “people [who] can't speak” or “they have no idea”, then they should be “learning like, a lower level”. Female student (A3) said: “it should be better if I have another booklet”. Female student (A2) said: “I'd like to change how ... the booklets are the same”. She added: “for the people who are good at Arabic, they just take it so easily”, and “people who don't know Arabic they take it so hard. And it's kind of irritating how they just know it so easily, while we're struggling”. Female student (A4) said: “I think that would have been a good idea [organising classes by level] because you know they'd have like one worksheet that everyone is supposed to do, but not everyone has the ability to do that worksheet.” Female student (A5) said: “[the teacher could] give me a little bit more. Like, extra. Like, specifically going on remembering and memorising the letters and then joining them, and then sounding them out”. She added: “I have to learn like these simple things. So, along with the work that she gives like the whole class, maybe give me like a little bit extra, or something.” Female student (A8) said: “you know how there's different types of people that know Arabic and stuff?” She added that if you have “a booklet or task for us to do. Then it would be in the middle for everyone,” so it is “easy for everyone to do”.

6.1.3. Make Arabic an Elective

A minority of students suggested that Arabic should be made an elective subject much earlier than senior secondary so that only students who are interested in learning Arabic enrol in the course. The need for and importance of choice and autonomy permeated these views. Female student (M12) explained that the school should: “not [be] pressuring someone to do it”. Female student (M24) felt strongly about this for religious reasons. She stressed student’s autonomy, agency, and student voice. She said: “people who don't wanna learn and interrupt and muck around and take things for granted shouldn't do that because they're taking away [our] right”. She believed that: “Allah will punish them for this. And I don't want them to be punished. So, if they don't wanna learn, just leave them. Give people forms if they wanna learn Arabic, then they would sign the form and return it. *Them personally: Not their parents.* Not their parents’ signature. Just that student”. She emphasised: “[ask if they] wanna learn. If yes, okay. If no, then let them be. Because then they're gonna be like, ‘Arabic is being forced on me! I don't wanna learn it! It's so bad!’ But I don't want people to think about Arabic that way.” Male student (M40) said: “if we had other choices that will be the best”. He added: “like, a bunch of other choices and languages”. Male student (M35) believed that: “when people hear the word Arabic, like, LOTE class, they feel very depressed, you know.

They like, should add a little bit more. Instead of just doing Turkish [and] Arabic, why don't they do like Japanese or something, you know?" He explained that if there were "choice, a lot of people would start choosing Arabic".

6.2. Enhancing the L2LE

Students focused on the improvement of their Arabic L2LE. They suggested six things: (1) structuring the curriculum; (2) using more appropriate texts (3) adding collaborative work and activities; (4) taking a 'hands-on' approach to instruction; (5) enriching content by using audio-visual and computer-assisted language learning (CALL) resources; (6) and incorporating communication and culture.

6.2.1. Structure of the curriculum

A few students stressed the need for well-structured learning content. Firstly, these students wanted the content to be introduced incrementally to gradually build their knowledge. Female student (M18) explained: "*I feel like the way we learned English, that's how we should learn Arabic.*" She added: "they should follow that same layout". She emphasised: "treat us like we're babies. Basically, like we don't know anything!" Male student (M34) said: "like, [start with] the alphabets and go all the way up to words". He said we went "from the letters, then we went straight into ... join together, like, words [syntax]. So, I think we should start from the beginning and then slowly rise up".

Secondly, students wanted the Arabic program to be organised into cohesive units of work. Female student (A8) said: "[the] work; I think that if they like, stage it out. So, like, they'd go from beginners. In a booklet, you would do text. And then it would help you like separate the words and stuff. [Then] understand the meaning. And then it would go like, in different subjects [or] stuff in Arabic. Do you know what I mean?" She elaborated that: "right now, I'm not really sure what it's focusing on." She emphasised: "if they did it *more in order, from like the easier tasks to getting harder*, then I think it will be more easier for kids to understand what's going on."

Thirdly, students emphasised the need for building a foundational vocabulary base. Male student (M40) identified that: "they should have started off, [by] like teach[ing] me the words". He reiterated: "they should have taught us a lot of words, like, basic words at the beginning." He added: "words, and [then] slowly, slowly, teach reading after, you know? Like, after we learn the words first, then teach us the reading. So, that we can understand

what we're reading". Female student (M23) said: "I just think we need to do like, simpler words first" and "the teacher has to make sure we understand them. Then we move on."

Fourthly, a minority stressed that the curriculum should include time for consolidation and practice. Male student (M14) said: "once we start a new topic ... maybe not rush it. Maybe have a bit more activities on that. Just, so you thoroughly understand the words and the things". Female student (M18) said: "give like introductions first", then "more activities, you know?" She added: "activities, they would, like ... give us practice. But I feel like, if we got homework, then that would have made like our practice stronger. 'Cause like during exam time, we were like, 'what's this?'..." Male student (M28) felt learning should be supplemented by adequate revision. He said: "every single lesson, I would bring a revision worksheet, so they can always not forget the words." He added: "write like, every single lesson, what we are learning, what we are covering, we revise what we did last lesson." So, "[students] don't forget". Female student (M25) felt that learning was shallow. She said: "if I could change it: it would be going deeper into it".

Finally, one student emphasised the need for structured textbooks. Female student (A5) connected the unstructured learning to the reliance on photocopied worksheets. She said: "get at least like, a textbook that has a lot of information", "then you could easily follow it. 'Cause it'd have English, and then it'd have Arabic. And then like, you could actually understand what it's like talking about". She said that for other subjects: "we got textbooks, I'm like, 'this makes so much more sense to me now' because everything ... is explained in chapters. And it's all like specific." She added that this would help with: "focusing on like, things in Arabic", as everything would be in "one book and you can always like, go back to it when you need help. You don't always have to wait for the next day to ask the teacher about one specific question. You could always like, open your book and be like, 'OK! now I get this; now I can do my homework' ..."

6.2.2. Level and nature of the text

Given the focus on reading and translation in most lessons, a few students made recommendations directly related to readings. Firstly, a minority suggested the use of more L2-appropriate texts that are levelled incrementally. Male student (M35) said: "[last year] it was sentences, letters" but this year "*the jump was huge*. Because I open this book expecting to see something a little harder than last year" not "full Arabic paragraphs, [like] reading a newspaper". Female student (A1) said: "We should start from like, the ... first level; learning

our alphabets and then like, learning how to join them and everything. Instead of a straight jump into Year 9 level for like an Arab country, or something like that. Because we don't know it.” She emphasised that the texts were: “Arab country standard, yeah”.

Secondly, several students advised that booklets (or textbooks) should include English instructions and translations. Female student (A5) asserted that “worksheets like, should at least have” the “English translation of it”, “because half [of] the lesson we're ... like, translating all the questions, all the words, all the paragraphs”. She stressed: “if we had that already, the English translation, we would have so much more time to focus on what we actually have to improve in”. Male student (M15) said: “they can give short passages, like two paragraphs, and state the meaning under the Arabic words”. Female student (A1) said it would be helpful: “if there was a bit more English [in the booklets]”, like “[if] questions were in English, like explaining what to do in English”. Male student (M39) said: “I'd like the textbooks to have a bit of English inside. So, it will be easier for us to learn”. Female student (M24) said: “even with these resources, a little bit of like English would be better”. Male student (M38) stated: “some parts in English, some parts in Arabic”, so people “can read the English part and get to do it”. Male student (M28) said the books: “[have] everything [in] Arabic. Maybe put a little bit of English in there”. Male student (M36) said: “I would probably keep that book, but then add English translations.” He added: “so, the students could like, you know, find the book easier” because if “something's too hard, then students are more likely to give up”.

6.2.3. Please “Change it up a bit!”

Data revealed that lessons revolved around reading and translation of texts. However, learning was not supplemented by additional resources and activities (see section 5.4.2.3). The data suggests that most students desperately wanted to break the monotony of Arabic learning and felt that introducing variety (in terms of content and tasks) would be more beneficial educationally and would also lead to greater engagement.

Male student (M33) said that by way of improvement: “I would just make sure that there was a lot of different things in the class”. When probed, he said: “just not the same thing ... like, all the time”. He said variety means that: “everyone could be more interested”. He stressed: “mix it up, yeah!” Male student (M31) said adding various activities would be useful because when the “teacher explains to you what it means, it just gets out of your head” and “you don't understand anymore”. Male student (M39) said: “I'd like us to try new

activities. Maybe like once a month, or maybe once a fortnight". Male student (M38) said: "the more fun the class is, the more the kids will have fun and really, really enjoy it and take this class seriously". Female student (A11) said that this would help educationally. She said: "it would be way more interesting if we have like PowerPoints", or "way more fun activities". She added: "doing, like, some other stuff. Not only in a booklet. It would be way more interesting, and it would be way more like, educational". Likewise, male student (M30) said: "the activities and the PowerPoints would help me" because "it's kind of like, more enjoyable and it helps a lot more". Female student (A2) said: "I'd just like to do activities. I don't wanna sta[y] in my seat, just slumped down, umm ... copying". Female student (A1) compared Arabic to other subjects. She said in the other subjects: "we research, [we] do presentations, everything. Arabic we just sit there listen to her speak". Male student (M40) said: "change it up a bit".

A minority of students stressed that variety should extend to reading tasks and reading content. Female student (M16) wanted the teaching of literacy to utilise various approaches that would: "help us understand. Rather than she [her] just giving us worksheets [and] explaining what they are". A minority of students believed that religious content should be added to their reading curriculum. Female student (A6) explained: "I feel like they don't teach"... "using the Qur'an and the words in it." She added: "I feel they just teach you, it's like only one part of it. Like, just to speak it and read it, but not like the way the Qur'an is like, read and written". She said that teachers should "use like the Qur'an and bring it in. So, the ... teachers select words from the Qur'an to help us understand a bit more of the Qur'an". Female student (M18) said that: "even for the beginners, they should add like some Qur'anic elements in it". She elaborated, "discuss an Ayah or the Tafseer or something. That'll be good, so you should add religious, like elements in it".

6.2.4. More "hands-on" learning

Nearly all students were invested in the notion of 'hands-on learning' as a means of improving L2LE. Male student (M21) said: "it could be more *hands-on*". Students' concept of hands-on learning related to 'using Arabic' in collaborative tasks, games, and interaction. Students contrasted 'hands-on learning'³⁵ to the paper-and-pen teacher-centred approaches dominating current L2LE. Female student (M18) said: a bit more like activity", "rather than

³⁵ For example: task-based learning, group work, movement, and conversations.

like, sitting in class”. She explained that learning should be: “more activity-wise rather than like, theory, you hear me?” She added: “the students of the last generation” are “different to like, this generation. We wanna be out and about. We wanna like, get up and learn”.

Students offered various explanations of how this approach would manifest in terms of their L2LE. Female student (M13) explained: “currently we just like read it from the book, we answer [questions]”. She added: “I think it needs to be more on-hands” like when learning about “jobs, we can get our parents to come in, and they can talk about their jobs. Or we [can] talk about our parents’ jobs. We like, sit in a talk[ing] circle, circle and then talk about it”. She added: “[or] we [could] become a teacher for a day, for primary students”. Male student (34) suggested the use of: “board games”, “where you sit together” so “you can learn together”. He added that teachers would facilitate activities: “you’d learn, and then if you don’t know what it means, the teacher can help you”. Male student (M39) suggested a game: “everyone’s in a row and have a game. Like, a challenge”. He described the game: “you say, like, ‘what’s this word mean?’, or like, ‘how do you pronounce this word?’ And then you get it right, you go back to the line. You’re still in! You get it wrong; you go out! Like, you have a few lives. I reckon a game like that would be fun”. He added: “that’s a game I’ve been wanting to play”. He also proposed topic-related excursions: “I reckon there should be an excursion for like every topic”, “so, it will help us”. Male student (M34) also suggested that excursions would help. He said: “an excursion to the zoo”, “like, what animals [are] there you just write their names”.

Cutting-across students’ suggestions were requests for collaborative and play-based learning. Male student (31) said: “don’t wanna do worksheets” and “don’t wanna ... work by myself, I like to work in groups”. Female student (M16) stressed the need for: “interactive learning”, “rather than just her explaining things on the board”. She said: “When we’re sitting in a group, then all of us can share what we don’t get, and what we get, and that kind of helps each other learn. But like when it’s just her explaining” then “we can’t really help each other”. She stressed that: “[the] teacher obviously doesn’t get everything that I get and don’t understand. And my friends would understand me better”. Female student (A10) was also keen on collaborative game-like learning. She said: “We could play games. It’s funny. And like, we play cards, so [for] example, I will read. I will show. I will ask you a question and try to answer back in Arabic”. She added: “[ot the teacher will] call us out and we’ll just say

a word. And each of us will say a word, and then see what comes out of it. So, like, we'll create a sentence”.

Many students highlighted the need for oral communication. Female student (A6) said: “we could improve learning Arabic if they like, spoke it to us”. She added: “[we can] practice [by] doing ... plays, and stuff like that, in Arabic”. She said that if the teacher: “spoke like, somethings in like, Arabic so we'll have to guess what she's saying, yeah? That would get me more interested”. Male student (M38) said: “activities where we talk to other people”. Female student (A4) said: “conversation.” Female student (A8) said: “group activities to connect with your fellow students. Because most people just go to the classroom do Arabic, and then they don't really go outside and speak Arabic as such. So, I think if they did it more in the classroom, then they'll get used to speaking to other people, you know? Like, [in] public”. She exemplified: “if we do show-and-tell in Arabic. It could boost up someone's confidence. And, in a way, they can learn new things. Like, what they're talking about and stuff”. Female student (M27) said: “I would want more activities, and probably more interaction in like, talking in Arabic”. She added: “When we're learning [about] sports equipment: like, we can go outside and physically, you know, be like this is this”. She added: “We could create our own little cue cards during class time. Or like, some game we can create ourselves. Like, all groups can have their own game, and we can keep on swapping”.

A couple of students suggested creative and tactile learning activities. Male student (M19) suggested drawing language. He said: “if we get like a paper and like, and we have to draw it, and then like write the thingy, that would be like actually, more fun.” Female student (M23) wanted to draw and do tactile activities as she did in primary: “we had to draw like, a fruit ... on one paper, and on the other paper write the Arabic word for it. And then we had to laminate them. And then present them in class. So, that would be like, a fun thing I would want to do”. She added: “[or] a poster or something. So, it's more colourful”.

6.2.5. Enriching learning content

The majority of students wanted their learning to be supplemented by audio-visual materials and CALL³⁶ resources such as PowerPoint slides or online games. Many felt that this would increase engagement and enhance retention. Female student (A10) said: “video, PowerPoint”, “something that would make us... [think] it's interesting. ‘Cause nowadays

³⁶ CALL: Computer-assisted language learning

kids are always on technology” and if you do it “the boring way”, “it’s going to be like, boring for us to keep on reading and reading. We need like, some sort of video to make it look funny. So, that we can keep it in our heads”. Female students (A8) said that teachers need to use PowerPoint slides so students: “would understand it more thoroughly.” She elaborated that: “on the board, you explain it once. But then you might explain some points only, and then in the PowerPoint, it could be different points, that could help give like, more understanding.” Even one of the resistant students, male student (M30), stated that such content: “would help me”, “make me enjoy it”, and “possibly make me more interested in Arabic than what it is. Than what’s going on today”.

