
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Collaborative Distance Arabic Language Learning Between Russian and Arab Students in Africa

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| ABSTRACT

Teachers of Arabic as a foreign language (AFL) in Russia mainly focus on reading and grammar, not oral skills. Russian students learning AFL have limited opportunities to practice oral skills (listening & speaking) outside the classroom, meet native speakers of Arabic and practice oral skills with them. This study aims to propose a model for online collaboration among Russian AFL teachers and students and Arabic-speaking teachers and students in African Arab countries through video-conferencing platforms to help Russian students practice oral skills. First, the host teacher contacts the collaborating teacher. The host and guest teachers select the platform, set the practice schedule together, prepare the material and online resources for oral practice. They try the platform and its different tools, how to share the screen, call on students, breakout rooms...etc, how to upload/share material. The practice material may consist of Arabic language functions, things around the students, daily activities, experiences and students' environment, describing pictures, talking about cultural topics and so on. Only Standard Arabic should be used. No explanation in L1 (Russian), no translation, no explanation of grammatical rules, no use of Arabic grammatical terms, and no writing of the question and answer on the board. The students should depend on their ears. They use short sentences and concrete objects, nouns, verbs ... etc. Vocabulary and sentence structure are taught together. Pictures, gestures, and short videos are used while the students are answering the questions. Some students ask questions, others answer. The same question pattern *ما هذا؟ ماذا يفعل* is used when the teacher asks about names of objects and actions (verbs). They ask questions to help students discriminate singular, dual, plural, masculine and feminine forms and verb conjugations. Mistakes are corrected instantly. The students repeat the correct form, new word or question several times. Correct answers are reinforced. Positive feedback is given for every answer. Benefits and shortcomings of online international collaboration between students and teachers from different countries are given.

| KEYWORDS

Arabic as a foreign language (AFL), cross-cultural communication, writing, exchange, online instruction, global issues, culture, Russian students, African Arabi students

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

In 2015, an Act issued by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation mandates that secondary school students learn a second foreign language, in addition to English. In compliance with this Act, Arabic has gained more significance, is attracting more students and has become the most prospective language to learn by Muslim students in Russia. In Muslim Republics in Russia, an interest in teaching and learning Arabic has always existed in the community. For example, in Tatarstan, Tatar heritage is closely related to the Arabic language because centuries ago, the Tatar writing system utilized the Arabic alphabet, and many Tatar scholars wrote their books in Arabic script. Nowadays numerous universities in Russia such as the Kazan Federal University (KFU) offer Arabic language courses to undergraduate students, in addition to Arabic language courses offered to Russian students at the secondary and elementary school levels.

A variety of textbooks being used for teaching Arabic are currently used at Russian schools and institutions. Many of those textbooks were written by Arabic language instructors at those institutions who are either native speakers of Arabic or Russian teachers who speak Arabic as a Second Language (ASL). An overview of some of the textbooks and curricula used for developing Arabic language skills is of great importance, as they would shed some light on the Arabic language skills and content taught and whether those curricula fulfil the purpose for which they were written. Teachers of Arabic as a Foreign Language (AFL) to Russian students are still teacher-based and are still using traditional teaching strategies that focus on reading, writing, learning Arabic grammar and translation, with no interaction with Arabic-native speaking students and teachers.

Generally speaking, a plethora of studies in the literature utilized strategies that teachers use in teaching AFL to students of different levels in different countries, whether as an integrated course or as a course focusing on the development of a single Arabic language skill such as interdisciplinary approaches to Arabic language learning and enhancing engagement and global competence (Yusuf, 2024); using puzzles to improve students' Arabic language skills (Falah, Mz, Fahmi & Riva'i, 2024); the effect of the jigsaw technique and cooperative learning on enhancing student engagement in an Arabic language course for second semester students at the Islamic Education Program at the Riyadlotul Mujahidin Ngabar Ponorogo Islamic Institute in Indonesia (Ajizah, 2024).

