

Engaging heritage learners through creative activities in the Arabic classroom

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Saad

... the art is like the heart of this whole thing  
Student F, Peace School




### Outline of session

#### PART 1

##### Group discussion

- Heritage Language Learning
- Project Based Language Learning
- Group discussion
- Affordances of visual art
- The artist Ali Omar Ermes
- Focus works
- Pedagogical process

#### PART 2

- Peace School
- Project Based Approach
- Implementing the 3-stage pedagogical model
- Sharing students work.
- Team Work
- Implications
- Questions

Group discussion  
5minutes

What does the term heritage learners mean to you?

Is there a link to foreign language learners and mother tongue language learners. If so, how?

### Between prejudice and empowerment: The unique situation of HLLs



- A marginalised group, straddling two cultures, may feel stigmatised by social attitudes including amongst peer group
- Discrimination, Islamophobia, lack of recognition in mainstream education for achievements of young people in their community schools
- Learning outside mainstream in 'borrowed spaces' at weekends
- Issues of pedagogy, resourcing and teacher professional development
- Potential to reap multiple benefits of harmonious bilingual-bicultural development

### Appeal of project-based language learning approach



#### ENGAGEMENT – CHALLENGE – EMPOWERMENT

- Addresses relevant, real-world issues and connects with students' personal experience and interests
- Promotes active learning, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity
- Extends walls of the classroom into home and community, facilitating parental involvement
- Builds confidence and supports positive identity construction

### Relevance of the Project Based Language Learning (PBL) approach



- A macro-based, top-down approach fitting needs of HL learners (socio-affective factors) (Kagan & Dillon, 2001/2003; Carreira 2016)
- Akin to cross-curricular, thematic, TBLT and CLIL approaches
- Crosses boundaries and makes connections – curriculum, languages and cultures, sites of learning, semiotic modes, online-offline (Beckett & Slater, 2019; Thomas & Yamazaki, 2021)
- Learner centred, active, experiential, collaborative dialogic, holistic, (van Lier, 2007; Kramsch, 2009)
- Safe, flexible space for negotiation of identity (Cummins & Early, 2011)
- Socially engaged, participative, critical and creative

**GROUP WORK,**

Look at these art work pieces.

Do you think they would be useful to teach Arabic language with?

How would you use them in an Arabic class?  
Time : 5 minutes

**Affordances of visual art**

- Accessibility
- Materiality (social objects, artefactual literacy)
- Sensuality
- Emotionality
- Memorability ('mental images', 'language learning with the mind's eye', Arnold, 1999: 260 and 264 )
- Ambiguity
- (Inter)culturality
- Creativity
- Intertextuality

**Text art and the work of Ali Omar Ermes**

Harf Al Kaf (1991)



- International artist and thinker – Arab/Muslim but also Western influence
- Fusing of painting, letter shapes/short words, and poetry (intertextuality)
- Social, political and moral issues
- Several works in the British Museum (Harf al kaaf)

**Pedagogical principles**

As-Saad

- Cross-curricular with dual focus on content and language
- Learner agency, critical thinking, collaboration and ownership
- Scaffolding to build towards more cognitively challenging and creative tasks
- Flexibility to cater for intermediate and advanced levels in schools and other contexts

[https://mdstmr.wordpress.com/arabic/resource\\_pack\\_and\\_the\\_professional\\_development\\_programme](https://mdstmr.wordpress.com/arabic/resource_pack_and_the_professional_development_programme)

**Pedagogical process:****Phases****1. Approaching**

- brainstorming
- discussing in pairs/group
- introducing key words

**2. Exploring**

- researching
- connecting and comparing
- analysing and interpreting
- developing language knowledge and skills

**3. Creating**

- re-imagining
- re-mediating
- re-presenting

**Implementing the 3-stage pedagogical model:**

1. Approaching
2. Exploring
3. Creating



- Active involvement of learner
- Links to personal experience and interests
- Dual focus content and language
- Scaffolding including bilingual elements
- Planning
- Collaboration in groups
- Integrated use of technology
- Variety of activities involving 4 skills
- Progression towards a creative outcome

## Time for a break



### Peace School and heritage language learners



- Community-based 'complementary' school run by volunteers on Saturdays
- Teaches Arabic language-and-culture as well as Islamic studies
- **Mission:** *To enable young people mainly of Arab background to experience high quality Arabic-language-and-culture teaching which develops confidence and gives them a sense of pride and responsibility as bilingual Arab-British individuals.*
- Focus class: 12 students, 8 Arabic background, 4 non-Arabic background, range of countries of origin / Intermediate level

### Data sample: Student art posters inspired by work of Ali Omar Ermes



### Approaching phase: individual work, 2 minutes



[https://mdstmr.wordpress.com/arabic/Resource\\_pack\\_and\\_the\\_professional\\_development\\_programme](https://mdstmr.wordpress.com/arabic/Resource_pack_and_the_professional_development_programme)  
<https://mdstmr.files.wordpress.com/2018/10/planning-toolkit-arabic.pdf>

### Exploring phase: pair work, 3 minutes

This phase aims to assist learners in developing their appreciation of the art works and at the same time to further extend related linguistic understanding and skills.