Several students stressed the need for videos. Female student (M24) said: “I don’t think like, many people find reading as efficient, or as important as they would videos”. She explained that with videos, the: “learning pace is more”. She added that: “videos like, attract many people. So, I would recommend [that] our teacher just shows us sometimes.” Female student (A9) emphasised the importance of videos, saying: “if you see other people speaking the language” then “you will learn”. Female student (A4) said: “by my age”, “you don’t wanna study that much. It’s more like of playing around, like. So, if you put on videos that are like interesting” it would be “learning Arabic, where you see Arabic being said, you see the subtitles with Arabic on them, that helps as well”. Male student (M34) recommended videos: “in Arabic and translated in English”. Female student (M13) stated: “I don’t think we have enough videos”. Male student (M40) believed such content would be engaging but doubted that teachers would make the changes. He said: “ [It] would be fun, but you know, I don’t think they’re gonna do that”.

Many students underscored CALL resources. Female student (M27) stressed the need for: “more interactive things, rather just writing and reading”. Male student (M39) suggested that CALL would be useful in building oral-aural skills. He said: “you can use maybe the computer, or whatever [technology]. Maybe you can use it to listen to it [Arabic], and then you can speak with it and then learn it”. Male student (M38) said: “interactivities on the computers” such as, “listening to someone actually speaking Arabic. Like cartoon videos, something more fun and enjoyable”. Female student (A1) suggested using computer labs for a range of learning tasks. She said: “there’s the computer room. [We can] research stuff about it [Arabic]”, “learn like alphabets to actually know what I’m reading. [To] know how to pronounce the words and the letters. And like know meanings of words”. She said: “[we]

have computers at [the] computer room, and we have like Arabic keyboards that we can [use to] type in Arabic". Male student (M21) said: "interactive. Maybe like, on the iPad, maybe it'll be more than just text in a black and white book". Male student (M33) said that online quiz games would: "be really fun". He added: "Kahoot!³⁷ You know Kahoot? We've never done that in Arabic, nah." He added: "I think that'd be fun". Male student (M14) asked: "how about like, you know Kahoot!...?" ... "it's a fun way to learn".

6.2.6. Conversations and culture

Several students wanted to be exposed to Arabic culture and to interact with Arabic speakers. Female student (A10) wanted to connect with Arabic at a deeper level: "like, how it all started? Like, what's the history behind Arabic? Yeap". Male student (M34) said: "start from the beginning of the Arab culture". Female student (M18) requested: "excursions. Or, like, I think there should be incursions". As in, "great Arabic-speakers coming to our school", and demonstrating "how they can speak and all that. So, like poets or something. And then like, that'd probably inspire [us]". Female student (A11) said that if they bring: "teachers which [who] know how to speak Arabic. [Or] like, visitors, if they can get them to our school and speak a bit more about Arabic and stuff. I think it would be way more educational. And it would be way more interesting for the students". She said that: "students will like, learn more Arabic. Like, other than the lessons in class". Female student (A6) said: "find people who speak Arabic and like, try saying a sentence like, 'Hi! my name is whatever'... 'Do you speak Arabic?' And like, have a conversation with people to see if they understand you." She added that the school should: "gather people from different places", "that speak Arabic". Female student (A2) said students should: "talk to learn Arabic. Like, how to greet each other, how to say good morning, and go out, that would be nice. I think that will help us a lot". Male student (M36) also said: "We can bring in people, you know, with an Arabic background. And we can do some, you know, some activities. Or they can have a presentation or a fun game show", that "they prepared". Male student (35) had big dreams of visiting an Arab country to learn about the culture. He said: "in other schools they do Arabic" and "you would actually go on a wonderful trip to an Arabic country, to go learn from the people who actually live like that. There would be far more stuff [to learn]. And that would really help shape the way the people think about it, yeah".

³⁷ Please see: <https://kahoot.com/>

6.3. Recommendations for teachers

Students made observations about teachers' methods, personalities, and investment (see sections 5.4.2.8). Students were generally dissatisfied with teachers' performance. Male student (M36) said: "[to] fix the class?"... "I would get rid of Mr-Y!" Female student (A1) said that to improve L2LE, we should: "*change the teacher!*" Male student (M19) explained that his: "classmates used to say, 'Oh! this teacher is so lame!', 'Why did we even have this teacher?' and like, all that stuff". Male student (M29) said: "the whole class waits ... until the period ends. This is how bored we are." Male student (M35) highlighted that: "more qualified teachers" are needed. He said: "[those who] teach Arabic, yeah, as [a] specialty". He added: "like, teachers who grew up in it", and know "how to interact with the students". Students had six leading suggestions for the improvement of teachers' performance.

Firstly, the teachers' dominant 'teaching style' requires change. Male student (M30) said teachers should: "[use a] different teaching style" to "[support] students that are incapable [incapable]". Female student (M26) stated that teachers need to: "make it more engaging", and likewise, male student (M29) suggested that teachers: "*change the style of the teaching*". Female student (A6) advised: "[teachers could] encourage us to be more interested in learning". Female student (M16) said: "the teacher can make the lessons more interesting". Female student (M12) said lessons need: "to be a bit more fun". Male student (M36) suggested that the teacher: "mend the classroom environment", "make [the] classes more fun", and "not [as] intense". He added that if teachers did that, "when you come into the class, you're gonna feel like more energetic. If you had a bad day, then it's gonna be a good time for you". He elaborated that it would be good to finish: "the day on [with] a good class. Like, where you feel happy".

Secondly, the teachers should explain clearly, focus on the content of their lessons and prepare. Male student (M36) clarified that the teacher: "would tell you to do something, and then the whole class is all over the place". He added: "you wouldn't like, understand him", or "do what he told you to do", because "he thinks he told you stuff", but "he's all over the place". He emphasised that the teacher: "should prepare more". The teacher must: "take his teaching, and the students, probably a bit more seriously. And, you know, put more effort into what he's doing." He added that the teachers ought to "prepare a good class for us". Preparation was critical as it meant that the: "teacher's gonna teach, and the class is gonna

learn, and everyone's all happy.” He stressed that: “learning would be more effective that way”. Better preparation should assist in engaging students and minimising disruptions.

Thirdly, teachers need to be sensitive; they need to listen to students and invest in the learners’ education. Male student (A7) said that we need: “a teacher that could understand the kid and how they feel. And [can] like tell when they're getting annoyed, and when they don't know what it means”. Male student (M19) needs a teacher who will: “listen to what we say.” He explained that his Arabic teacher would: “just say ... ‘shush’ and all that stuff”, while other teachers say: “... ‘What's the matter?’ and all that.” The teacher was uninvested because: “she wants to, just, do her job!” Male student (M36) compared his two Arabic teachers on this point. He said: “Mr-Y [will] probably do what he's supposed to do, or probably even less. But Mr-X would [do what] he's meant to do, or even more”.

Fourthly, teachers need to learn how to control the class because disruptions were a serious concern. Male student (M39) said that he would like: “no one to be disruptive”. Male student (M28) said: “I would want the kids to listen”. Male student (M19) said that managing disruptions is, in fact: “more about the ... like, the teacher. How can the teacher control the class?” He said that “a stricter teacher” is needed: “[so] everybody would listen [and] like, do their work”. Male student (M29) complained that: “the teacher can't even control the class properly!” He emphasised: “*the teacher can't control the class at all!* He just wastes his time by screaming at the person or sending them out”. He elaborated that to improve lessons and L2LE: “[he needs to be] able to control the class first, which he really can't do!” Thereby, suggesting that the teachers should be trained on this. By way of specific suggestions, male student (A7) said: “[I] suggest like, a teacher that would firstly act on the punishments”, rather than making empty threats. Female student (M26) said: “consequences, [should only be] for the bad kids not, like, for [everyone]”. She added that once: “some kids were being naughty and the whole class [got] detention.” It is important to avoid shaming students. Female student (A4) said: “because I was on the bad list then I was like, ‘well if I'm on the bad list then I don't wanna do it’ ...”.

Fifthly, a student suggested that topic relevant humour could be useful for learning. Male student (M36) said: “funniness helps us learn. And then we would wanna like, you know? We're motivated to like, come there and ... enjoy the lesson. If you don't like something, you're not gonna get much from it.” He added: “[If] you're looking forward to it: You're probably gonna get more from there”. He pointed out that teachers did not always

use humour effectively. He compared his teachers: “his lessons get funny sometimes, but then it's off-topic” while “(Mr-X) keeps ... the humour connected to the topic”.

Finally, it emerged that teachers need to develop students' identity connections with Arabic through learning. Female student (M18) captured this saying: “it's good that you learn the language, but you should also know ... why you're learning it. Like the context in which you're learning it.” She explained that they need to: “put more effort into like, putting that into their heads. But like, not in a like a ‘this is your religion you should know it [way]!’ ...” Rather, “they should add more value to it, like, it's more than your religion. Like, it's part of your identity! You hear me?” She added: “They need to focus on like putting it in the student's identity”. She stressed: “use some, like, sort of inspiration, or motivation, to like, inspire students to keep Arabic as a part of their lives”. She suggested the use of content that students can relate to: “if you learn [teach] about the stories of the Saḥābah”³⁸ “or the Prophets. You should connect the students to it. So, like, in this Arabic lesson, like you should make connections to the students, yeah.”

6.4. Chapter summary

This chapter presented the findings related to RQ3: **How would a-MLA like their L2 learning experiences improved?** Firstly, students made suggestions about the structuring of programs. Students recommended that more lessons should be allocated and spread over the week. Students also suggested that learners' levels should be managed better and that learning should take the learners' levels as a point of departure. Furthermore, it emerged that there may be a benefit in making Arabic an elective earlier. Secondly, students made recommendations for the improvement of their L2LE. Students want a structured curriculum. Learning should begin at the lowest level and progress incrementally. Several students suggested that easier texts should be used. Students wanted varied learning experiences and were invested in the notion of ‘hands-on learning’. They suggested audio-visual and CALL enhancements. Several students wanted to converse with Arabic speakers and learn about Arab culture. Thirdly, six recommendations were made to improve teachers' performance. These were: (1) using different engaging teaching styles; (2) preparation and organisation; (3) being more sensitive and invested; (4) learning how to manage disruptions effectively; (5) using relevant humour; and (6) building identity connections.

³⁸ Saḥābah: Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

In the following discussion chapter, the implications of the findings of the three research questions are discussed. The chapter briefly summarises the key findings and relates them to the research purposes. The chapter then addresses the L2M implications of these findings in light of our current knowledge, existing theory and research.

Chapter 7. *Discussion*

This exploratory research focused on the Arabic learning experiences and motivation of adolescent non-Arab Muslims enrolled at four Islamic schools. The research approach emphasised student voice and pursued answers to three research questions: **(1) how do a-MLA in AIS make sense of Arabic learning, (2) what do a-MLA make of their L2 learning experiences, and (3) how would a-MLA like their L2 learning experiences improved?** These questions provided ample descriptions of the status quo and the way forward.

In this chapter, I outline the significant findings. I connect the findings to my research aims and ascertain how they relate to current knowledge. The chapter explains how the findings complement, support, or contradict existing knowledge on L2 motivation. To this end, the chapter is divided into five main sections. The first section summarises the key findings; the second briefly illuminates the significance of the findings; the third reflects briefly on the methods and framework; the fourth discusses students' Arabic L2 motivation and engagement; the fifth section focuses on the students' recommendations and the way forward.

7.1. The major findings of the thesis

Each question produced significant results. The first research question provided a broad perspective on the phenomenon. It offered an overview of a-MLA motivation (or lack thereof) by describing the nature of their orientations, L2 expectations, and engagement. The second research question narrowed the focus and zoomed in on the minutiae of learners' L2LE. It described their typical learning activities, learning content, teachers, peers and outcomes. The third research question was underpinned by critical thought, which stresses the need for presenting alternative scenarios rather than merely pessimistic descriptions of the status quo. In keeping with the emphasis on student voice, the question provided the students' directions for improvements. The significant findings of each question are discussed below.

7.1.1. RQ 1: The overview

The first question pursued an understanding of *how a-MLA in AIS make sense of Arabic learning*. It scoped the lay of the land (see chapter 4). It provided an overview of perceptions of programs, students' orientations, learning expectations, and the nature of their L2M. This question aligned with the first two aims of the research: (1) *understanding how Arabic learning experiences at AIS influence non-Arab Muslim learners' motivation*; and (2) *identifying other influences*. Three key findings emerged from this question:

- Firstly, most students were religiously oriented. The sacred text orientation was the most dominant. That is, the most cited reason for interest in learning Arabic was 'understanding the Qur'an'. Other religious orientations were enlightenment, ritual, obligation, preservation, transmission, and Afterlife. A minority of students had a subset of additional interests. Many students considered Arabic part of the Muslim identity of the schools. They believed that Arabic programs were introduced for religious reasons. However, several students were sceptical and believed that AIS were just appeasing Arab students.
- Secondly, most students had expectations of what L2 learning should entail. Their concept of 'L2 learning' entailed acquiring proficiency in the four language macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). Learning that did not produce this outcome was deemed 'pointless'. Some students underscored communication as an outcome of learning. Students' conception of literacy involved decoding texts successfully, fluently and with comprehension. Reading without comprehension was deemed 'pointless'.
- Thirdly, students' resistance and disengagement were noteworthy phenomena. A minority expressed explicit resistance to learning. Four overlapping explanations emerged in discussions: ethnolinguistic priority, past failures, narrow religious interest; as well as rebellion and alienation. The majority were disengaged. Students discussed their disengagement or that of their peers. Five possible interrelated reasons for disengagement emerged: English primacy, future planning, parental attitudes, countercultures, and exposure to negative L2LE.

7.1.2. RQ 2: Focus on L2LE

The second question pursued insights *into what a-MLA make of their L2 learning experiences*. It captured program evaluations, decisions to forgo Arabic in senior secondary, and detailed accounts of L2LE (see chapter 5). This question aligned with the third aim of the research: *providing a detailed account of language learning experiences*.

Four key findings emerged from this question.

- Firstly, AIS programs were generally deemed ineffective, and learning outcomes were thought to be poor. Disillusionment was notable. Many students felt they had not learned anything or realised their goals. These perceptions were implicated in senior students' decisions to drop Arabic. Many were bored with Arabic by the time they reached Year 9. The majority believed pursuing Arabic in senior secondary was pointless or ill-advised.
- Secondly, students complained that Arabic programs were not structured in ways that lead to meaningful progress. Many students were critical of the limited allocation of lessons. They complained that their schools managed and assessed language levels ineffectively. Most students struggled with learning, and many felt left behind. Most students felt that their Arab peers had a head start, which influenced their self-concepts (e.g. perceptions of their ability).
- Thirdly, most students found lessons boring, ineffective and full of disruptions. All of the students described experiencing teacher-led lessons in which the predominant activities were reading and translating (i.e. grammar-translation method). Students complained about the difficulty of reading texts and the dearth of resources.
- Fourthly, teachers' methods and personalities were very influential in engaging and disengaging students. Students held teachers accountable for the quality of their L2LE. The majority of students were frustrated with their secondary Arabic teachers (save for Mr-X). Teachers were perceived to be dull; forever reading and translating; unprepared and disorganised; bad at explaining; poor time managers, and unable to control disruptions. Students disliked teachers who were unsupportive, uninvested, or unduly angry or harsh all the time.

7.1.3. RQ 3: Recommendations

The third research question pursued an understanding *of how a-MLA would like their L2 learning experiences improved*. It elicited students' recommendations (see chapter 6). The third question was aligned to the fourth aim of the research: *outlining the students' recommendations for change to bridge gaps between expectations and realities*.

Three key findings emerged.

- Firstly, students wanted to change how programs were structured. Most students wanted more lessons that were spread out over the week. They wanted programs that were designed with their language levels in mind. Students explained that programs should begin with basics and progress incrementally. They recommended remedial classes, separate streams for Arab and non-Arab students, differentiated learning, and easier booklets (or textbooks). It was also recommended that Arabic should be offered as an elective at an earlier stage.