Other studies employed collaborative learning approaches such as peer tutoring viz a collaborative approach in Arabic language learning (Hanifansyah, Mahmudah & Syakur, 2024); collaborative learning environment with think-pair-share method and learning tools for learning Arabic online (Majid, Hilmi, Rashid, Syed-Mohammad, Malim & Zainol, 2013); collaborative dialogue in task-based interaction for additional learning of Arabic (Lämsä-Schmidt, 2024); a systematic literature review of studies on collaborative learning in AFL learning in Indonesia (Simon. & Mutmainah, 2025); and cooperative learning, method, strategy, and its importance in AFL learning (Alsubhi, Adnan, bin Yusof, Awae & Abuhassna, 2023).

Another group of studies explored collaborative learning to enhance Arabic speaking skills among students of bachelor's degree in Arabic language education at Sultan Idris Education University (Ramli, Fatimah Ramli, Ghani, Daud, & Atoh, 2021); developing language skills through project-based Arabic Language teaching, collaboration and creativity at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri, a public Islamic junior high school in Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia (Ajizah, & Jauhari, 2024); collaborative writing in ASL classrooms (Alwaleedi, Gillies, & Obaidul Hamid, 2019); language related episodes of ASL learners during collaborative writing activities (Alwaleedi, 2017); and the role of engagement and task demands in collaborative and individual vocabulary learning in the Arabic classroom (Rabie-Ahmed, & Mohamed, 2022);

A fourth group of studies combined technology and interactive/collaborative approaches in Arabic language learning as in innovation in combining technology and interactive approaches in Arabic language learning (Khairanis, 2024); the impacts of contemporary educational technologies on learning Arabic (Seyidov, & Çitil, 2024); using technology for teaching Arabic language grammar (Arrabtah, & Nusour, 2012); opportunities and challenges in Arabic language learning based on technology (Rani, Zikriati, Muhammady, Syukran, & Ali, 2023); innovation and technology in Arabic language learning in Indonesia (Fitrianto, 2024); technology integration in Arabic language skills development in the digital era (Sarah, Rizqia, Lisna, & Ali, 2024); a web-assisted language learning system for enhancing Arabic language learning using cognates (Shehab & Zeki, 2015); using e-learning facilities in learning ASL (Gharba, 2024); an online Arabic language teaching model based on collaborative learning in Indonesian senior high schools (Umamah & Hifdhiyah, 2024); online collaborative writing in ASL classrooms (Alwaleedi, 2020); and the influence of technology and innovation on online teaching of ASL in Dubai (Moghazy, 2021).

Few more studies utilized video-based and social media in Arabic language teaching as integrating Zoom and WhatsApp in learning Arabic language at institutions under the Muhammadiyah Islamic organization in Waru, Indonesia (Nugroho, Inayati, & Azani, 2020); the effects of the collaborative video-based flipped learning strategy on the achievements in Arabic Grammar of 10th-grade female students (Al-Maqableh, & Al-Makhadmeh, 2024); integrating TikTok entertainment content as a strategy for attracting interest in learning Arabic learning (Dinia, Jannah, Mustofa, & Helalsah, 2024); and students' feedback on the utilization of Facebook in Learning Arabic (Rahimi, Azhan, Normeza, & Baharudin, 2015).

Further studies integrated mobile apps in the teaching of Arabic as a literature review on the effectiveness of e-learning and mobile applications in Arabic language learning (Haq, Akmansyah, Erlina, & Koderi, 2024); students' perceptions of the use of mobile applications in learning ASL (Abedalla, 2015); and mobile-assisted language learning in ASL acquisition in Saudi Arabia (AlQarni, Bown, Pullen, & Masters, 2020);

A plethora of studies explored distance learning in AFL teaching and learning, such as the Turkish experience in remote teaching of Arabic as a model (Hasanoğlu, 2024); evaluation of students' experience in remote learning of ASL during the COVID-19 Pandemic (Almelhes, 2021); challenges of distance teaching and learning in the Arabic language classes during the Coronavirus

pandemic (Moh'd Al-Assaf, 2021); attitudes of distance learning students at the UKM's Faculty of Islamic Studies towards learning Arabic language skill courses (Arfin, Jamsari, Riddzwan, Latif, & Halim, 2014); and Arabic language education in a distance education model for non-native Arabic language (Karuko, 2022) and others.

