Introduction

Arabic has been taught in formal education in Japan for the past 90 years. Arabic instruction is mainly conducted within the sphere of higher education in Japan, where the most important L2 (i.e., second language) is English. This chapter is an investigation of both the history of Arabic teaching and learning in Japan, and an analysis of the current situation. Official statistics, data originally obtained by inquiry, and original survey results were used as data. Also, parts of our previous studies are included. The focus of this chapter is core issues concerning the actual condition of Arabic instruction in Japan, and a discussion of the strengths and limitations of current practices. Future directions in the field are also proposed.

Historical Development

This section traces the origin of Arabic instruction in Japanese formal education and examines how the field developed alongside changes in the historical, economic, and industrial backgrounds. The historical period is comprised of two main phases: 1925 to the 1960s, and the subsequent period influenced by the first oil crisis of 1973.

1925 to the 1960s

In Japan, formal Arabic education began in 1925 at the Osaka Foreign Language College. There, Arabic was categorized as a second language in the Indian and Malayan Departments (now the School of Foreign Studies in Osaka University). Shigeharu Matsumoto, who originally specialized in Japanese history and was a graduate of the History Department at Tokyo Imperial University in 1912, was dispatched by the Ministry of Education to study Arabic in Germany from 1922 to 1924. He became the first professor to teach Arabic in the college (Ikeda, 1980, p. 76). Seventeen students chose to study Arabic under him in 1925 (Ikeda, 1980, p. 76). Matsumoto taught Arabic from 1925 to 1929, using the German method of Arabic instruction which focuses on grammar at all stages. According to Ikeda, he employed books that he acquired in Europe, such as Arabische Chrestomathie aus Prosaschriftstellern compiled by Brünnow, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s Rihlah issued by Société Asiatique, and Lane’s Arabic-English Lexicon (Ikeda, 1980, p. 77).
According to Shinji Maejima (1980, p. 2), the Japanese scholar who translated the *Arabian Nights* into Japanese, Arabic instruction started rather late compared to Persian and Turkish, which were already being studied before 1925. Maejima attributed this to three factors within the 1920s and 1930s: (1) al-Nahḍah (the Arab Renaissance Movement) had not yet generally drawn the attention of the Japanese people, (2) few Arab countries had become independent at that time, and (3) oil field developments in the Arab regions were still restricted to a small scale (Maejima, 1980, p. 2).

In 1926, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent Yoichirō Ohara to Alexandria, Egypt, where the ministry opened a consulate general in the same year. He became the first trainee in Arabic in the ministry. This was the beginning of a still ongoing training program for Japanese diplomats in Arab countries by the ministry (Ikeda, 1980, p. 77). Ohara went to local elementary and middle schools for Egyptian children in Alexandria to learn Arabic (Ikeda and Ohara, 1980).

Though Japan’s interest in Islam began earlier in the early 20th century, the first big wave of Islamic studies in Japan occurred in the late 1930s. The first Arabic department was established in 1940 in the Osaka Foreign Language College, with the aid of Japanese diplomats as the teaching staff—including Ohara. The department used teaching materials obtained from Egypt, such as school textbooks that had been adopted by the Wafdist government. In 1949, the college became a university and changed its name to Osaka University of Foreign Studies, which became the School of Foreign Languages at Osaka University in 2007. Fifteen students were accepted each year from 1940 until 1975, and in 1976 the quota was increased to 25 students each year.

In 1940, Keiichirō Kikuchi introduced an Arabic short course text in serial format within the magazine *Kaikyō Sekai*, which means “Islamic World” (Kikuchi, 1940). This publication coincided with a rise of interest in Islamic regions among Japanese scholars in the late 1930s. The Second Sino-Japanese War began in 1937, which led to an effort to manipulate Muslims in China and Central Asia. Japan was also interested in natural resources in Southeast Asia, which contains Muslim countries (Itagaki, 1980, p. 60). Kikuchi wrote the Arabic portion of the short course text employing handwritten Arabic characters. Ikeda said that Kikuchi also attempted to explain the basics of Arabic grammar by depending on the Greek-Latin method for teaching grammar (Ikeda, 1980, p. 78).

With Japan’s defeat in the Pacific War in 1945, intense interest in Arab-Islamic studies faded except among a few scholars. One well-known Japanese scholar of Islamic studies, Toshihiko Izutsu, published *Arabic Grammar* in 1950. According to Ikeda, a number of universities and institutes taught Arabic from the 1950s onward. For example, Takushoku University created an Arabic night course in 1959 (Mori, 2003, p. 261). The field was included in related departments that focused on Middle Eastern Studies, such as History, Religion, and International Relations (Ikeda, 1980, p. 79).