- Secondly, students felt that improving L2LE would increase L2 motivation and enhance engagement. Some emphasised the need for a structured curriculum. They emphasised that this curriculum should develop decoding skills and beginner-level vocabulary, then progress to sentences and other learning. Students wanted time for practice and consolidation to be built into the curriculum. Many students also wanted booklets (or textbooks) to include English instructions.
- Thirdly, nearly all students wanted their teachers to use different teaching approaches that are more engaging and educational. Students disliked the monotony of their current L2LE. They emphasised the importance of variety. They were invested in “hands-on learning”. In their estimation, hands-on approaches permit the practical use of Arabic in activities, games, collaborative work, incursions and excursions. Students requested supplemental audio-visual content and CALL resources. Some students wanted to converse and to learn about Arab culture. Some students also wanted varied readings which build Islamic identity connections.

7.2. The significance of the findings

The findings are significant in a few ways. Firstly, they generated new knowledge about a-MLA, Arabic L2LE and AL2M in Australia. The findings suggest that AIS Arabic programs do not promote significant participation in Year 12 Arabic by a-MLA. They also expand our understanding of a-MLA motivation (and lack thereof). In terms of school-mandated learning, the religious orientations of a-MLA cannot be equated with ‘religious motivation’. Moreover, the thesis revealed that prolonged exposure to ineffectual teaching, poor teacher-student relationships, and poor learning outcomes have repercussions for a-MLA engagement and persistence in learning Arabic. The thesis also presented the first set of a-MLA proposals to improve L2LE and guide future interventions.

Secondly, the findings underscore the importance of situated explorations of L2LE in formal instructional contexts (Csizér, 2017, 2018; Csizér & Kálmán, 2019a; Dörnyei, 2001a; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Falout, Elwood, & Hood, 2009; Kaivanpanah & Ghasemi, 2011; Kikuchi, 2019; Thorner & Kikuchi, 2019). The findings add to research focused on the L2MSS and highlight the importance of the L2LE and its capacity to negatively influence students’ L2M. It was noteworthy that students’ reflections on their L2LE were generally concurrent and retrospective (Csizér & Kálmán, 2019b; Ryan, 2019a). More importantly, the data suggest a need to create theoretical links between negative L2LE and students’ possible future selves. Pizzolato (2006) explained that the “relation between what students want to become and what students actually become may be mediated by what students feel

they are able to become” (p. 59). This statement is true of the a-MLA in this research because, as Markus and Nurius (1986) contended, the attributes, abilities, and actions of the self are interpreted within the “surrounding context of possibility” (p. 955)

Thirdly, the findings demonstrate that research of L2M and L2LE needs to account for the complexities of learning languages other than English, particularly in English-dominant contexts. Curnow, Kohler, Liddicoat, and Loechel (2014) argued that school students’ decisions about L2 learning often reflected “the attitudes of the students, their parents and the broader community toward languages and language education” (p. 13). The data suggest that a-MLA L2M and decisions were products of their contexts (Australia and AIS), parental attitudes, competing priorities, and L2LE. In other words, as Ushioda (2012) explained, L2M is “experienced alongside and in interaction with” the “processes of motivation associated with other learning activities and pursuits in life” (p. 17).

7.3. Research method and framework

Given the thesis's exploratory nature and its theoretical intricacies, the BIQA proved extremely useful in answering the research questions. The BIQA tapped into the various strengths of qualitative research and allowed using the required instruments, analytical approaches, and reliability safeguards. However, it also allowed me to remain focused on the substantive findings of social reality (Liu, 2016). Maintaining research flexibility made it possible to simultaneously explore the phenomenon in question and the perspectives of the people involved in it (Merriam & Grenier, 2019:7).

The theoretical framework proved useful in (1) accounting for the highly susceptible nature of adolescents’ possible selves; (2) responding to Arabic-specific issues; and (3) accounting for the complexities of learning languages in an English-dominant context. The PICRV helped to theoretically link a-MLA experiences and current self-states with their possible L2 self (Ushioda, 2009:225). It also facilitated understanding learners’ agency as they interacted with a “fluid and complex system of social relations, activities, experiences” in their “micro- and macro-contexts” (Ushioda, 2009:220).

The data showed that L2 selves of a-MLA were influenced by the wider milieu, their social interactions, assessments of plausibility (see section 2.1.4.4.2), and L2LE (captured in the L2MSS). Therefore, the findings lend credibility to the conceptualisation of a-MLA motivation to learn Arabic (see section 2.1.4.6). Essentially, the Arabic learning motivation

of a-MLA was conceptualised in terms of a possible self (IL2S/OL2S) with a tentative capacity to motivate.³⁹ The findings of this research and their implications will be interpreted in terms of this conceptualisation.

7.4. L2 Motivation and engagement

School choices are often imposed on learners, which minimises the weight of choice motivation (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998). The findings of this research substantiate this claim. It was demonstrated that mandated language learning during Years 7-9 minimised learners' choice motivation. Therefore, the Arabic self can be described as 'imposed' (Taylor, 2013). Imposed selves are "representations of other people's hopes, desires and expectations of what an individual should achieve" (Taylor, 2013: 45). The data suggest that there is interest in Arabic among many a-MLA and complementarity between the perceived purposes of AIS and students' religious orientations. Therefore, the internalisation of an imposed Arabic self (Taylor, 2013) is a distinct possibility.

7.4.1. The potential Ought-to L2 Self

Analysis of the data suggests that a-MLA interest is mainly linked to their belief that they *should* acquire Arabic to *meet Allah's expectations* and to *fulfil religious obligations*, such as performing prayers, reading the Qur'an, listening to sermons, and navigating their Afterlife. This interpretation is crystallised by the emergence of a clear 'obligation orientation'. Female student (M25) said: "*I feel like it's my responsibility to learn Arabic*". The 'enlightenment orientation' supports this interpretation too. For instance, male student (M39) said that "*Allah could have chosen a number of languages, but he chose this specific language, and like, I wanna study it*". Conceptually, these orientations align to an *Ought-to L2 Self* (OL2S). The OL2S captures attributes one pursues to meet duties, obligations, expectations of others, or to avoid adverse outcomes.⁴⁰

Further, data from this thesis suggest internalisation by many a-MLA (at least in part) of the Arabic OL2S. Higgins (1998) identified that when obligations are potent, like "biblical commandments, oughts can even function like necessities" (p. 5). The majority of a-MLA

39 A possible Arabic self is constructed and assessed for plausibility. If it is plausible, it is maintained and motivates the learner. A motivational self manifests in students' engagement and persistence in attaining the desired Arabic self. If it is not, it is shelved, dropped, or maintained for other purposes. The learner may construct other selves that are more relevant to their situation. The appraisals of plausibility are ongoing.

40 It is important to remind the reader, that even for the minority of students who had other orientations, these existed alongside their primary religious orientations.

wanted to (or needed to) perform religious duties using Arabic. The ‘ritual’ and ‘sacred text’ orientations captured urgent necessities. For instance, female student (M26) said: “*I want to learn Arabic because I want to understand what I’m saying like when I pray*”, and female student (M27) said: “*I really wanna pick up on what the Qur’an is trying to say*”. At other times, these were related to distal goals, such as those captured by the ‘Afterlife orientation’. The ‘preservation orientation’ was fueled by the avoidance of negative outcomes (e.g. Arabic dying out). For instance, female student (M24) said: “*if Arabic finishes in our country, in our world, will the Prophet be happy?*” The possible outcomes she was reacting to were ones she construed.

Data, therefore, suggest that despite the imposition of learning by AIS, for most learners, a measure of interest and internalisation exist on account of faith affiliation. This data supports the argument for bifurcating the OL2S to distinguish between obligations that one wants to perform and obligations that others expect one to perform (Al-Hoorie, 2018). This bifurcation exists in self-discrepancy theory, which specified two perspectives on the self: own and others (Higgins, 1987). The Arabic OL2S has an ‘other’ dimension represented by the external origin of commandments of faith and Muslim group norms. For most a-MLA, the self has an ‘own’ dimension too, which is represented by an apparent internalisation of faith commandments and group norms. The findings cannot determine if internalisation is at the level of identification or introjection (partial); this requires future research (Ryan, Rigby, & King, 1993).

7.4.2. Inclinations sans motivation

In any case, students’ religious orientations (captured by the Arabic OL2S) did not generally translate into motivated behaviours marked by engagement or persistence in learning. Disengagement was prominent, and attrition in Year 10 is significant. Jones (2013) also described instances of disengaged behaviours in a-MLA and abandonment of Arabic in senior secondary by many students. The choices students made and their behaviours contradicted their stated desire to learn Arabic for religious reasons. For instance, female student (M18) said she wanted to understand the Qur’an (read Arabic poetry and engage with Arabs on her travels) but had dropped Arabic because she could not relate it to her future. The orientations of (M18) were merely antecedents of L2 motivation (Ortega, 2009). Or one might describe her as demonstrating inclinations sans motivation. Therefore, the data suggest that a-MLA orientations (reasons for learning an L2 captured by the Arabic OL2S)

are distinct from their L2 motivation (active effort to learn the L2, or goal-oriented behaviour, or learning engagement) (Dörnyei, 2019b; Henry & Thorsen, 2020; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Shenk, 2011). Or, as Dörnyei (2019b) explained that L2M and engagement are markedly different, as L2M “indicates a student’s potential for actively pursuing learning” but not how potential is actualised (p. 25).

7.4.3. The influence of contexts

This thesis found that a-MLA were influenced by, and responding to, the contexts within which they are embedded (Lanvers, 2016; Thompson, 2017; Ushioda, 2003, 2009). Oyserman and Fryberg (2006) identified that the feedback adolescents receive from their contexts could be “reinforcing or restrictive and undermining” (p. 22). Their English and educational contexts undermined the value of attaining Arabic (or the Arabic OL2S); some parents attitudes reinforced these undermining influences. Competing linguistic priorities arose from their ethnic context and social interactions within it. Parental attitudes emerged as a possible restrictive factor in this regard.

7.4.3.1. The English context

Adolescents learn what is possible and what is valued through their interaction with their social context (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). As Lanvers (2016) explained, adolescents internalise expectations from known others (e.g. parents) and unknown others or the wider milieu (e.g. national community). Oyserman and Fryberg (2006) explained that if the social context lacks examples or images of possible selves “for ‘people like us’ in a particular domain, possible selves in this domain are likely to be missing entirely or will be so global as to be useless” for self-regulation (p. 21-2). These contextual influences were also present in the case of our a-MLA. For example, female student (M18) said: “[we are] growing up in this society. Like, I'm not saying the society is bad. *But I feel like it affects us indirectly. So, like, we kind of lose that religious and Arabic link.*”

The singular emphasis on English in all the contexts within which a-MLA are embedded impacts them. English is considered the bedrock of the dominant Anglo-Celtic culture of Australia (Mansouri, 2005). In fact, English is equated with *Australianness*. Some a-MLA have internalised this notion, especially where their parents seemed to be implicated as well. The family of female student (M13) “*speak Australian*”, for instance. English dominance in Australia is founded on ideological structures that the minorities end up

supporting (Suarez, 2002). Male student (M35) said: “We go to school, and we live in like *a world where English is a main language*”.

Some students internalised subtle cues that suggest that English is more important than other languages that emerge from the Australian educational context. Male student (M40) explained that: “LOTE is like, *other languages*. So, English is like ... I think of like a more important subject”. He also stressed that English was central when it came to acquiring an education, whereas Arabic was peripheral. He said: “you *have to* learn English, you know, to go through our school. But Arabic? You can like, pick other languages. You can learn other languages!” These two issues seem to be quite widespread because male student (M36) said: “a lot of people that I know take other subjects seriously” but “when it comes to LOTE, they're a new person.”

In this students’ statement, we see that the English-self is also an expectation of the Australian and educational context. In this sense, the English-self can manifest as an OL2S and compete with the Arabic OL2S. This mandated nature of the English-self can manifest quite literally when students who have recently arrived in Australia are moved into EAL classes. For instance, male student (M15) said: “[I took Arabic for] three months, and then I got this [EAL].” He later said that it was unlikely he would return to the Arabic program because he is “still weak in English”. Such events can mandate the urgency of acquiring an ought-to English self and deemphasise the urgency of the ought-to Arabic self.

Most felt that Arabic was peripheral to their lives and contexts. That is, they could not connect their current Arabic learning efforts with their futures in the broader English-speaking Australian context. For example, female student (M18) said, “like, in this school, like outside, I don't see any real connection”. On the other hand, their *Actual (English-speaking) Self* ‘fit’ well in the context. Learners’ believed that English was expected, necessary, and preferred. Female student (M12) said she was “worried about my English ... Like, the *major one that I will be needing in life*”. These findings suggest that for a-MLA, the Arabic self-image is undermined by the dominance of English both locally and globally (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017). Therefore, as Lanvers (2016) found in research with adolescent Anglophones, the futility of L2 learning is salient to the Australian a-MLA.

7.4.3.2. Educational context

Oyserman and Fryberg (2006) explained that for the near future, adolescents’ possible selves focus on academic and interpersonal domains. While people “might wish to be all

things simultaneously”, they cannot strive to be all things “because the activities involved in different selves conflict” (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006:18). This was true of the a-MLA in this research. Under academic pressure, a-MLA made choices between competing visions of themselves (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). If a student wanted to learn Arabic in senior secondary to realise the Arabic OL2S, they weighed the effort needed to achieve this against the academic priorities needed to realise their successful Matriculation Self (Lanvers, 2016). In their calculation, the a-MLA also considered past failures and successes (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). For instance, female student (M20) said: “you *should be careful* about what subjects you choose in Year 10”. The outcome of these calculations did not support the pursuit of Arabic OL2S.

Data show that AIS shape the future PS of a-MLA long before they reach these critical decision-making moments. For adolescents, schools constitute an important social context in which they spend extended amounts of time and acquire “academic and social possible selves” (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006:22). Roshandel and Hudley (2018) explained that schools and teachers are instrumental in shaping adolescents’ educational selves. Feedback received in this context is highly influential. AIS are known to concentrate on pre-tertiary results (Jones, 2018). To achieve these results, AIS condition students (a-MLA included) to focus on attaining high pre-tertiary scores and, by extension, emphasise subjects that serve these outcomes. Therefore, as Oyserman and Fryberg (2006) identified, this thesis found that AIS condition students to “focus on grades, performance, and comparisons with others rather than personal mastery or involvement” (p.23). Therefore, a-MLA are more likely to focus on attaining good grades than on learning new things (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006).

Australian school curricula can frame the learning of languages as “valued/integral or less valued/optional” (Curnow et al., 2014:16). The four AIS framed Arabic as ‘less valued/optional’ (e.g. the number of lessons allocated to Arabic). Therefore, like other Australian school students, a-MLA developed attitudes about ‘core’ and ‘optional’ subjects (Curnow et al., 2014). Arabic is grouped with optional subjects such as art or woodwork. For instance, male student (M14) said: “Arabic is not viewed as an important subject,” adding that “the four main ones are: English, maths, science, and humanities”. AIS principals who subscribe to the notion of the ‘crowded curriculum’ probably push “languages to the periphery of primary curricula” (Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2009: 47). Such attitudes entail de-emphasis of Arabic from an early age. Male student (M36) suggests that this is the case. He

said he did not “learn anything in primary” and added that: “*the fact that it wasn't serious, made me not believe that it was serious*”.