The above studies focused on students studying AFL in a single school or college and in a particular city or country. Only one study was found about successes and challenges in inter-institutional collaboration in Arabic language instruction, focusing on the Great Lakes Colleges Association's Shared Languages Program, and the Arabic program at Denison University as a model for addressing the challenges facing Arabic language instruction as a less commonly taught languages and within the context of small single-person programs (Al-Masri, & Johnson, 2023). Therefore, this study aims to propose a model for connecting AFL students and teachers in Russia with Arabic-native speaking students and teachers in Arab countries in Africa such as Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and/or Sudan. It aims to show teachers of Arabic in Russia how they can connect and collaborate with Arab teachers and students in Arab countries through video-conferencing platforms to help Russian students practice oral skills in Arabic online with Arabic-speaking teachers and students. It also aims to propose some activities that can be used to help Russian students practice oral skills in Arabic online.

2. Context

The author had the opportunity to teach AFL to multilingual Tatar students, in Kazan, Russia, for one semester when she was a visiting professor there. At Kazan Federal University (KFU), Arabic is taught at several departments. I taught AFL to several groups of students: Arabic language majors at the Department of Eastern Languages, graduate students, and freshman and senior students at the Department of Languages. The author noticed that the students lack oral fluency. They pronounce words incorrectly. They have difficulty understanding questions and question words. They have a limited vocabulary. They do not know basic Arabic functions and politeness formulas. They write all the time. I felt that they were not listening to me. Their teacher depended on the textbook and writing on the board and the students were busy copying from the board. The main teaching approach that their teacher utilized was grammar-translation and using Arabic grammar terminology. Focus was on decoding words, short phrases and short sentences in isolation, mastering the basics of mechanics, spelling, and Arabic grammatical structures and categories. Grammatical categories and structures selected were randomly ordered. Arabic grammar rules were translated and explained. The teacher did not use pictures, objects and dramatization, did not use technology nor Arabic language teaching Apps, websites and YouTube videos. Grammatical structures were not organized in terms of the most frequently used syntactic patterns nor question-answer patterns such as *ما اسمك؟ اسمي سارة. ما هذا؟ هذا كوب. ما لون...؟ لونه أحمر. كم قلما لديك؟ أربعة.* Focus was on reading and writing. Oral skills were not practiced at all. No listening and speaking activities and practice. No focus on listening comprehension and speaking for communication. Arabic functions that are used in daily conversation such as *أربعة. Focus was on reading and writing. Oral skills were not practiced at all. No listening and speaking activities and practice. No focus on listening comprehension and speaking for communication. Arabic functions that are used in daily conversation such as* are not taught. The content taught is not related to the students' everyday life, and the students learn nothing about Arabic culture. No teaching of the language used in real-life situations is taught at all (Al-Jarf & Mingazova, 2020). In addition, AFL students in Russia, have limited opportunities to meet native speakers of Arabic and practice listening and speaking skills with them outside the classroom.

Since we live in the age of technology, web-conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Skype and some Learning Management Systems have made it easy for teachers and students learning a second/foreign language (L2) to connect and interact with native-speaking students in other countries (Al-Jarf, 2009a). The author has experience connecting students at King Saud University with students at Umm Al-Qura University and their instructor via an online course in which they collaborated in an online grammar course (Al-Jarf, 2005). She also has experience with a cross-cultural online writing project in which Saudi, Ukrainian and Russian teachers and students connected, collaborated and interacted. The aim of the project was to develop students' writing skills in English as a foreign language (EFL), to develop their awareness of local and global cultural issues and events, and to develop their ability to communicate and interact with students from other cultures (Al-Jarf, 2004a; Al-Jarf, 2004b; Al-Jarf, 2006b; Al-Jarf, 2011). In another remote workshop, Saudi graduate students at a number of universities around the world received training in electronic searching skills via a number of web-conferences (Al-Jarf, 2018).