In 1961, Japan’s second Arabic Department within the entire country was established at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS). It began with one teacher of Arabic and accepted ten students every year. The timing can be explained by an increased interest within Japan concerning the Arab regions following the Suez Crisis in 1956, and the fact that the low prices of Middle Eastern petroleum supported Japan’s economic growth in the 1960s (Itagaki, 1980, p. 61). Moreover, the Asia-Africa Linguistic Institute, established in Tokyo in 1961, started to teach Arabic in 1962 (Asia-Africa Culture Foundation, 2016). Graduates of the Arabic Department of Osaka University of Foreign Studies were in great demand within the job market in 1961 (Sawa, 1961, p. 3).

### The 1970s to the Mid-1990s

The decisive factor that caused a surge in Japan’s interest in the Arab regions was the First Oil Crisis of 1973, which followed the 1973 Arab–Israeli War. The crisis generated and boosted demand for Arabic language facility. With this surge, in 1974 TUFS increased its quota in the Arabic Department from 10 to 15 students per year. Osaka University of Foreign Studies augmented its quota from 15 to 25 students per year. After the crisis, the number of Arabic courses in private universities also
increased (Itagaki, 1980, p. 61). Taizō Itagaki stated that at the start of the 1980s there were hundreds of Japanese Arabic trainees in Cairo, who had been dispatched from private Japanese corporations (Itagaki, 1980, p. 61). Shitennoji International Buddhist University, a private university, established a specialized program for Arabic Language and Culture in 1983 as part of its Department of Languages and Cultures (Shitennoji University, 2014). That program started with a quota of 30 students per year and five teachers, but it was discontinued in 2008. It seems that the number of universities offering Arabic courses increased gradually until it reached 37 in 1997, although there are no specific data on this.

**Current Situation: Since the Late 1990s**

Because there have been only a few studies depicting the contours of Arabic teaching and learning in Japan, a more comprehensive and current examination is needed. This section describes the state of Arabic teaching and learning based on statistics since the late 1990s, and our own survey data and investigation.

**The Number of Universities and Students**

The number of universities offering Arabic courses, and of students learning Arabic in Japan are examined below. These figures are compared with statistics for other L2 languages both in Japan and in the USA.

**The Number of Universities Offering Arabic Courses in Japan**

Figure 3.1 indicates changes in the number of four-year universities offering Arabic courses since 1997 on the basis of the available data. In 1997, the number was 37. There has been a gradual increase since 1998. The number rose to 50 universities by 2006 (the same number existed in 2008), but after 2006 the number fluctuated between 43 and 50. In 2013, there were 46, which is 1.2 times more than in 1997. Figure 3.1 also offers a breakdown into three categories: (1) national, (2) public (i.e., prefectural or municipal), and (3) private universities. In this breakdown, private universities are predominant. The private universities increased from 26 in 1997 to 33 in 2013. The larger number of private universities is understandable because their percentage in the overall ratio of higher educational institutions is the highest in Japan. For example, in 2013, the number of all private universities was 3.6 times higher than the other (i.e., national and public) universities (601 and 169, respectively):

![Figure 3.1 The number of four-year universities offering Arabic courses in Japan from 1997 to 2013](image-url)
In 2013, the percentage of private universities offering Arabic courses (33) in contrast to all private universities was 5.5%, while the percentage of national and public universities offering Arabic courses (13) compared to all of the national and public universities was 7.7%. Because the numbers of national and public universities offering Arabic courses remained largely stable throughout the period, the increment in the whole number was due to the opening of Arabic courses in private universities.

Several factors may have influenced the opening of Arabic courses in universities. It is difficult to clarify such influences. Of these factors, events pertaining to the Arabs and Islam that shocked the world may have affected changes in the number of universities offering Arabic. For instance, the impact of 9/11 in 2001 may have been a factor, as the number 40 in 2001 increased to 50 by 2006. The Arab Spring in 2010–2011 is regarded as a small influence, as the number of universities offering Arabic actually dropped to 46 in 2013. For the years between 2008 and 2013, the number fluctuated between 43 and 50.

**The Number of Universities Offering L2 Language Courses in Japan**

Figure 3.2 illustrates the offerings of ten different L2 languages, including Arabic, in four-year universities between 1997 and 2013. The overall number of four-year universities in Japan was 587 in 1997 and 771 in 2013 (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 1998; Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology of Japan, 2015), which indicates an increase of 1.3 times during the period. Universities offering Arabic represent the smallest number throughout the period. Arabic was offered in 37 (6.3%) Japanese universities in 1997, and 46 (5.9%) in 2013.