Unfortunately, some parents also reinforced these undermining attitudes. For instance, male student (M15) said his parents “think that Arabic is not important to my learning”. Many parents harbour such attitudes according to male student (M36), who said that “most parents wouldn't care about your LOTE marks”.

7.4.3.3. Their ethnic context

Oyserman and Fryberg (2006) noted that we often become the type of people that others in our group can become because we fear disappointing significant others by failing to acquire group norms. Therefore, the desired possible selves could face off with the content of racial/ethnic identity (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006:23). This potential conflict was a problem for a few of the research participants. A minority of a-MLA perceived a discrepancy between their actual selves and their *Ideal Ethnic Selves*. Their worry about their *Ideal Ethnolinguistic Self* was implicated in their resistance to Arabic. For instance, female student (M17) retorted: “I'm already *bad at my own language*, so first I need to learn that, and then I can learn *a different language*”.

These a-MLA also shed light on the intimacy of their ethnic language and distance of Arabic. Their statements resonate with the proposal that the three facets of an individual's identity (individual, relational, collective) are not equidistant from their motivational core (Gaertner et al., 2012; Nehrlich, Gebauer, Sedikides, & Abele, 2018). For instance, male student (31) stated that Urdu was ‘more important’ to him because his relatives speak it, and he does not, which “feels embarrassing”. It has been suggested that if an individual feels that their *Actual Self* is incongruent with the *Ideal Self* that they believe significant others wish for them, they are prone to feelings of embarrassment (Higgins, 1987). This student internalised aspects of his *Ideal Ethnic Self* from his environment.

Adolescents often seek indications as to whom they *can become* from responses to their behaviour (Oyserman et al., 2004). Some parents prioritised the Ethnolinguistic Self over the Arabic OL2S. Female student (M27) was chastised for practising Arabic at home. Her mother said: ‘*we speak Turkish at home, don't speak in Arabic to me!*’ Some parents probably de-emphasise Arabic in the construction of the Muslim religious identity of their children. There was a clear difference here between what the girl wanted and what her mother wanted. Moretti and Wiebe (1999) identified that such incongruities between

adolescents' standards and their parents' standards could cause adolescents to suffer. This statement might explain why (M27) told me about this incident. The mother's attitude resonates with the parental attitudes reported by Sai (2017), which suggest that non-Arab Muslim parents can be ambivalent or hostile to Arabic (see section 2.2.1). Such attitudes tell a-MLA that Arabic is not for 'people like us'.

7.4.4. The L2 Learning Experiences

Students' summative appraisal of AIS Arabic programs was that they were ineffectual, disappointing, and tedious. The findings resonate with other Australian research, which raised concerns about the availability of trained language teachers; shortfalls in language-specific materials; timetabling; and students' opinions of some language programs (Curnow et al., 2014; Lo Bianco & Aliani, 2013; Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2009). The findings also echo the Arabic-specific concerns (both in Australia and in similar contexts) about the need for more qualified Arabic teachers; improved methods; teacher education; context-specific syllabi, level-appropriate textbooks, and quality resources (Al-Batal, 2007; Al-Batal & Belnap, 2006; Alhawary, 2013; Allen, 2004, 2007; Berbeco, 2011; Campbell et al., 1993; Cruickshank, 2008; Jones, 2013; Ryding, 2006; Selim, 2017, 2018a; Temples, 2013).

The findings of this thesis extend our understanding of L2LE influences on a-MLA AL2M, engagement, selves, and decisions about Arabic. Two significant findings are students' resistance and disengagement. On the one hand, they demonstrate that ineffective and disengaging teaching subdues religiously inspired interest in learning. On the other hand, they demonstrate that a-MLA are not passive agents locked in a one-directional relationship with the context. Rather, they actively resist the perceived problems and inequalities.

In the following sections, I will outline how L2LE influence the a-MLA in different ways, as well as detract from the plausibility of acquiring the Arabic OL2S.

7.4.4.1. L2LE: No Roadmapping

The L2LE do not provide clear strategies for the realisation of basic goals and learning expectations. Students complained about unstructured and inefficient L2LE that do not direct them to the accomplishment of learning goals. For example, male student (M35) said: "*I would be in that classroom for a week, and we don't learn anything*, to be honest." Goals, strivings or possible selves must be attached to specific strategies that can realise the desired goal to motivate learners (Oyserman et al., 2004). If the possible self is to provide a self-

regulatory function, it must “contain strategies for both personal goal focused action and for dealing and engaging with the social context in which the goal is to be achieved” (Oyserman et al., 2004:133). That is, it should provide a clear roadmap that can align the *actual self* with the desired *future self* (Oyserman et al., 2004). Learners’ do not seem to have clear roadmaps for how they can achieve their goals.

In the context of compulsory learning, schools need to assist and support students in developing strategies that facilitate the attainment of the possible L2 self. Schools and Arabic teachers need to “create learning environments that provide students with resources and opportunities concerning their futures that they might not receive otherwise” (Roshandel & Hudley, 2018: 213). Schools must structure programs effectively, build good curricula, and provide effective L2LE. The current school strategies and teaching approaches do not bring students closer to their L2 goals. For instance, female student (M18) acquired basic literacy in childhood and said that the school “didn't really direct me towards like, any other goals”. The choice to drop a possible self can become involuntary if that self is clearly unattainable (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). AIS programs suggest that acquiring any meaningful Arabic proficiency is extremely unlikely. The poor quality of programs, and the lack of roadmapping, restricts participation in Year 12 Arabic by a-MLA.

7.4.4.2. L2LE: Teaching Method

Problematic Arabic teaching methods are recognised in contexts of second and foreign language teaching. AIS are no exception. Students revealed that their boring teacher-centred lessons focused on reading, translating, and grammar. In classroom observations, aspects of the grammar-translation method (GTM) were detected. The GTM is often used to teach Arabic (Chobanova, 2018; Selim, 2018a; Sumi & Sumi, 2018). It concentrates on reading, writing, and the study of grammar to develop learners’ translation skills (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Characteristic of this method is its minimal attention to speaking and listening skills (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Untrained Arabic teachers often use this approach (Selim, 2018a).

The GTM frustrates learners and is not based on any theory of learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). It was suggested that younger learners are unlikely to respond well to this method (Berbeco, 2018; Selim, 2018b). The data prove that adolescents find this approach disengaging. Female student (A10) explained: “it's boring for us” because “every day, the whole day we are doing reading and writing.” Data demonstrated that they find this approach

ineffective. For instance, male student (M35) said: “*It was just information being fed to us*”, and female student (A2) emphasised: “*I still haven't learned anything*”. A few students believed that teaching made learning difficult. Male student (M40) said: “*the way they teach the language makes it hard*”.

The GTM is often used in contexts focused on comprehending classic literary works (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). However, the a-MLA said they had not acquired comprehension or translation skills. Ironically, despite the disproportionate focus on reading and translation, self-assessment scores were lowest for reading and writing (see section 5.1). Therefore, students requested changing the teaching approach (see sections 6.2 and 6.3). For instance, male student (M30) said: “[use a] different teaching style”.

Inadequate teacher training is implicated in poor pedagogical choices. It is important to reflect on the matter of teachers’ training backgrounds in this nexus. Of the nine Arabic teachers, five had no formal training in linguistics, language teaching, or education. Those five teachers were unregistered. The four registered teachers had acquired post-graduate degrees in education. Only one had a background in linguistics. It is not surprising that a maths teacher is not equipped to deal with the requirements of Arabic language instruction.

Jones (2013) visited nineteen schools for his PhD research, and I visited four schools. Both PhD theses identified weaknesses in some of the teachers’ training backgrounds. While the schools we visited might have overlapped, twenty-three (23) schools (out of a total of forty-six (46) AIS) are potentially struggling to find suitably trained Arabic teachers. The rapid expansion of the sector might have overwhelmed Australia’s capacity to provide adequately trained professionals to fill positions. This issue is concerning, as it has serious implications for program quality and learners’ engagement.

7.4.4.3. L2LE: Program Content

Accommodating learners’ interests is vital to the success of any program. While some a-MLA wanted to learn about Arab culture, most of them wanted to learn Arabic to understand the Qur’an. Consequently, the more general modern language learning offered was irrelevant to some. Male student (M29) said, for instance: “the Qur’an meaning, that's the ... main reason I'm doing Arabic. But *I'm not getting anything out of it*”. Female student (A6) explained that: “I feel *they just teach you, it's like only one part of it*. Like, just to speak it and read it, but not like the way the Qur’an is like, read and written”. She suggested that teachers use “the Qur’an and bring it in”. Female student (M17) even wanted Arabic to be

merged with religious learning (see section 4.4.1.3). Female student (M18) stressed building identity connections and suggested using Islamic content to which students could relate. This data support Husseinali's (2012) findings that Muslims seek Islamic identity connectors and enhancers, which need to "be given equal weight" in teaching (Husseinali, 2012:109).

In terms of content, learning did not meet religious interests. This finding resonates with the findings of Sai (2017) that Irish Muslim schools taught Arabic as a secular topic (see section 2.2.1). Teachers' attempts to relate units of work to the Australian curriculum might underpin dissonance. I highlighted that the curriculum was pitched to Arab background learners and, therefore, excludes other potential learners (Selim, 2019b). The context statement of the curriculum stipulates "the place" of Arabic in Australian education (ACARA, 2020). The statement notes that: "study of Arabic provides background students with the opportunity to connect with their family heritage and to communicate with speakers of Arabic" (ACARA, 2020). The religious identity connections Muslim learners seek do not have a clear place in the Australian educational paradigm.

7.4.4.4. L2LE: Clear Dissonance

Learners' L2 learning expectations are used as benchmarks against which the progress, quality of experiences, and outcomes are assessed (Tina & Peter, 2009). If learners' expectations are not understood or managed, they can become barriers to learning (Bell, 2005). Little was written about the goals and expectations of a-MLA; therefore, Arabic programs at AIS are structured without a sufficient understanding of their needs, expectations, or goals. The research identified that a-MLA wanted instruction to build *proficiency in all of the macro-skills* and to develop *reading comprehension* ability. AIS programs did not meet their desired L2 learning outcomes or expected quality of teaching (bearing in mind, that they are exposed to different experiences in their learning of English, maths, science, and humanities).

L2LE conflicted with students in five main ways. Firstly, the majority defined learning Arabic in terms of acquiring all macro-skills, but teaching de-emphasised speaking and listening. One student highlighted that teaching should begin by developing oral/aural skills, while others stressed communication (see section 4.3.1). Secondly, given the weight of the 'sacred text orientation' and the majority's definition of reading (as one that entails comprehension), frustration was pronounced with reading outcomes. Male student (M21) said learning: "doesn't help me like, read and understand". Thirdly, students felt that teaching

did not engender autonomy. For instance, female student (A2) said: “I want to ... translate stuff on my own, not the teacher translating it for me.” Fourthly, the students disliked the teacher-centred tediousness of the approach (see sections 5.4.2.4). Fifthly, some students could not relate to the secular approach taken to teaching Arabic.

Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) explained that in educational contexts where there is serious dissonance “between the student’s own motivational goals and preferences (e.g. to develop communicative skills in a learner-centred environment) and the teacher’s instructional goals and methods (e.g. teacher-controlled drill and practice)”, resistance to learning can emerge (p. 147). Moreover, L2M becomes restricted to a focus on passing the course to fulfil requirements (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011:147). Unfortunately, resistance emerged, and disengagement was prominent. Female student (M18) explained that students believed Arabic is just a course: “that you got to learn all the stuff until the exams, and then after you're gonna forget it”.

7.4.4.5. L2LE: Repeated Failures

Taylor (2013) explained that the language classroom “can be either a curse or a blessing for an adolescent’s emerging sense of self”(p. 2). For these a-MLA, their L2LE are a curse with deep implications for their L2M and future relationship with Arabic. Students were put-off by repeated failures and their inability to realise their L2 goals. Repeated failures battered some students’ self-efficacy beliefs and self-worth. Two points are discussed in the next subsections: (1) students’ expectancies of failure; (2) and their causal attributions.

7.4.4.5.1. Anticipating Failure

Expectancies of failure were evident in a-MLA. Female student (A5) said everyone has “mixed feelings about Arabic” because they want to learn it but do not think it is possible. Covington (1992) explained that “the term expectancy generally refers to subjective estimates of eventual success” (p. 26). Oyserman and Fryberg (2006) explained that the accumulation of failure feedback causes us to “give up on becoming those aspects of our desired selves that are too painful to keep striving for in the face of repeated failures” (p. 18). For instance, female student (M23) said: “I keep repeating it, but I'm not learning anything”. Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1983) and self-worth theory (Covington, 1992) further illuminate the more profound implications of L2LE for these a-MLA.

The concept of self-efficacy relates to one's belief that one possesses the ability to produce a specific outcome or deal with a prospective situation (Bandura, 1983, 2006). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) explained that one's efficacy beliefs determine "choice of activities attempted, along with level of aspiration, amount of effort exerted and persistence displayed" (p. 16). If one believes they have what it takes to manage the activity, they are more likely to engage with it. The opposite is also true. In compulsory learning contexts, this contributes to resistance and disengagement. For instance, female student (A6) said: "if I try ... it's not gonna happen". Going into senior secondary, negative perceptions of one's efficacy lead to the dropping of Arabic. For instance, female student (A4) explained dropping Arabic in Year 10, saying: "I didn't think I would be able to do it or be that good at it."

The concept of self-worth in this context relates to students' desire to protect their sense of ability even at the expense of getting good grades (Covington, 1992). School students' self-worth is often tangled with their ability (Covington, 1992). This entanglement can lead students to intentionally "handicap themselves by not studying" because to try hard and then fail anyway reflects poorly on their ability (Covington, 1992:17). Female student (A10) explained that students "know they're not good at it. So ... they don't really try."

It is alarming that L2LE are battering some students' self-esteem (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). Repeated failures had serious emotional impacts demonstrated by the use of distanced self-talk. Male student (M38) used this strategy to increase his psychological distance and reduce the emotional impact of the negative experiences he was about to describe (Orvell et al., 2020). He said there were 20 students in his class: "three non-Arabs, *including myself*, and the rest are Arab". He then shifted to the third-person, saying: "*non-Arabs* [including himself], *they* don't really take the learning seriously" because "*they* can't learn it. Maybe, I think that it's just too hard *for them*". Orvell et al. (2020) listed seven types of worries that invite distanced self-talk. Three are relevant in the case of male student (M38). These are (1) achievement, (2) appearance and self-worth, (3) morality and religion (Orvell et al., 2020).

7.4.4.5.2. Causal Attributions

Tied to expectancies of failure are one's explanations of failure (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Liu & Zhang, 2018; Weiner, 1972) and their perceptions and explanations of difficulty. Arabic has a reputation for being difficult (Campbell et al., 1993). However, when

Arabic was contrasted with other languages, its difficulty seemed exaggerated (Stevens, 2006). Approaches taken in the teaching of Arabic may make it appear difficult (Selim, 2019b). A few a-MLA believed this to be the case. For instance, male student (M21) said Arabic is “simpler than English”, but: “the way it's taught is, like, makes it difficult for the students to learn”. This statement highlights the role of attributions.

In applications of attribution theory to education, Weiner (1972) found that causal attributions “influence the likelihood of undertaking achievement activities, the intensity of work at these activities, and the degree of persistence in the face of failure” (p. 213). In other words, how we explain experiences of success or failure to ourselves has bearings on our future strivings (Covington, 1992; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Weiner, 1972). If one believes their success was the product of a lucky break, they are less motivated to study because they feel that their results are beyond their control (Covington, 1992). Male student (M29) believed he passed because tests were ‘given away’; male student (M32) expressed surprise at his results, and several others explained passing in terms of lenient assessment. If one believes they failed because they lack ability, it would have serious consequences for their strivings. Male student (M31) said Arabic is a “hard language to learn, *for me*”. He attributed the failure to his inability to learn.