3. The Proposed Model

3.1 Planning the Online Collaboration

AFL teachers in Russia can contact a collaborating Arab teacher in a school or university in an Arab country in North Africa. Then the host and guest teachers select a platform that they will use to connect with each other together with their students. They set a practice schedule in terms of sessions, i.e., how many times a week and duration. They prepare the material for the speaking practice and prepare the technologies to be integrated into the activities. Teachers in both countries tell their students about the collaboration activities, its aims and how the weekly exchanges will be taking place (Al-Jarf, 2022e; Al-Jarf, 2020b; Al-Jarf, 2020c).

3.2 Selecting a Platform and

The host and guest instructors may select a free platform to use with their students such as Zoom, Moodle, Blackboard, Google Meet, WebEx, Skype, MS Teams, Elluminate, Anymeeting, Coursera, Adobe Connect, Periscope, WizIQ or whichever platform the teachers find convenient and accessible (Al-Jarf, 2022e) (See Figure 1 below).

In this respect, Mohamed Riyath and Muhammed Rijah (2022) indicated that the adoption of a Learning Management System (LMS) by teachers requires that the school or college organise hands-on training sessions to improve teachers' computer self-efficacy and explain the importance of the LMS and its features and tools to offer an effective open and distance learning environment for delivering high-quality distance learning courses.



Image 1: Examples of Distance Learning Platforms

3.3 Practice Using the Platform

The host teacher and her AFL students, together with the guest teacher and her native Arabic speaking students try the platform or LMS that they have selected. They get to know the design, the different platform tools, how to adjust the audio and video, how to use the breakout rooms, how to share the screen, and how to upload/share the material such as a text, a picture a, video, a PPT presentation, and how use the white board, how use the platform chat, how to call on the students how to solve issues with platform by seeking help from a school or college technician or a colleague who is good at using the platform. The teachers and the students should not use many platforms at the same time. They may try two or three platforms to select the one that is the most convenient for them. But only one platform is used per semester. The teachers provide help to the students in both countries (Al-Jarf, 2022e; Al-Jarf, 2020b; & Al-Jarf, 2020c).

3.4 Types of Practice Material

The host and guest teacher select different types of material for oral practice such as:

- 1) **Arabic language functions**, i.e., expressions used in greetings, congratulating, thanking, apologizing, taking permission, condolences ... etc., such as:

- السلام عليكم، الحمد لله، ما شاء الله في أمان الله، جزاك الله خيرا، الله يرحمه، عظم الله أجرك،
- أهلا وسهلا، مرحبا، شكرا، عفوا، مع السلامة، أرجو المعذرة، عن اذنك.
- ميروك، أنا آسف، لو سمحت، من فضلك، تفضل، إلى اللقاء.
- كل عام وانتم بخير، عيد سعيد، عيد مبارك، رمضان مبارك، رمضان كريم، حج مبرور.
- صباح الخير، مساء الخير، تصبح على خير، نهاركم سعيد، ليلة سعيدة

2) Describing pictures

The teachers use the show and tell activity. They show a picture and ask the students to tell what they see in the picture, or they show a picture and ask the students to tell a story about it. They can also show pictures of linguistic landscapes and ask the students to read them out loud and explain what they mean (Al-Jarf, 2021). The teachers help the students with questions.



Image 2: A Sample of Pictures To be Described

3) Things around the students

The students practice learning the names of things around them as: *Colors, family members, fruits, vegetables, animals, birds, body parts, clothes, countries, cities, my house, my room, my classroom, my school, my bedroom, my city, the park, in the supermarket, food and drinks, kitchen and houseware, tableware, computer, mobile, tv, watch, clock, means of transportation, days of the week, months, telling the time.*

4) Talking about Students' Daily Activities, Experiences and Local Environment

Examples of daily activities, experiences and their environment that the students can talk about are going *shopping, going for a picnic, their hobbies, favorite city, cooking, daily routine, how to bake a cake, how they spend free time, what they have for breakfast, lunch, dinner, preparing for a party* (Al-Jarf, 2020b; Al-Jarf, 2020c).