### Exploring: group work



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## Creating phase: group work



## Creating phase

creating something of your own  
present or perform it to a real audience.  
A chance to use imagination to



### Saad



Poetry related to different types of love: love of family, community or country and tragic love (Antara and Abia).



### Student K:

- Poster follows same multimodal, intertextual design as Ermes
- Sombre mood evoked through dark colours, but white 'eye' and white border around letter shape symbolise hope
- Text in 'cup' of letter shape relates to family love



Text above the letter shape relates to love of parents and reads:

*Our Islamic religion is keen on benevolence to our parents and commands us to obey them because they are simply everything in our life. My mother's prayer is what protects me from any harm and my father is the one who goes to work every day to secure our livelihood...*

Text below the letter shape, cited from the holy Quran, reads:

*Thy lord hath decreed that ye worship none save him, and show kindness to parents ...*

### Interview data: 1. Multimodal design



1b Students developed appreciation of how visual and textual elements can complement each other and work together as resources for meaning-making.

Letter Saad reimagined as a ship –'the ship of rescue' Focus on family love.

*So then I drew the Saad and just looked at it and **imagined** it, literally out of nowhere I was looking at it and I said 'ship.' (Student E)*

### Interview data: 2 Agency, emotions and personal links

2b Students found they could relate the ideas and emotions expressed in the art works to their own life experience



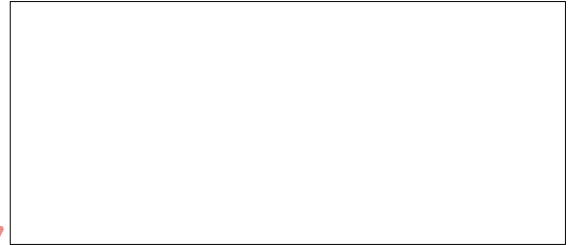
• ... everyone can relate to it, no matter what your age is, most of the stuff you've either been through or you've seen it in someone else (Student D)

• *I've actually been able to make personal connections with Ali Omar Ermes' art, like from my personal life, for example in one of the art works which I wrote the poem in, which was Saad, it was based on family love which I had to link to my personal life and I feel that that really made it my own ... so I felt that it was really about me . (Student K)*

Here the student drew the Saad and filled it with the personal story that was voted to be shared as DST



Clip inspired by the work of Ali Ermes "Saad" painting



## Team work: Be Creative

FROM THIS ART PIECE.

CREATE YOUR OWN POSTER AROUND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES USING INSPIRATION FROM THIS PAINTING.

20MIN

**Ba Ayoon Al Akhbar**

Blame yourself that sinned. Don't blame others. Don't hold anyone to account for their sins. How can you see the dust in the eyes of your friend, whilst hiding the branch in yours?

بإذن الله تعالى  
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
الحمد لله الذي هدانا لهذا  
ما كنا لنهتدي لولا أن هدانا الله  
والصلاة والسلام على  
سيدنا محمد وآله الطيبين  
الطاهرين

### Ba Ayoon Al Akhbar

- Responding to the artwork
- Connection made to theme of environment
- Includes poetry related to 'taking responsibility'

### Yusra



- drawn to Ba Ayoon. Made an association with threats to the planet and human responsibility for this (ref. Al-Merri poem) - Developed story idea related to this
- Ba letter shape in gold seen to have symbolic significance as something sacred: *'the earth at its best'* (Yusra)
- references to Quran in Al-Merri poem connecting with students' own Muslim faith background (quotes they are familiar with) and ethos of school

Student Anfai created this piece of art

Combining painting and text into one multimodal design

- Translation
- Link with religious faith (faith literacies)
- Parental support
- Boost to confidence
- Response from mainstream teacher



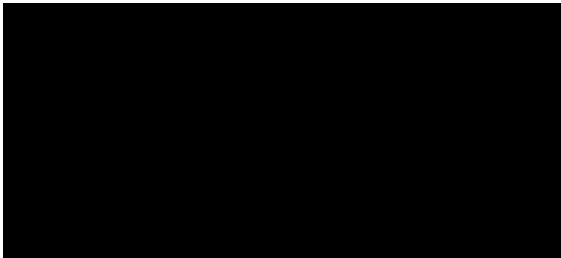
Collaboration  
Made proud of  
her languages  
It is not  
language  
learning only  
Developing the  
visual art and  
language  
Appreciation of  
culture and  
emotions.



Students work



Short clip inspired by the work of Ali  
Omar Ermes" BAA Art work "



Implications.

**Visual art can:**

- bring context and purpose to language learning
- foster learner agency, creative thinking and voice
- develop appreciation of heritage culture
- develop pride in bilingual identity
- unlock personal, emotional, multisensory and aesthetic aspects of language learning
- develop understanding of multimodal design and intertextuality

Students evaluation



Reflection

What have you  
learnt ?

How will you  
take it further?

## references

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Thank you  
and  
questions.

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...the art is like the heart of this whole  
thing' (Student F)



Peace means justice, 2010