Perceptions of learning difficulty reinforced resistance in a-MLA who prioritised their ethnolinguistic selves. When a person is involved in an activity which “feels identity-incongruent”, any experience of difficulty could lead them to describe the activity as “pointless” or “not for people like me” (Oyserman, 2015:1). Male student (M30) was overtly resistant and focused on his ethnolinguistic self. He faced difficulties in acquiring Arabic and used nearly the same expressions presented by Oyserman (2015). He stated: “learning Arabic *is not for me*”. He reiterated that while it is good “to know multiple languages ... I guess Arabic *is not* [the] *one for me*”.

7.4.4.6. L2LE: The Students' SOS

Disengaged behaviours or attitudes are often framed from an adult educator's perspective as disinterest in learning (Kim, 2010) or misbehaviour (Harshman, 2013). However, they are a means of resistance used by students to signal to, or communicate with, their educators (Abowitz, 2000; Kim, 2010). In other words, they are a means of creating dialogue around problems and inequalities (Abowitz, 2000). A key message communicated by such behaviours and attitudes is the presence of severe dissonance between students and

their educators. Various disengaged behaviours and attitudes emerged (see sections 4.4.2.1 and 4.4.2.2.). These were possibly being used by a-MLA in three ways:

- As a self-defensive mechanism (Kim, 2010): If a student chooses not to learn, this helps them avoid thinking about themselves as lacking in the ability to learn (Kim, 2010). For instance, male student (M31) expressed explicit resistance. In the discussion, he revealed that he had wanted to learn Arabic “because that's what the Prophet used to speak, and that's what I should know as a Muslim”, but that he no longer did because he cannot “catch on to Arabic”.
- To demand meaningful instruction (Kim, 2010): Students whose voices, needs, and interests are systematically sidelined in the classroom and curriculum have no option but to react by acting out (Harshman, 2013). For instance, students can ask off-topic questions to signal that the learning is irrelevant to their interests (Harshman, 2013). Female student (M22) explained that she and her friends deliberately went off-topic, “mucked about”, made the teacher’s life miserable without fear of repercussions. They did this because learning was boring.
- To affirm self-agency and empowerment (Kim, 2010): Students might want to counterbalance what they perceive to be an oppressive context, or an unfair teacher, or to find their voice (Kim, 2010). For instance, female student (M17) explained that she and her friend just talk in class. She elaborated that the teacher was too strict, saying: “if you cough, you die! She doesn't let you breathe. It's our right to breathe!”

Unfortunately, because students’ signals are ignored or misinterpreted, problems persist. Many students acknowledged that disruptions detracted from an already problematic learning process. The data show that AIS management and teachers must listen to students and try to understand their needs. Male student (M19) said that they need a teacher who will: “*listen to what we say*”, rather than “say ... ‘shush’ and all that stuff”... they should *say*: “... ‘*What's the matter?*’ and all that.” Male student (A7) explained that they need: “a teacher that could understand the kid and how they feel”.

7.4.5. Implications for L2M and PS

The motivational impact of the Ought-to Arabic Self was diminished (or nullified). That is, the self carried the learners’ orientations interests, but it was not generating motivation or only generated minimal motivation. Too many external forces are working against the internal mechanisms of L2M, thereby undermining the importance of language learning (Henry & Thorsen, 2020; Ushioda, 2008). L2LE did not foster engagement or persistence in learning. L2LE also diminished the plausibility of acquiring the Arabic L2 attributes the learners believed they should possess to meet the expectations of Allah.

Falout et al. (2009) explained that if learners encounter “disagreeable teacher personalities or pedagogies, or inappropriate level of courses or materials, learners are at risk of becoming demotivated” (p. 412). Beginners or learners at lower levels of proficiency are more susceptible to this (Falout et al., 2009). Experiences of failure threatened students’ self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-worth (Bandura, 1983; Covington, 1992; Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006; Taylor, 2013). Various micro-level and macro-level variables undermined the value of language learning (Lanvers, 2016; Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006; Ushioda, 2009). These various issues have four key implications; (1) implausible Arabic self; (2) learned helplessness; (3) emergent alienation; (4) emergence of other selves.

7.4.5.1. Implausible Arabic Self

Female student (A5) is a classic example of L2LE mediated abandonment of the Arabic OL2S. Her experiences suggested that successfully assimilating Arabic into her future self was highly unlikely. She wanted to learn Arabic but had “mixed feelings” about it because she did not believe it was possible. Her desire to learn Arabic derived from a ‘sacred text orientation’ and a ‘friendship orientation’. After *three years* of study, she was at the stage of “learning the letters, knowing the harakat, learning how to join all of the letters.” Her L2LE did not provide her with support to progress beyond this point. She complained about the limited lesson allocations, time wastage; ineffective teaching; lack of support, level disparities, and difficult, unstructured content. Ultimately, she disentangled Arabic from her future self, saying: “if I did have the free time, I would go. I would like, spend some time doing Arabic ... when I’m done with what I actually wanna do in the future”.

The fact that (A5) volunteered to participate in the research speaks volumes. This learner did not drop Arabic because they are disinterested in learning; this is a seriously disappointed learner. Her inner conflicts about Arabic are probably true of all the insightful a-MLA who participated in this research. Students who had already dropped Arabic came to explain why they did so. Resistant students came to explain why they acted in this way. Additionally, students invested energy in advising on how programs can be improved. They proffered many truly insightful suggestions about how programs can be structured better, how the learning content should be improved and enhanced, how teachers can improve their performance, and build better relationships with the students. Such advice suggests that a-MLA are interested but disappointed. Muslim educators need to listen to their students and try to understand their perspectives.

7.4.5.2. Learned Helplessness

Under such negative influences, *amotivation* or the lack of motivation emerged (Lucas, Bernardo, & Rojo-Laurilla, 2016). Deci and Ryan (1985) explained that if a context neither permits “self-determination nor competence” for a given behaviour, people become amotivated (p. 71). Amotivation is “characterised by alienation and helplessness, resulting from lack of choice and control over one’s actions” (Taylor, 2013:12). Amotivated students are likely to be listless, helpless, depressed, and self-disparaging (Deci & Ryan, 1985:71).

Unfortunately, these four states permeate the data. A few illustrative examples are furnished here. Male student (M35) revealed that “when everyone finds out we have LOTE, it's like everyone's in a jazzy mood ... drowsy, like, everyone just gets depressed”. Male student (M21) said that he wants “to do activities in class” rather than sit around listening to the teacher and revealed that it gets “boring, and then I just doze off sometimes”. Female student (M17) was self-disparaging, saying: “every year *I go dumber* in Arabic”.

The hallmarks of *learned helplessness* were evident. That is, belief “that effort or self-responsibility cannot aid outcome” (Weiner, 1972). In this state, “learners give up trying because they come to believe, often rightly so, that they have no control over their destiny” (Covington, 1992:48). Learned helplessness involves hopelessness and the “belief that no matter how hard or how well one tries, failure is the evitable outcome” (Covington, 1992:65). Helplessness manifested on personal and universal levels. On a personal level, male student (M32) said: “*I do not* understand it, and *I don't* know how”. On a universal level, male student (M15) said: “*we don't know* how to learn it properly”. Some students’ laid the blame squarely at the feet of the school. Male student (M33) said: “*whatever you do*, like, *as hard as you work* at school, I don't think you can come out learning Arabic”.

Learned helplessness is a very likely outcome for lower achievers in classrooms which heighten competition (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). It is possible that sharing lessons with Arab background learners is fostering learned helplessness and hurting students’ self-efficacy, self-worth and overall expectancies of success. For instance, female student (M25) said: “because I'm not Arabic-speaking, I find myself asking Arabic speakers, like, ‘can you help me out with this?’ ... So, I think it is clear who's higher than who.” She then compared and contrasted herself against her Arab peers, saying: “Arabic-speakers, obviously, are much better than me”.

7.4.5.3. Emergent alienation

Geyer (2001) explained that the subjective state of alienation “points to a relationship between a subject and some—real or imaginary, concrete or abstract—aspect of his environment”, marked by “a separation that is considered undesirable from some point of view” (p. 388). Geyer (2001) elaborated that alienation can be understood as “undesirable separation” from something outside a person (e.g. God) or inside them (e.g. drives or desires) (p. 390). Case (2008) noted that alienation is “a disconnection in the context of a desired or expected relationship” (p. 324).

Academic alienation emerges when the needs and expectations of students are not aligned with those of the school; when external regulation estranges the learner from tasks; and when an individual has less control (Mahmoudi, Brown, Saribagloo, & Dadashzadeh, 2018). A study with 1,029 Iranian adolescents found that a sense of autonomy, competence, relatedness and the student-teacher relationship predicted changes in academic alienation (Mahmoudi et al., 2018). Their results suggest that the current situation at AIS is a recipe for academic alienation.

Jaspal and Coyle (2010) found that when a lack of proficiency in a liturgical language impedes someone’s access to faith, they are at risk of alienation. Female student (M23) demonstrated the potential for this. She explained that she keeps repeating and repeating but that she does not learn anything. She found the learning boring and considered Arabic hard. She eventually revealed her alienation. She said that “*I don't think all Muslims are that connected with Arabic*. Not all Muslims! ‘Cause some ... people don't even know any words in Arabic.” She linked the Muslim-Arabic connection to knowing Arabic words. She elaborated: “I can read Qur’an, but I don't really, I don't understand it. I'm not [connected].” I asked her if she felt any connection to Arabic because of being Muslim, she said: “Not really”.

7.4.5.4. Emergent Other Selves

Possible selves relevant to particular contexts can emerge. For instance, the Rooted L2 Self emerged in connection with learning Gaelic in Canada (Macintyre et al., 2017). Among a-MLA, two context-specific possible selves are emergent.

7.4.5.4.1. *The Rebellious Self*

Rebellious attitudes are emergent. Lanvers (2016) emphasised that there are many possible selves and that some are ‘rebellious’. Rebellion manifests as a rejection of the external impositions in favour of one’s Ideal Self (Taylor, 2013). In a controlled environment where L2 learning is imposed, “some may resist even if they would themselves have liked to become successful L2 speakers” (Taylor, 2013:56). Lanvers (2016) explained that “.. ‘rebellious’ attitudes, resisting pressure from others (e.g. peers, wider social milieu), can push a learner away from learning, rather than towards it, especially in Anglophone learner contexts, where languages might be perceived as irrelevant” (p. 83). The scope for this is probably pronounced when resistance emerges due to dissonance (see section 7.4.4.5). Female student (M12) demonstrated this self (see section 4.4.1.4).

Recent research introduced the *Anti-ought-to L2 Self*, which refers to one’s “desires that are at odds with what the others expect from the individual” (Al-Hoorie, 2018:724). An *Anti-ought-to L2 Self* seeks to assert the learner’s dominance in the learner-context relationship (Thompson, 2017). It signals “active resistance against societal expectations” (Thompson, 2017:39). This self promotes learning languages other than the ones mandated by the context (Thompson, 2017). A counter-culture focused on learning European languages is emerging among a-MLA. This culture was described as ‘trending’. For instance, male student (M29) said: “I would like to do French or something, like those kinds of languages”.

7.4.5.4.2. *The One-day Self*

A self lacking in motivational capacity can emerge or continue to exist to serve other purposes. Oyserman et al. (2004) explained that PS might not have self-regulatory functions. They might exist to “facilitate optimism and belief that change is possible because they provide the sense that the current self is mutable”(Oyserman et al., 2004:131). In other words, a possible self that is vague and lacking in strategies can be maintained to make us feel better about ourselves (Oyserman et al., 2004). Such selves are described as “self-enhancing” and promote a sense of well-being within the individual (Oyserman et al., 2004).

The religious origin of the Arabic OL2S has possible implications for the discomfort students feel due to the perceived discrepancy between their actual self and the Arabic OL2S. The discomfort could be a form of religious guilt that derives from failing to meet religious

expectations. For a few students, the unattainable Arabic OL2S could evolve into a vague *One-day Self* to alleviate religious guilt, to save face, or to shelve one's aspirations for another time and place in which they might be attainable. For instance, male student (M33) said: "*I might learn it one day*", but "I don't think it's gonna happen while I'm in school".

7.4.6. The essential X-factor

The emergence of Mr-X at School 4 is significant in three ways. Firstly, Mr-X proves that a supportive, caring teacher can make a difference. For instance, male student (M39) said: "[The teacher] *finds time for us ... maybe a lunch session or a recess ... that's what I like, Alhamdulillah*". He explicitly stated that this approach improved his outcomes: "*that's making my Arabic better*". Secondly, Mr-X shows that agreeable methods and content can capture students' interest and motivate them. For instance, male student (M34) explained that when they were learning about food, Mr-X "made a *PowerPoint* about ... all the different foods and drinks." He also added that: "we play *games*. We do *role-plays*. We have ... *projects* to do". He elaborated: "last term, we had to do a role-play about the shops" and "I was in a group of three *with my two best friends*" and "we did the project together". Thirdly, the presence of Mr-X emphasised the inconsistent quality of L2LE (even in the same school). Students criticised his counterparts. Those who took his classes used him as a benchmark and were disappointed with their subsequent experiences. For instance, male student (M36) said: "Mr-X's classes, I have to admit we learnt a lot and it was pretty fun ... Mr-Y's classes *there's no motivation*. It's pretty *boring*, and that's probably because *he doesn't put any effort into it*".

Nonetheless, Mr-X represents the potential for breaking the vicious cycle within which some students are caught. The essential X-factor can be seen as a disruptor of the status quo. It emphasises that following students' recommendations for improving learning and teacher performance should be taken seriously (see Chapter 6). Roshandel and Hudley (2018) identified that "teachers are in a unique position to support adolescents' hopes and dreams for the future and help them to understand the impact of their school performance on their educational possible selves" (p. 213). Several students highlighted the need for changing the teachers. As a way forward, I highlight two students' suggestions. Male student (M35) said that "more qualified teachers" are needed. "[Those who] teach Arabic, yeah, as [a] specialty". Male student (M36) stressed that the teacher should: "*take his teaching, and the students, probably a bit more seriously*. And, you know, *put more effort into what he's*

doing.” He stressed that the teachers should “prepare a good class for us” because “*learning would be more effective that way*”.

7.5. The students’ recommendations

The potential for quality L2LE to engage and motivate students is emphasised by the students’ elaborate recommendations for change (see chapter 6). Students were aware of the undermining contextual influences but energetically suggested improvement to their L2LE. Following their proposals and fostering encouraging micro-experiences might offset some of the negative attitudes they absorb from their broader context/s (Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2009). The lingering desire in a-MLA to change the status quo probably stems from their internalisation of Arabic OL2S. That is, while they do drop the unattainable Arabic OL2S, they still feel that they should be pursuing it to meet the expectations of their faith. It is vital that AIS develop their L2M potential, rather than inadvertently (or purposely) condition them in counter-productive ways that culminate in the abandonment of the Arabic OL2S.

The students offered contextualised, insightful and detailed suggestions. This prolific outcome emphasises the need for more L2MR committed to student voice (Lamb, 2005; Ushioda, 2008). The a-MLA suggestions were grouped into three categories: (1) improving program structure; (2) improving teaching approaches and content; (3) developing teachers’ performance (see section 7.1.3 for a summary). Four conclusions can be drawn from their suggestions. Firstly, AIS and Arabic teachers need to invest time and energy in planning and delivering quality L2LE. Secondly, some teachers’ behaviours, attitudes, skills, and efficiency require attention. Thirdly, Arabic learning should be tailored to the cohort’s needs and interests. Fourthly, instructional approaches need to be “hands-on” to protect L2M and improve L2 learning outcomes.