Image: A Sample of Daily Activities that Students Can Describe

5) Talking about cultural topics

The students talk about familiar and easy issues in the Russian and Arabic cultures as *telling the time, meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner), food (cuisine), costumes, festivals, feasts and celebrations, weddings, religion, shopping, sports and games, architectural styles, educational system, major holidays, proverbs and sayings, dance, music, customs, art, children's literature* and the like (Al-Jarf, 2020b; Al-Jarf, 2020c; Al-Jarf, 2006b).



Image 3: A Sample of Cultural Aspects that Students Can Talk About

3.5 Combining Listening and Speaking Activities

The host and guest teachers can use a variety of technologies for practicing listening and speaking activities such as Mobile audiobooks (Al-Jarf, 2021d) and mobile listening and speaking lessons (Al-Jarf, 2012b). They can select and use YouTube videos for pronunciation practice (Al-Jarf, 2022f) and for a variety of lessons, topics, and dialogues as in:

- https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%85+%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9+%D9%84%D8%BA%D9%8A%D8%B1+%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B7%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%86+%D8%A8%D9%87%D8%A7

The students can watch Arabic TV channels (CNN, BBC, RT, Aljazeera) on YouTube summarize the content orally. Pre-questions can be given before listening and answered after listening to the video. New vocabulary items can be noted and practiced.



1) Image 4: Examples of Arabic T.V. Channels

3.6 Combining Reading and Speaking Activities

Arabic children's mobile fiction apps can be used for enhancing AFL students' reading and appreciation skills. The students can listen to a multicultural children's short story individually, in pairs or small groups before the meeting and orally summarize it and answer comprehension questions on it orally with the help of the guest teachers and her students (Al-Jarf, 2022b). They can also read mobile ebooks collaboratively, before or during the online session, discuss it or answer questions about it orally. The stories selected should match the students' proficiency level (Al-Jarf, 2021a; Al-Jarf, 20152012c).

3.7 Combining Vocabulary and Speaking Activities

While working on speaking activities, the students might encounter some new words which the host and guest teachers can teach to enrich the students' vocabulary knowledge. To help the students learn, retain, apply and relate words that they hear with those that they know, the teachers should use a multiple-associations in teaching the new words by connecting the pronunciation of the new word with its printed form, its part of speech, inflectional endings, singular or plural form, Russian and Arabic meanings, and previously-encountered words. Visualization, association and categorization skills and mnemonic devices should be emphasized. Mind maps can be used to group the vocabulary items sharing the same topic and show the connections among them (Al-Jarf, 2006a; Al-Jarf, (2022a).

Online tasks such as mobile-based applications viz Vocup, Quizlet, Quizizz, game-based mobile apps, Saving Alice, Duolingo, Kahoot, vocabulary flashcards, podcasts, online dictionaries, concordance-based glosses, picture viewing and picture drawing on tablets; videos; e-portfolios, teaching idioms via graphic novels, multimedia annotations, social networks, project-based learning and mind-maps can be used in order to engage and motivate the students (Al-Jarf, 2022d; Al-Jarf, 2022c; Al-Jarf, 2020a).

3.8 For Effective Practice

Some of the guidelines that the host and guest teachers should take into consideration in oral skills practice are:

- Using Standard Arabic only while speaking.
- No explanations should be given in L1 (Russian) and no translation from Arabic to Russia.
- No explanation of Arabic grammar rules. Grammar rules should be learnt through grammatical patterns, and the association of the actions with the sentence or expression.
- No use of Arabic grammatical terms.
- Do not write the question and answer on the white board. The students have to depend on their ear.
- Using short sentences.
- Using concrete objects, nouns, verbs ... etc.
- Teaching vocabulary and sentence structure together.
- Using pictures, gestures, short videos while the students are answering the questions.
- Some students can ask questions, others answer. For instance, Russian students may ask questions, and Arab students answer them or vice versa.
- The students repeat the new word or question several times.
- The teachers use the same question pattern when they ask about the names of objects and actions (verbs) ما هذا؟ ماذا يفعل.
- The teachers ask questions to help students discriminate singular, dual, plural, masculine and feminine forms and verb conjugations.



Image 5: Images for Understanding the AFL Teaching and Learning Guidelines

3.9 Feedback and Error Correction

The instructors correct pronunciation and grammatical mistakes instantly. The students repeat the correct form several times. In correcting mistakes, the backward build-up strategy is used. At the beginning of a new session, the material practiced in the previous online session is reviewed to ensure continuity and connectedness. The teachers reinforce correct answers and give positive feedback for every activity.

3.10 Interaction and Communication

Russian and Arab students and teachers can continue to communicate and interact outside the online session through a Website Chatbox, as a quick and easy way of communication. The students post questions about the practice material, their difficulties, personal and social issues and college events. The teachers can provide advice, reassurance, clarify difficulties and respond to queries. They post messages and responses at their own convenience (Al-Jarf, 2021b). Similarly, they can connect through an Online SMS Service which enables students and faculty to be reached anytime, anywhere and 7 days a week (Al-Jarf, 2021c; Al-Jarf, 2012). In addition, they can communicate via social media such as Platform X or Facebook. The teachers can mainly use X for making announcements, tweeting language learning tips and links for the students, course-related issues, language learning tips, and tweeting queries by participating students (Al-Jarf, 2020d). Moreover, they can use WhatsApp or ConnectYard to create a community of inquiry, create learning partnerships, collaborative projects, student collaboration, social interaction, integrating text-chat and webcam, and utilizing technology-mediated task-based language teaching and learning. The teachers and students can select any of the options given based on their preference and convenience.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

4.1 Effects of the Collaborative Activity on AFL Oral Skills Development

The proposed collaborative activities for practicing oral skills in AFL are believed to be effective in developing AFL students' oral skills. The proposed activities were tried out with Saudi EFL freshman students, and they proved to be effective in developing the student's linguistic skills. For example, significant differences between the experimental and control groups were detected as a result of using mobile technology (MP3 self-study lessons containing short audio files of Basic English structures and commonly used expressions). The experimental group made higher gains in oral skill development. Improvement was noted in listening comprehension, pronunciation accuracy, fluency, oral expression, and vocabulary knowledge. Results also showed positive correlations between practice time and the number of lessons covered by the students and listening and speaking posttest scores, i.e., improved listening and speaking skills. Students reported positive attitudes towards the MP3 self-study listening and speaking lessons (Al-Jarf, 2012b).

In another study, results of the collaborative activity between elementary school children and teachers in schools around the world showed many benefits for Indian children as listening and speaking skill enhancement, improved pronunciation, getting used to different native and non-native accents, learning new vocabulary and grammatical structures, learning names of countries, their location, flags, currency, cities, people, and exchanging information and pictures about the local and foreign cultures. They learnt about the foreign country's educational system, history, antiquities, food, art, traditions, and costumes (Al-Jarf, 2020b; Al-Jarf, 2020c).

In a collaborative EFL writing project that Saudi, Ukrainian and Russian students shared, the project proved to be effective and successful. The interaction between instructors and students who belonged to two completely different cultural, political, linguistic and educational backgrounds, and different majors was impressive.

Ukrainian and Russian students enjoyed discussing and expressing opinions about global and cultural issues and events. They thought the course helped them understand some aspects of "world life" and gave them a feel of "live" English. Saudi students enjoyed reading the messages and reactions posted the Ukrainian and Russian students. The students were very enthusiastic and found the online project exciting. Although Saudi students were apprehensive and hesitant to participate in this project, they found it informative, and their experience clarified the misconceptions and fears they had about learning and interacting with students from other countries. Saudi students were impressed by how often Ukrainian students wrote, how fast they responded, and how long their messages were. They found Ukrainian and Russian students respectful and interested in discussing global issues and found the information the students provided about themselves, their universities and towns enriching. It was fascinating for Ukrainian as well as Saudi students to be in touch with their instructors who were abroad and to be in the same class with students from other countries. The author shared an online grammar course with a Japanese colleague and her students but the Japanese students did not exchange any e-mails with students from other countries, neither during, nor after the online course was over (Al-Jarf, 2004a; Al-Jarf, 2004b; Al-Jarf, 2011).