As a way forward, Australian Islamic schools need to (1) explore motivational Arabic teaching; and (2) work together to improve Arabic L2LE.

7.5.1. Motivational Arabic teaching

At a global level, schools need to apply motivational teaching strategies to all stages of learning. Given the a-MLA recommendations, the taxonomy of motivational language teaching practices recommended by Dörnyei (2001a) is relevant. Dörnyei spreads 102 strategies over four stages of L2 teaching (Dörnyei, 2001a; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Lamb, 2019). The AIS Arabic teachers need to (1) establish the basic motivational conditions [e.g.

appropriate teacher behaviours which cultivate a conducive atmosphere]; (2) generate initial L2M [e.g. using relevant material and boosting expectancies of success]; (3) maintain L2M [e.g. making Arabic learning enjoyable, presenting tasks in motivational ways, promoting autonomy, and promoting cooperation among learners]; (4) encourage positive retrospective self-evaluation [e.g. increasing learner satisfaction, encouraging motivational attributions, and offering grades in a motivating way] (Dörnyei, 2001a:29).

Teachers need to focus on the “hands-on learning” students requested (see sections 6.2.3, 6.2.4, and 6.2.5). According to a-MLA, “hands-on learning” is active, interactive, communicative, and multi-sensorial. In other words, it is ‘learning by doing and experiencing’. The term “hands-on learning” is engrained in science teaching (Haury & Rillero, 1994) but is not commonly used to describe L2 teaching. However, a-MLA descriptions of “hands-on learning” resonate with aspects of several established L2 teaching methods. The most relevant are (1) the whole language approach; (2) total physical response; (3) communicative language teaching; and (4) task-based learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The a-MLA definition of “hands-on learning” stressed using interactive computer-assisted language learning content (Blake, 2013; Levy & Stockwell, 2006); and other audio-visual resources. There may be a benefit in exploring the strategies developed by Moore and English (1998) to teach African-American boys Arabic (see section 2.2.2.1). Most relevant is the need to increase learning time (students spent 4 hours and 45 minutes learning Arabic per week); and create L2LE that are discovery-based and synergistic (students moved around, experienced multisensorial activities, partnered in planning learning and teaching, and used rap to learn vocabulary).

7.5.2. AIS collaboration for Arabic

Students mostly considered their L2LE in Years 7-9 unsatisfactory. The shortage of suitably-trained teachers and well-structured, level-appropriate, enriched and relevant learning material is evident. Resolving these issues (by developing training programs and an AIS curriculum) requires collaboration. The need for a central coordinating body to steer and direct Arabic educational efforts and research in Australia is recognised but has not been realised (Campbell et al., 1993; Leal, 1991; Selim, 2018a). It is recommended that the Islamic Schools Association of Australia (ISAA)⁴¹ spearhead collaborative initiatives to

⁴¹ Please see: <http://www.isaahome.org.au/>

train their Arabic teachers and to develop and share content that is suitable for the needs of the a-MLA in the sector.

7.6. Chapter summary

This chapter outlined and discussed the major findings. It reviewed the theoretical framework and discussed many important interpretations. The students' L2 orientations aligned with the OL2S but did not translate into L2M. Their English, educational, and ethnic contexts undermined or de-emphasised Arabic. The sections that followed focused on the numerous impacts of their negative L2LE. Data showed that students' disengaged behaviours were used as communicative acts. Various implications for learners' L2M and possible L2 selves were discussed. It was identified that favourable teacher qualities and good instructional methods could improve the situation. In the final section, students' important recommendations were discussed with an emphasis on "hands-on learning".

In the following chapter, the research conclusion, limitations, and recommendations are discussed.

Chapter 8. *Conclusion*

The success of an educational process hinges on its ability to engage learners in meaningful learning experiences that sustain their motivation and persistence in learning. Realising this goal can be facilitated by the close examination of L2M from an experiential perspective. Such examinations of L2M permit the delineation of the internal and external forces that shape motivation. These examinations also generate findings that can be of practical relevance to educators. This thesis explored the L2 learning experiences and L2 motivation of adolescent non-Arab Muslims (a-MLA) learning Arabic at Australian Islamic Schools (AIS). The research had four aims: (1) to understand how learning experiences influence a-MLA motivation; (2) to identify other influences; (3) to provide a description of learning experiences; and (4) to present students' recommendations for change.

The L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009, 2019b) informed the theoretical framework of this exploration. The main focus of the thesis aligned with the third component of the model: L2 Learning Experience (L2LE). However, theoretical flexibility was needed to respond to Arabic-specific issues and the nature of adolescent school students' motivation. Therefore, the L2MSS and L2LE were supplemented by the 'person-in-context relational view' (PICRV) of emergent motivation, self, and identity (Ushioda, 2009); as well as possible selves literature. A basic interpretive qualitative approach (BIQA) was used to conduct the research. Four AIS participated in the research. The data were gathered using semi-structured interviews and classroom observations (CO). Twenty-four CO were conducted to triangulate the research. In total, forty adolescents from Years 7-10 participated. Data were analysed thematically. The presentation of findings focused on the students' words and honoured their voices.

This final chapter is divided into five sections. The first section outlines the answers to the research questions and reconciles them with the research aims. The second section summarises some of the key interpretations that emerged from the data. The third section highlights the significance of this thesis. The fourth section identifies the limitations of the thesis. The final section presents recommendations for teachers and researchers.

8.1. Questions and aims

The first research question was: *How do a-MLA in AIS make sense of Arabic learning?* It was aligned with the first two aims of the research, (1) to understand how Arabic learning experiences at AIS influence a-MLA motivation; (2) identify other influences. The findings uncovered the students' perceptions of Arabic program purposes; their motivational orientations; their L2 learning expectations; and the nature of their L2 motivation in terms of engagement with learning. The most significant findings that emerged concerning this question were that disengagement was prevalent and explicit resistance was emergent, both of which indicate negative motivational states. Data revealed that negative L2LE were implicated in both phenomena. The findings also delineated other influential factors (English primacy, future planning, parental attitudes, and countercultures) that contribute to this.

The second research question was: *What do a-MLA make of their L2 learning experiences?* The second question addressed the third aim of the research: providing a detailed account of Arabic learning experiences. Students' perspectives generated a wealth of knowledge about their Arabic L2LE. Structural aspects, typical learning, classroom experiences, learning content, and appraisals of teachers were described in students' words. Students complained that program structuring (number of lessons and multi-level classes) impedes their progress. Students found most teachers' skills, methods, and personalities disagreeable. They complained that learning was pitched at too high a level and that content was unstructured. For some students, the content of learning was also irrelevant. The essential finding was that negative L2LE disengaged a-MLA and often impacted their self-concepts in negative ways. Poor learning outcomes, matriculation pressures, and boredom were key reasons for abandoning Arabic in Years 10-12.

The third research question was: *How would a-MLA like their L2 learning experiences improved?* This question realised the fourth aim of the research: outlining the students' recommendations for change. Students provided wonderful suggestions for the improvement of their Arabic L2LE. A key message that came through in their recommendations was that implementing their requested changes would enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. Students emphasised the need to change teaching methods and gave tips for the improvement of teachers' performance. Students stressed the need for "hands-on learning", which permits practical engagement with Arabic through a range of collaborative activities, games, and conversational tasks. Students wanted audio-visual content and CALL resources

incorporated into their learning. They also emphasised the need for building Islamic identity connections. The majority of students' requested changes to the way programs were structured and emphasised the need for more lessons and better management of their levels. The excellent proposals students made for the improvement of their L2LE constitute a contextualised plan for change.

8.2. Key interpretations

The L2MSS reconceptualises L2M in terms of the future-oriented component of one's self-concept. A future self is constructed and carries the L2 attributes that one desires to possess (ideal L2 self: IL2S) or believes they should possess to meet their duties or the expectations of others (ought-to L2 self: OL2S). The students' predominantly religious orientations were mainly aligned with the ought-to L2 self (e.g. duties). Seven religious orientations emerged (1) enlightenment; (2) sacred text; (3) ritual; (4) obligation; (5) preservation; (6) transmission; and (7) Afterlife. Despite the external origin of the OL2S, a measure of internalisation was evident. However, the motivational power of the Arabic OL2S seemed diminished (or completely nullified). The reasons for this were complex and interrelated.

Macro- and micro-level contexts undermined the value of Arabic language learning. Negative L2LE amplified the implausibility of acquiring Arabic. Disengagement was prevalent, and overt resistance, countercultures, and alienation were emergent. The repeated failures to learn, battered some students' self-worth and engendered learned helplessness. The data revealed that students used disruptive behaviours as communicative acts. The frustration many students showed, and the hurt that several students revealed, indicate that disruptive behaviours are a cry for help. These a-MLA dropped the Arabic OL2S or developed other selves in response to their situation. Two other selves emerged: a rebellious self (tries to assert itself) and a one-day self (alleviates guilt).

It is important to highlight that serious dissonance was apparent between students' expectations and experiences. Students were dissatisfied with the nature of instruction, the irrelevance of reading texts and their learning outcomes. Students expected L2 learning to facilitate the acquisition of all language macro-skills and to build reading comprehension skills. Their self-appraisals and discussions revealed that they could not comprehend texts; and that many had not acquired decoding skills either. One student had not acquired

decoding skills after three years of study. Overall, the Arabic programs did not direct learners to their goals and did not meet their expectations. Nonetheless, students energetically provided a change plan.

8.3. Thesis significance

This thesis makes several significant and original contributions to knowledge.

Firstly, the thesis makes a major contribution to research on Arabic language learning in Australia. As the first focused effort to understand the L2M of a non-Arab cohort of Arabic learners, this thesis uncovered a complex web of interrelated factors that influence AL2M in a-MLA in the AIS context. The findings showed that the learners' macro-level context/s undermine the value of learning Arabic. The thesis also showed that negative L2LE are potentially detrimental to a-MLA motivation and participation in Arabic learning in Years 10-12. The thesis added to the emergent research focused on the nature of education at AIS by expanding our understanding of the nature of Arabic L2LE. Students' perspectives also drew attention to the need for a level-appropriate curriculum that caters for their needs. As a pioneering exploration committed to student voice, the thesis presented a unique a-MLA guided plan for improving Arabic L2LE in AIS.

Secondly, the thesis contributes to Arabic research in the areas of AL2M and Islamic education, both locally and in comparable contexts. The thesis showed that students have several interests in learning Arabic. However, it also revealed that adolescents' orientations to Arabic learning do not automatically engender motivated behaviours or engagement (even if religious). The thesis showed that their L2 motivation is tentative and susceptible to many influences. It also provided evidence that students expect to acquire well-rounded proficiency in Arabic. More importantly, the data revealed that the students' conception of literacy extends beyond the acquisition of liturgical literacy void of comprehension. The thesis presented evidence that the GTM is ineffective and disengages younger learners. Furthermore, it showed that prolonged exposure to negative Arabic L2LE could have serious implications for self-efficacy and self-worth in a-MLA and other young Arabic learners. These findings can assist the educators of Muslim children in designing and delivering better Arabic programs that respond to their expectations.

Thirdly, in connection with the larger body of work on L2 motivation, the thesis makes important contributions. It demonstrated some of the theoretical complexities that need to be

accounted for when working with adolescents' L2M, especially in connection with learning languages other than English (LOTE). The thesis consequently proposed a theoretical framework for examining adolescents' L2M when learning a LOTE in an English context by adapting aspects of the L2MSS, PICRV and possible selves literature. The thesis also proposed a conception of adolescents' L2M that accounts for the roles of context/s and L2LE in shaping and interacting with the actual and possible L2 selves of school students. This theoretical framework and conception proved useful in this thesis and could benefit other L2M researchers in similar contexts. This conception can provide a basis for further theoretical scrutiny and research comparisons.

8.4. Research limitations

Adopting an exploratory approach is suited to researching topics and contexts about which little is presently known. The thesis scoped the lay of the land and uncovered many significant findings. However, the strengths and limitations of exploratory research are two faces of the same coin. While the thesis efficiently lays the foundations for future research, it has its limitations. Firstly, the research was undertaken with minimal expenditure and limited resources. The data were generated from a modest number of research sites and participants. Therefore, the data is not representative of the entire AIS sector or all a-MLA experiences within it. L2 providers and schools need to decide if the findings resonate with their situation and context. Secondly, the study was possibly limited by its focus and aims. The research homed in on non-Arab Muslims in the AIS sector. Therefore, it did not examine the motivation and learning experiences of Arab students in the AIS sector.

8.5. Recommendations

In undertaking this research, I hoped that the knowledge it generated would help protect and enhance participation in Arabic learning in Australia. Present participation in Arabic learning is poor. Unfortunately, my findings and those of Jones (2013) suggest that the AIS sector's potential to generate meaningful participation by a-MLA is not being realised. While the present scenario is not promising, the situation is not hopeless.

I draw much optimism from three facts. Firstly, many students volunteered to speak to me about their experiences, regardless of whether they were disengaged, overtly resistant, intending to drop or had dropped Arabic. These insightful adolescents presented us with a wealth of data on how to move forward and reconcile programs with their expectations.

Secondly, the feedback about teacher-X emphasised the potential role a supportive and effective teacher can play in engaging learners and improving outcomes. Thirdly, the findings of this research are rich enough to generate robust discussions in the AIS sector and foster collaboration to meet learners' needs.

The thesis makes three key recommendations based on the findings:

8.5.1. Implementing students' suggestions

Teachers and educators in the AIS sector (who find the data relevant) need to implement the students' suggestions. The a-MLA recommendations are contextualised, but they are also very logical and in keeping with contemporary research on L2M. Applying the students' recommendations could increase engagement and improve Arabic learning outcomes. Using motivational teaching strategies and "hands-on learning" is essential. Students strongly emphasised the need for instructional approaches that permit practical engagement with the language, speakers of the language, and fellow learners. The motivational strategies introduced by Dörnyei (2001a) can aid teachers in developing strategies for the specific stage of learning they are managing. Teachers can use these strategies to augment the students' recommendations.

8.5.2. Arabic teacher training programs

Arabic teacher training programs need to be organised urgently to create a better fit between students' expectations and teachers' approaches. These programs need to increase the teachers' understanding of current educational and instructional approaches as well as language-specific matters. Teachers must receive support and guidance in developing cohort-specific and level-appropriate Arabic programs of work. To this end, it is recommended that the Islamic Schools Association of Australia assume a leadership role in guiding these efforts. ISAA can liaise with schools, teachers, and academics to provide a professional development program for Arabic teachers; and develop a more comprehensive cohort-specific curriculum. It is also advisable for universities to invest in postgraduate certificate programs or short courses focused on the teaching of Arabic as a second or foreign language.

8.5.3. Directions for future research

Further research on Arabic learning is required. Campbell et al. (1993) had recommended that more postgraduate research focused on "Arabic language and linguistics

should be encouraged so that a sound academic base is developed in Australia” (p. v). This recommendation is as necessary today as it was then. However, it is recommended that established academics give more research attention to Arabic language education. It is also important that research momentum is maintained. A significant portion of these research efforts needs to focus on the AIS sector and Muslim students to build on the research gains that have been made. In this regard, there are several key directions for future research.

- Researchers need to undertake larger-scale quantitative studies to extend the thesis’s findings. Survey studies can capture the perspectives of a larger cohort of a-MLA. The current findings can guide the development of surveys. The surveys can be used to examine the prevalence of the issues that emerged in this thesis. Additionally, these studies can incorporate facets of established quantitative and correlational L2MR to gain insights into quantifiable aspects of L2M.
- Researchers need to compare the perspectives of a-MLA with those of adolescent Arab learners of Arabic in the AIS sector. Comparative research needs to understand the nature of these Arab students’ experiences and participation in Arabic learning in Years 10-12. It is important to compare their motivational orientations to Arabic learning to those of a-MLA. It is also important to explore the Arabic-related possible selves of Arab learners of Arabic at AIS.
- Future action research is needed. Action research needs to examine the impacts of changes on various facets of the students’ Arabic learning experiences. Research should compare students’ perspectives before and after implementing changes. Action research can elevate the level of commitment to student voice by including the students as partners in the design, implementation, and examinations of changes.
- Research needs to investigate the relationship between Arabic and religious identity construction among a-MLA in the AIS sector. It is important to explore whether a-MLA see Arabic as a necessary component of their religious identity. The emergence of possible alienation is a concern given the Islamic context of education. Researchers also need to examine if the failure to learn Arabic alienates some learners from Islam.
- Investigations of other key stakeholders’ perspectives are needed (parents, Arabic teachers, and principals). It is important to learn the similarities and differences in expectations and perceptions of Arabic programs between these various stakeholders. Research needs to compare other stakeholders’ views to those of a-MLA to better understand intergenerational differences.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Analysis final themes table

Theme Name	Description
1. MAKING SENSE OF ARABIC	Research Question 1: How do adolescent MLA in AIS make sense of Arabic learning? Research Aim 1. Understanding how Arabic learning experiences at AIS influence non-Arab Muslim learners' motivation. Research Aim 2. Identifying other influences.
1. Perceptions of AIS programs	The reasons students identified as possible for the introduction of Arabic at their schools.
1.1. Schools' Muslim identity	Students' beliefs that the Islamic nature of the schools factored in the introduction of programs.
1.2. Educational purposes	Students' beliefs that the schools had specific educational reasons for the introduction of programs.
1.3. To oblige majorities	Students' beliefs that the presence of majorities of Arab students at schools factored in the introduction of programs.
2. Students' motivational orientations	Students' underlying interests in Arabic.
2.1. Religious Orientations	Interests inspired by faith and faith-related factors.
2.1.1. Enlightenment orientation	Interest in answering Allah's commandments.
2.1.2. Sacred text orientation	Interest in comprehending religious scripture.
2.1.3. Ritual orientation	Interest in practising various faith rituals.
2.1.4. Obligation orientation	Interest that is predominantly emanating from a sense of obligation.
2.1.5. Preservation orientation	Interest in preserving the Arabic language.
2.1.6. Transmission orientation	Interest in sharing Arabic learning and religious knowledge with others.
2.1.7. Afterlife orientation	Interest inspired by the belief that Arabic is needed in the Hereafter.
2.2. Other L2 orientations	Additional interests that are non-religious in nature.
2.2.1. Language-cultural orientation	Affinity for Arabic and Arabic cultural products.
2.2.2. Travel orientation	Interest in learning to facilitate interaction during travel.
2.2.3. Friendship orientation	Interest in using language with friends or making friends.
2.2.4. Instrumental orientation	Interest in using Arabic for other purposes.
2.2.5. Recognition orientation	Interest in impressing others with Arabic learning.
3. Definitions of expected learning	Students' conceptions of learning.
3.1. Acquiring all L2 macro-skills	Students mainly conceived of L2 learning in terms of well-rounded proficiency.
3.2. Reading and understanding	Students' belief that reading means reading with comprehension.
4. Resistance and disengagement	Evidence that students showed resistance to learning and were disengaged.
4.1. Overt resistance	A minority openly rejected Arabic learning for various reasons.
4.1.1. Ethnolinguistic priorities	Focus on home language in the rejection of Arabic.
4.1.2. Recurring failures in L2LE	Repeated learning failures are leading to negative perceptions of learnability.
4.1.3. Narrow religious interest	Disinterest due to interest in religious reading and exegesis only.
4.1.4. Rebellion and alienation	Open rebellion against the religious compulsion to learn Arabic at the school and emphasis on Arabic in the community.
4.2. Disengagement	Internal and external disengagement from learning.
4.2.1. External disengagement	Behavioural manifestations of disengagement.
4.2.2. Internal disengagement	Evidence of more internalised disengagement.
4.2.3. Possible explanations	Students' reasons and explanations of disengagement.
4.2.3.1. English primacy	The dominance of English in personal and school lives. Perceptions of the emphasis on English in Australia.
4.2.3.2. Future planning	Disengagement caused by an inability to relate learning to future academic milestones or career choices.
4.2.3.3. Parental attitudes	The negative attitude of parents to Arabic language learning.

4.2.3.4. Countercultures	Peer culture around alternative European languages.
4.2.3.5. Negative L2LE	Negative and unpleasant learning experiences turning students away.
2. ARABIC L2 LEARNING EXPERIENCES	Research Question 2: What do adolescent MLA make of their L2 learning experiences. Research Aim 3: Providing a detailed account of their Arabic learning experiences.
2.1. Appraisals of AIS programs	The general opinion of the Arabic programs and their effectiveness.
2.2. Attrition in senior secondary	Senior students' explanations of their actual or intended dropping of Arabic.
2.3. The L2 learning experiences	Students' collective overall accounts of the essence of Arabic learning at AIS.
2.3.1. The structure of programs	Issues related to the school level planning for Arabic learning.
2.3.1.1. Timetabling lessons	Perspectives on the number of lessons planned for Arabic.
2.3.1.2. Managing L2 levels	Perspectives on learners' proficiency assessments and level assignment.
2.3.1.3. Learning with Arabs	Perspectives on sharing classes with Arab-background peers.
2.3.2. The descriptions of L2LE	Students' perspectives on various aspects of their learning experiences.
2.3.2.1. The standard lesson	Descriptions of typical lessons and learning activities.
2.3.2.2. Prescribed readings	Descriptions of typical reading texts (booklets or textbooks).
2.3.2.3. Dearth of resources	Concerns around the lack of additional resources.
2.3.2.4. Reactions to lessons	How their typical lessons and in-class experiences make them feel.
2.3.2.5. Regular disruptions	Accounts of regular classroom disruptions of learning.
2.3.2.6. Lenient assessments	Perspectives of the teachers' tendencies to lenient assessment and test preparation.
2.3.2.7. The rare experiences	Descriptions of atypical lessons and learning activities with a few teachers.
2.3.2.8. Student appraisals of teachers	Students' assessments of their teachers' performance and traits.
2.3.2.8.1. Teachers' methods and skills	Students' perspectives on the teachers' teaching styles and various skills.
2.3.2.8.2. Reaction to teachers' natures	Students' perspectives on teachers' personalities and attitudes.
2.3.2.8.2.1. Negative characteristics	Students' descriptions of problematic traits.
2.3.2.8.2.2. Positive traits of Mr-X	A few students identify the positive traits of one teacher.
3. RECOMMENDED CHANGES	Research Question 3: How would adolescent MLA like L2 learning experiences improved? Research Aim 4: Presenting the students' recommendations for change if gaps between expectations and realities emerged.
3.1. Improving program structuring	Students' offer perspectives on how school level program planning can be improved.
3.1.1. More "spread out" lessons	Students discuss increasing allocated lessons.
3.1.2. Managing students' levels	Students' outline their perspectives on how levels should be managed.
3.1.3. Make Arabic an Elective	A minority suggestion that Arabic learning should be optional.
3.2. Enhancing the L2LE	Students' requests for the improvement of the learning experiences.
3.2.1. Structure of the curriculum	Students requests for better-structured programs.
3.2.2. Level and nature of the text	Students' request for easier, more relevant texts.
3.2.3. Please "Change it up a bit!"	Students' requests for varied activities and content.
3.2.4. More "hands-on" learning	Students' requests for more practical approaches to learning.
3.2.5. Enriching learning content	Students' requests for additional resources and materials.
3.2.6. Conversations and culture	Students' requests for the incorporation of more conversational and cultural content.
3.3. Recommendations for teachers	Students' tips and suggestions for the teachers.
3.3.1. Change teaching style	Requests for alternative teaching approaches.
3.3.2. Clarity and preparation	Requests for better lesson preparation and clearer explanations of the content.
3.3.3. Sensitivity and investment	Requests for better interaction with students and commitment to Arabic teaching.
3.3.4. Control of the classroom	Requests for building skills in classroom management and student disruptions.
3.3.5. Relevant humour	Suggestions for the use of relevant humour and jokes in teaching.
3.3.6. Develop identity connections	Requests for building creating identity connections with learning through learning content.

Appendix 2: Semi-structured interview forms

1. Interview prompts



Students semi-structured interview prompt

Part 1: Prompts to create rapport and provide some background notes

- Student age:
- Student's gender is: ☐ male ☐ female
- Student is in Year: ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10 ☐ 11 ☐ 12
- What language/s do you mostly speak with your parents and siblings?
- What language/s do you mostly speak with your friends and school mates?
- How long have you been studying Arabic at this school?
- Can you tell me about the languages you speak and can you score yourself for each language?
(students will be given a form to fill)

Part 2: Students' 7-12 interview prompts: About learning experiences and goals

- Tell me about why you think you are learning Arabic?
 - Why do you think the school teaches Arabic?
 - Do you feel that your goals and the goals of the schools are matched?
 - When do you use Arabic and why?
- Tell me about learning Arabic at this school?
 - What do you normally do in your lessons?
 - What activities do you have; presentations, role-play etc?
 - How do you feel about that?
 - What does learning Arabic mean to you? Is it reading, listening, speaking, writing ... or a combination of all?
 - What does learning to "read" mean to you?
 - How do you think your Arabic learning helps you achieve this?
- Can you tell me about your textbooks and other resources you use to learn?
 - Do you like these? Do they help you learn?
 - How do your classmates feel about the textbook and resources?
- Can you tell me about your teacher?
 - How do they teach? How do they help you learn?
 - Does this way of teaching suit your learning needs? Why?
- Can you tell me about your classmates?
 - How do they feel about Arabic?
 - How do classmates behave in class?
 - Why do you think that is?
- What can you say about Arabic as a language? Is it easy or difficult? Why?
 - Do your classmates feel the same way? How would you explain that?
- How can we improve the learning of Arabic?
- What are your plans for the future?
 - How does Arabic fit into these plans?
 - Will you be studying it in Years 10-12? Why?
 - What about your friends? Why do you think so?
 - or: Are you studying Arabic now? Why? Or Why not?
 - Do you see yourself studying Arabic at university?

Date: _____

2. Form to fill in the interview

LANGUAGE	RANK IMPORTANCE TO YOU	READING (w/ UNDERSTANDING)	LISTENING (w/ UNDERSTANDING)	WRITING (IN YOUR WORDS)	SPEAKING (EXPRESS YOURSELF)	OVERALL (OVERALL SCORE)
HOME LANGUAGE _____						
ENGLISH						
ARABIC						
OTHER LANGUAGE/S _____						

Appendix 3: Interview transcription samples

Sample 1

[00:13:02] umm, umm ... so how does she teach you the vocabulary and the grammar?

[00:13:07] like, if in each text there was like a vocabulary word, she will be like ... "OK this is a vocabulary word and there is another meaning to it", she will say like that, and then she will show an example on the board, and she will just umm put it in a small sentence like, this is for this type of questions or something... just ... yeah ...

[00:13:32] OK, and with the grammar

[00:13:34] same as the

[00:13:37] Ok so, she ... am I understanding you correctly by saying, you're reading a text first and then taking words and grammar out of the text?

[00:13:48] uhm

[00:13:49] Ok, OK ... and so how does this ... reading of the text happen? you come into class ... you...?

[00:13:58] she will, cuz we have a worksheet for each term, so like for one term there's one worksheet, so she will ask us to, cuz there's a whole page full of umm text, she will ask each, all of us to read at least one or two lines ... then she will translate it back to English and where she thinks that we should know about this word, vocabulary or grammar, she will point it out..

[00:14:23] ok, so ... you're doing a lot of reading and translating ...?

[00:14:31] yes [heavy sigh]

Sample 2

[00:05:08] ok, awesome. So, how long have you been studying at this school

[00:05:13] umm... since reception,

[00:05:16] which means 9 years, hehe

[00:05:17] yeah ...hehe

[00:05:18] hehe... please explain the zeros mate? haha

[00:05:24] haha ...

[00:05:27] I thought maybe a recent addition to the school?

[00:05:31] hehe

[00:05:31] please tell me more, now... I'm really interested ...

[00:05:33] hehe... well like I don't know the teacher doesn't teach properly, like she writes stuff on the board, and expects us to know what it is, and I'm like sitting here like, w... what the hell am I doing here,

[00:05:44] oh,

[00:05:45] the girls in my class they talk so much, like by the time she calms them all down, the lesson is nearly over...

[00:05:51] Umm...

[00:05:51] and she doesn't teach that much, she just like writes some stuff on the board, and I'm so confused... like, like ... 90% of the girls in our class are like that ...

Appendix 4: Classroom observation guide

Date / time:	School:	Session number:
Number of students:	Teacher:	Years:

Observable aspects	Description/comments
1. Student engagement and rapport	
2. Physical aspects of the learning space	
3. Subject matter content, textbooks and resources	
4. Classroom organization and management	
5. Teaching methods and presentation	

Other notes about the student experience:

Appendix 5: Filled classroom observation sample

Date / time: [REDACTED]		School: [REDACTED]		Session number: 7	
Number of students: 16 PRESENT		Teacher: MR.		Years: 8 B	
Observable aspects	Description/comments				
1. Student engagement and rapport	- 9:10 AM 16 BOYS PRESENT - AS THE TEACHER DOES NOT HAVE SCANS STUDENTS START TALKING. - ONE BOYS ASKS TO GO TO THE BATHROOM, AND THE TEACHER ALLOWS IT. - BOYS FROM THE MIDDLE ROW, ARE HUDDLED WITH BOYS IN THE BACK ROW. - ANOTHER BOY GOES OUT. - BOYS ASKS, "MR CAN I BRING MY PROJECT TOMORROW" AND TEACHER SAYS "YES YOU CAN" - BOY TALKING. - 3 BOYS HAVE THE BOOK OPEN, MOST BOYS DON'T HAVE THE BOOK - BOY WHO WAS MOVED, WENT AND SAT NEXT TO ANOTHER DISRUPTIVE BOY IN THE MIDDLE ROW. - BOY DRUMMING ON TABLE - BOYS COPY OF THE BOARD, BUT SOME ARE CLEARLY PRETENDING. - ONE BOY NEXT TO ME, WROTE ONE SENTENCE AFTER BORROWING A SHEET FROM MATE. - ONE BOY LEFT THE CLASSROOM WITHOUT ASKING - SOME ARE PAROTTING THE TEXT AFTER HIM, OTHERS CANNOT BE BOTHERED, SOME BOYS SLUMPED ON DESK, OTHER TALKING - TEACHER TRIES TO GET THEM TO PARROT, BUT NO ONE READING AFTER HIM - ONLY [REDACTED] IS READING, SO SOME START SHOUTING WITH HIM - 2 BOYS PLAYING ON IPAD, 1 BOY PLAYING WITH SHEET, BOY NEXT TO ME DOODLING - THEY ARE WAITING FOR THE BELL - 9:44 AM BELL RINGS, THEY GET UP AND RUN OUT				
2. Physical aspects of the learning space	- REGULAR ROOM, WITH INDIVIDUAL DESKS ORGANISED IN ROWS.				
3. Subject matter content, textbooks and resources	- HISTORY OF TRANSPORT, FROM THE TEXTBOOK - REVISION OF "CELEBRATION"				
4. Classroom organization and management	- BOYS ARE TALKING, TEACHER SAYS "YOU WANT TO LEAVE OR STAY HERE WITH ME?" AND THEN FOLLOWS "I WANT TO TEACH AND NOTHING WILL STOP ME". THE BOY ANSWERS, "STAY HERE" TEACHER SAYS, "GOOD BOY". - TEACHER IS NOT READY WITH ALL THE SCANS, SO HE TELLS THE BOYS "YOU'RE ALLOWED TO TALK FOR TWO MINUTES, REST" AND STARTS LOOKING FOR SCANS ON IPAD, HE COULDN'T FIND THE PAGE, SO STARTS SCANNING AGAIN. (TIME OF SCANNING COULD HAVE BEEN USED DIFFERENTLY) - ASKS THEM TO SETTLE DOWN AND USES AND UMPIRE'S WHISTLE, CALLS THEM BACK AND SAYS, "I GAVE YOU REST, NOW RESPECT!" - TOOK 5 MINUTES TO GET STARTED AGAIN				