4.2 Shortcomings of

Although the intercultural exchange sessions between Indian children at the ZP High School in Bhattiporu mandal's Illavaram village, Guntur, and international guest teachers from 200 schools in 75 countries were a great experience for participating Indian children, there were few shortcomings. During the meeting with me, there was an echo in the classroom which made it difficult for me to understand what the children and the teacher were saying. I also had difficulty understanding the Indian children's English accent. The students were not taking notes, and I was wondering how much they could grasp especially that those who asked questions were in the elementary grades. One limitation is that there is no way to measure actual improvement in students'

English language skills and amount and type of knowledge acquired as a result of communicating with the international guest teachers and their students.

While browsing the Indian teacher's Facebook page, no interaction was noted between participating children and the guest teachers after the meeting, and none of the students made any comment on a guest teacher's video, or pictures posted after each session. No follow-up activities for the students were posted after meeting with the guest teachers such as summarizing or writing a report or giving their impressions about a particular session, or what they learnt from it (Al-Jarf, 2020b; Al-Jarf, 2020c).

In the collaborative activity in which an online grammar course was shared by a professor and his students from Umm Al-Qura University (UQU) in Makkah, and students and their instructor from King Saud University in Riyadh, using an online course, the collaborative activity proved to be a total failure. Some cultural factors contributed to students' inadequate participation in the online collaborative activity, and their hesitation to register and interact. Only one student from UQU and 4 students from KSU registered in the Makkah e-Learning collaborative and there was very little interaction in the discussion throughout the semester, despite the encouragement, extra credit given and messages sent to the students individually and as a group. The author's students were shy, apprehensive and hesitant to register. They thought that sharing an online course with students from another university would be like a chatroom, where male and female students chat rather than study. They declared that the internet should be used for fun, not for courses, credit and serious studying. As a result, they did not take the collaboration seriously. They were passive and only read and checked the websites and posts. They were afraid of making mistakes in public, i.e. in front of students and an instructor that they did not know. (Al-Jarf, 2007).

Further factors contributing to the ineffective collaboration included fear of criticism or negative comments from other participants. The KSU participants reported that they only work if activities are part of the course mark. Since participation was optional, and no portion of the course grade was allocated to use of the online activities, many students were not motivated to participate as they felt it was not mandatory. Although extra credit was given, they did not seem to care. Since students were using the online course from home, the author had no control over what they were doing. The rest of the instructors and students at the college did not use online courses in language teaching at all. That made them feel odd. The author was the only one using online instruction (Al-Jarf, 2005).

5. Conclusion

Remote collaboration in AFL is not widely used between Russian and Arab students and teachers in Africa. Therefore, sharing a distance learning platform by two groups of students at two universities can be ineffective and unsuccessful and the interaction between the two groups can be insufficient. AFL students might be inhibited by and unfamiliar with remote learning and collaboration. They might have negative attitudes towards collaboration with students from another university in another foreign country. For online collaborative instruction to be effective, AFL students in the same class may be exposed to online platforms. AFL students of different levels at the same college may connect to the Internet from home and share a remote online course together with their instructors. When the students are more confident and have more experience using remote courses, they may be connected with students at other universities within Russia and then with other students abroad. Each AFL students can be matched with one or more native-Arabic-speaking students in the collaborating university. Online collaborative projects could become more effective in enhancing AFL students' attitudes and skills if the material to be practiced online is first brainstormed in class, before and after the online practice. To help the students take the collaborative practice more seriously, it must be part of the final exam and course credit. Collaborative projects could become more effective in enhancing students' skills, if collaborating instructors focus on the same skills and topics in-class and online. Partner instructors can write to each other about their expectations before class, and how the class actually went. Topics for oral practice must be specific and familiar. General and complex topics should be avoided. The students can begin talking about topics related to their local cultures, then move on to discussing topics related to the target language culture, i.e. Arabic culture in a particular country. Students must be encouraged to select topics that they would like to talk about. An online collaborative course would be more helpful if it is more structured. Taking the above steps into consideration is believed to help AFL as well as native Arabic-speaking students become willing and more confident in participating and interacting in online AFL listening and speaking activities.

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