	- BOY TALKING; HE GOES TO HIM AND MUMBLES SOMETHING AND THE BOY RETORTS "SIR, I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING" - WHEN THEY ARE READING, ONE BOY SAYS SOMETHING, TEACHER SAYS "DID I GIVE YOU PERMISSION?" "BEFORE YOU TALK" HE GESTURES (RAISE HANDS) - TEACHER SAYS, "STAND UP" BOYS SAYS, "I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING" AND TEACHER SAYS "READ, SAY MEANING" ... THE BOY COULDN'T AND THE TEACHER MOVED HIM.
5. Teaching methods and presentation	- TEACHER PROJECTS IMAGE FROM TEXTBOOK ABOUT THE HISTORY OF TRANSPORT - THEY ARE READING PAGE TWO, AND PUBLIC DISCUSSION MOSTLY IN ENGLISH AROUND TRANSLATION OF THE TEXT - THEY START READING / REVISING LAST LESSON'S READING ABOUT "CELEBRATION" ... THEY READ OFF THE BOARD AND TRANSLATE AGAIN - "WE ARE GOING TO READ, SAY THE MEANING, THEN YOU WRITE IT DOWN" - BOY STANDS UP TO READ, ONE BOY LEAVES READING, ONE BOY STRUGGLING TO READ (ALSO CAN'T SEE SCANS CLEARLY) - TEACHER TELLS THEM TO PULL OUT EXERCISE BOOK AND WRITE THE MEANING. "WRITE THE SENTENCE AND TASHKEEL AND THE MEANING" - BOYS COPYING OFF THE BOARD. - TEACHER SAYS "MA SHA ALLAH, 4 GAVE ME YOUR PROJECT" - ONE STUDENT SAYS, "SIR I WAS ABSENT" AND TEACHER SAID, "I EXTENDED TO TOMORROW, WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?" - THE TEACHER TELLS THEM THAT WHEN THEY ARE DONE COPYING, THEY CAN TALK, AND THEN ASKS "DONE?" AND SAYS "ON THE COUNT OF TEN, I'M GOING TO COME AND CHECK" - "OK MR AND DO" "GOING TO COME TICK YOUR WORK" - TEACHER SAYS "ONE SENTENCE" (GIVE THE MEANING, WRITE TASHKEEL, YOU DIDN'T DO ANYTHING" - TICKED BOY NEXT TO ME FOR COPYING SENTENCE AND ASKED HIM TO WRITE THE MEANING. - TEACHER SAYS "WELL DONE, MAJORITY OF YOU DONE IT" - HE EXPLAINS WHY TASHKEEL IS IMPORTANT FOR READING, - THEY PROCEED TO READ THE REST OF THE FIRST LINE OF THE TEXT, TEACHER SAYS, "READ TOGETHER, READY SET GO" HE THEN SAYS "THAT'S NOT THE WHOLE CLASS" - HE TRIES TO GET THEM TO READ, "READY SET GO" BUT THEN THE IPAD POWERS OFF AND HE HAS TO UNLOCK IT. - WHEN THE BELL RINGS, HE SHOULDS AFTER THEM YOUR HOMEWORK TO READ AND LEARN THESE WORDS.

Other notes about the student experience:

*** GYM METHOD BEING USED, BUT NOT EVEN IN AN EFFICIENT MANNER, SO MUCH TIME WASTED IN SCANNING, RESTARTING AND DISRUPTIONS.

THE TEACHER HAS NOTHING SPECIAL PREPARED. THE TOPIC CHANGED SUDDENLY. BOYS WERE NOT ENGAGED, AND THIS WAS MOST OBVIOUS WHEN

ASKED TO READ ALOUD AND REFUSING TO DO SO.

Appendix 6: Informed consent forms

1. Student recruitment form



Student recruitment form

Dear Student,

My name is Nadia Selim. I am a student at the University of South Australia, Adelaide. I am working with my teachers Professor Mohamad Abdalla and Dr. Ibrahima Diallo to complete a research project.

I need your kind help with my research project. The title of my research project is "Muslim youth experiences of Arabic language learning at Australian Islamic schools".

My research is about the experiences of non-Arab students learning the Arabic language at Islamic schools.

"This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee"

How you can help me with my research project:

I want to learn what you think of your learning experiences, this includes asking you questions about your opinions of your teachers, textbooks, and your classroom activities.

I also want to understand what you think is good and what you think should be improved and I need you to tell me what can be done to improve your learning of Arabic.

So, I would like to interview you for 30-45 minutes and visit some of your Arabic language lessons to share your learning experience.

If you are interested please let us know by signing below. We will then give you a letter to take home to your parents/guardians so they can give you permission to help with my project.

1. If you wish to participate in this research project, please sign below

_____ Student Name (<i>please print</i>)	_____ Student signature	_____ Date
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If you have any questions you can email me at nadia.selim@unisa.edu.au

Thank you very much,
Nadia

2. Student/parent or guardian consent form



Research and
Innovation Services

Human Research Ethics Committee
CONSENT FORM

Dear Student and Guardian,

My name is Nadia Sellm. I am a student at the University of South Australia. I am working with my teachers Professor Mohamed Abdalla, and Dr Ibrahima Diallo on a research study. We are asking you to be part of it.

A research study: Is when people like me collect a lot of information about a certain thing to find out more about it. This letter tells you about my study so you can decide if you want to be in it. Before you decide, you can talk about it with your parents or anyone else you like.

Basic idea of my research study: Australian Islamic schools are one of the biggest providers of Arabic language learning programs to Australian students. So, it is important to know what these programs are like. However, what is more important is to understand what the students think of these programs and why they think this. This research aims to improve your experience by asking you to tell us what you think can be improved.

I am doing this study to find out more about:

- How Muslim students learn Arabic at Australian Islamic Schools,
- If non-Arabic background students like their Arabic language learning experience,
- and how Arabic can be improved to meet the needs of non-Arabic background students?

We're inviting you to take part because you go to a school where we are doing the study.

If you agree to be in the study and your parents say it is okay, we will ask you to:

- Participate in an interview. This will take about 30 - 45 minutes and will be done at your school.
- I will audio record our discussion so that I can write down what you said later.
- I will also come and attend some of your Arabic lessons to understand your normal experience.

Place and time: The interview will occur at your school and during school hours. We will ask the school and teachers to allocate a time during one of your regular lessons to discuss this matter.

Any benefits? Being in this study won't change anything for you. But we hope that what we find out from this research will help future students with their Arabic language learning in Australia.

Do you have to participate? No, research is something you do only if you want to. Whether you decide to participate or not, it will have no effect on your grades at school. And if you agree, you can always change your mind later if you don't want to be in the study any more.

Any discomforts? You do not have to participate and if you participate you can stop after you start. If you get bored or tired or decide that you don't want to finish the interview just tell me and I will stop the interview.

Who will know? If I write up a report or give talks about this research, I won't use any real names of people who were in it. I will just talk or write about what I learned from all the results put together.

- The audio-recordings, transcripts and paper recordings of classroom observations, will be password protected and stored in a restricted key-card access facility in the School of Education, at the University of South Australia for five years.
- Other researchers may want to understand what I learned from you so I might need to share the answers you give me and my notes about the classroom. I will remove your name from the answers before I share them and my notes will not include any names.

Questions:

If you have any questions about this research, or would like a summary of the research findings, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached at nadia.sellm@unisa.edu.au

Thanks and best regards, Nadia Sellm



This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any ethical concerns about the project or questions about your rights as a participant please contact the Executive Officer of this Committee, Tel: +61 8 8302 3118; Email: Vicki.Allen@unisa.edu.au

SECTION 1: CONTACT AND PROJECT DETAILS

Researcher's Full Name:	Nadia Selim
Contact Details:	nadia.selim@unisa.edu.au
Supervisor's Full Name:	Mohamad Abdalla
Contact Details:	mohamad.abdalla@unisa.edu.au
Protocol Number:	200067
Project Title:	Muslim youth experiences of Arabic language learning at Australian Islamic schools.

SECTION 2: CERTIFICATION

Participant Certification

In signing this form, I confirm that:

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it (interview and classroom observation).
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status/grades/studies now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published or presented, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential, unless required by law.
- I understand that I will be audiotaped during the interview.
- I understand that the digital audio recording will be saved on a secure drive and only the researcher will have access to the file.
- I understand that data will be securely stored for five years upon completion of the project, at the School of Education, University of South Australia.
- I agree that my anonymous results may be used for future research, subject to ethics approval

STUDENT Signature	Printed Name	Date
PARENT/ GUARDIAN Signature	Printed Name	Date

Researcher Certification

I have explained the study to participant and consider that he/she understands what is involved.

Researcher Signature	Printed Name	Date

3. Parent/guardian consent form



Research and
Innovation Services

Human Research Ethics Committee
CONSENT FORM

Dear Parent/guardian,

My name is Nadia Selim. I am a post graduate student at the University of South Australia, Adelaide. I am working under the supervision and guidance of Professor Mohamed Abdalla [Director of the Centre for Islamic Thought and Education] and Dr. Ibrahima Diallo [Senior Lecturer at the School of Communication, International Studies and Languages.]

I would like to invite you to take part in my research study by consenting to the participation of your children. This study is concerned with the nature of Arabic programs being offered at Australian Islamic schools and the non-Arabic speaking Muslim student's experiences of these programs. This study seeks to understand from the students what they are learning, how they are learning this, what they think of this and how they feel that their learning context can be improved.

Title of Study: Muslim youth experiences of Arabic language learning at Australian Islamic schools.

Background: Non-Arabic speaking Muslim learners of Arabic at Australian Islamic schools constitute a significant cohort of Arabic language learners in Australia, however, they are one of the least serviced groups by research in the areas of second language acquisition and education. These students have language learning needs that are quite different from their Arabic-background peers in terms of instruction, textbooks and curricula. Unfortunately, their needs have not generally been addressed by research and students have not been consulted about how their learning experiences can be improved to better meet their needs.

This is surprising considering the substantial academic evidence that suggests that students are in fact experts on their own experiences and that their input should be at the core of educational improvements. However, this is even more curious when we consider that research conducted on Arabic language learning in Australia in the early 1990s (almost 25 years ago) suggested that the curricular needs of non-Arabic speaking learners of Arabic should be researched and the means through which Arabic language learning can be made more appealing to them should be identified.

Therefore, this research seeks to fill this academic gap and provide much needed insight into the real experiences of Arabic language learners at Australian Islamic schools by directly seeking student input through interviews. Some classroom observations will be necessary to better understand the student experience. The findings from this research will be of great benefit to various groups. Firstly, students as they will be given the opportunity to voice their needs and concerns. Secondly, school management who can use the findings to reflect on how the programs they offer are being perceived by students. Thirdly, teachers as they can better understand how students respond to their teaching styles, techniques and activities. Additionally, the findings from this research can also inform future curriculum development for non-Arab background students in Australia.

Procedures:

If you agree to allow your child/ren to participate in my research, I will ask your child to:

1. Participate in an interview with me. This interview will address their experiences with Arabic at their school, the reasons behind their decisions to continue with their Arabic studies or to drop them and how programs can be changed to better suit their language learning needs.

These interviews will be conducted at the school and will take about 30-45 minutes to conduct. These interviews will be audio recorded to allow the researcher to take notes at a later time and focus on the discussion.

A copy of the transcript will be offered to your children to allow them to check for accuracy. If your child wishes to view the transcript, please email the Principle Researcher with the request.

2. Be in a classroom where the lesson is being observed. This would not be a direct observation of your children but of the overall student body, teacher and classroom dynamics. The classroom observation will permit me to better understand the students' day to day experiences of their Arabic subject.

Benefits and Compensation:

One of the direct benefits is that this study will give your children an opportunity to voice their concerns and opinions of their learning in the safety of a confidential interview with me. This will provide opportunities for school improvement of the Arabic subject content and instruction.

Risks/Discomforts:

I do not envisage any risk or discomfort to your child. However, if your children wish to discontinue the interview because they are bored or tired they will be allowed to do so. The child can stop participating at any stage of the study.

Participants or third parties who wish to lodge a complaint about either the study or the way it is being conducted should contact the Executive Officer of UniSA HREC in the first instance, email: humanethics@unisa.edu.au or tel: 8302 3118

Confidentiality:

All data collected for this study will be de-identified as soon as possible and remain confidential, unless required by law. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and any other information that can identify your children will not be used. Your children will not be identifiable to any teachers, school administrators or external bodies. Only the researcher will interview the children, after which the content of their opinions will be used for improvements without sharing any identifiable information that may cause your children to be recognized.

- The audio-recordings, transcripts and paper recordings of classroom observations, will be password protected and stored in a restricted key-card access facility in the School of Education, at the University of South Australia for five years.
- Subject to receiving ethics approval, this data may potentially be used for future research projects and/or databases and may be released to a third party in de-identified document form. This means that anonymous transcripts and my classroom observation notes may be shared with other researchers.

Rights:

Participation in research is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in the project, at any time before data has been de-identified without affect, now or in the future. Your children may also refuse to answer any questions during the interview

Questions:

If you have any questions about this research, or would like a summary of the research findings, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached at nadia.selim@unisa.edu.au

This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any ethical concerns about the project or questions about your rights as a participant please contact the Executive Officer of this Committee, Tel: +61 8 8302 3118; Email: Vicki.Allen@unisa.edu.au.

SECTION 1: CONTACT AND PROJECT DETAILS

Researcher's Full Name:	Nadia Selim
Contact Details:	nadia.selim@unisa.edu.au
Supervisor's Full Name:	Mohamad Abdalla
Contact Details:	mohamad.abdalla@unisa.edu.au
Protocol Number:	200067
Project Title:	Muslim youth experiences of Arabic language learning at Australian Islamic schools.

SECTION 2: CERTIFICATION

Participant Certification

In signing this form, I confirm that:

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree for my child to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my child's involvement in it (interview and classroom observation).
- I understand that my child may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect their status/grades/studies now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published or presented, my child will not be identified and their personal results will remain confidential, unless required by law.
- I understand that my child will be audiotaped during the interview.
- I understand that the digital audio recording will be saved on a secure drive and only the researcher will have access to the file.
- I understand that data will be securely stored for five years upon completion of the project, at the School of Education, University of South Australia.
- I agree to the anonymous results of my children being used in future results, subject to ethics approval.

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Participant Signature

Printed Name

Date

Researcher Certification

I have explained the study to participant and consider that he/she understands what is involved.

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Researcher Signature

Printed Name

Date