The most predominant L2 language in Japanese education, English, was taught in more than 95% of Japanese universities throughout the period in Japan. English increased by 1.3 times (580 to 737), and Spanish by 1.21 times (190 to 230) during this period. The increase of Arabic (1.2 times, as noted earlier) is similar to the increases for English and Spanish. However, Arabic is the twelfth language among the L2 languages within the universities that offered L2 languages in 2013.

**The Number of Universities Offering L2 Languages in Japan and the USA**

Figure 3.3 compares how many four-year universities in Japan and in the USA offered ten specific L2 languages in between 2002 and 2013. The overall number of universities in the USA was 2,466

In the USA, Arabic offerings increased greatly from 2002 (199) to 2013 (473), which is an increase of 2.4 times. This is the highest growth in all of the ten languages, including Chinese and Korean. In Japan during the same period, the number of universities that offered Arabic rose very slightly (from 44 to 46), and the rises for offerings of English, Chinese, and Korean all had a higher rate.

We compared the ratio of universities offering Arabic to all four-year universities in Japan in 2013 with the situation in the USA. The ratio in Japan was 5.9%, as described above. In the USA in 2013, the ratio was 20.6% because the overall number of universities was 3,039 (US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2016, p. 562), and the number of universities offering Arabic was 473 (Goldberg, Looney, and Lusin, 2015, p. 75). The ratio in Japan is statistically significant and much lower than that in the USA ($\chi^2 = 33.04, p < 0.001$).

### The Number of Students Learning Arabic in Japan and the USA

Approximately 3,700 students enrolled in at least one Arabic course during the 2014 academic year in all of the four-year universities within Japan (A. M. Sumi and Sumi, 2016b, p. 10). The number in the USA was 26,497 in 2013 (Goldberg, Looney, and Lusin, 2015, p. 31). In Japan in 2014 and in the USA in 2013, 2,855,529 and 13,407,050 students were enrolled in four-year universities respectively (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology of Japan, 2014; US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2016, p. 416). Therefore, the ratio of students learning Arabic compared to the entire population attending four-year universities were 0.13% and 0.20% in Japan in 2014 and in the USA in 2013, respectively. Although there is a statistically significant difference between the two ratios ($\chi^2 = 586.47, p < 0.001$), the ratio in the USA is only somewhat higher than that in Japan.
Arabic Teaching Institutes and Materials

This section describes the current Arabic teaching programs in high schools, universities, language institutes, and other projects in Japan. In addition, several teaching materials are mentioned. No junior high schools offer Arabic in Japan.

Arabic Subjects in Japanese High Schools

Three high schools presently teach Arabic as an elective subject in Japan. All of these are located in the Greater Tokyo metropolitan area. The number of full-time high schools in Japan was 4,300 in 2014. Therefore, these three schools represent a very small percentage. Considering that a number of high schools offer Chinese, Korean, French, Spanish, and German courses (517, 333, 223, 109, and 107 high schools, respectively in 2014), the number of high schools offering Arabic is extremely small. Most students learn Arabic for the first time in a university.

The Two Kinds of Arabic Courses in Japanese Universities

Arabic instruction in Japan has been conducted mainly in the realm of higher education. University Arabic courses can be divided into two types: one is courses offered as required subjects for Arabic major students in Arabic major programs, and the other is courses offered as electives for non-Arabic major students. The two are very different because Arabic majors learn Arabic intensively, while most non-Arabic majors attend one class of Arabic for 90 minutes per week in Japan. Due to this difference, we examined Arabic courses in Japanese universities by making a comparison between Arabic majors and non-Arabic majors. In addition, learners’ perceptions of teaching styles, and learners’ attitudes and outcomes while studying Arabic were examined.

At present, only two universities have Arabic major programs in Japan, and these two are both national universities: Osaka University and TUFIS. The other type is Arabic courses offered as elective courses for non-Arabic major students. According to our survey, 48 universities offered Arabic courses in Japan in 2014 (A. M. Sumi and Sumi, 2016b, p. 108). It should be noted that this number includes the two above-mentioned universities that have Arabic major programs, as they also offer Arabic courses as electives for students who do not major in Arabic.

ARABIC PROGRAMS FOR ARABIC MAJOR STUDENTS

In general, Arabic majors take Arabic courses as required courses because they have chosen Arabic as their major upon entering a university. Therefore, earning Arabic credit hours is a requirement of their program. They attend more than four or five Arabic classes per week (one class is 90 minutes in duration), though this frequency varies depending on the university and the students’ academic year. Along with Arabic, they typically take other subjects pertaining to the Arab regions. In most of the Arabic language courses, the students learn modern standard Arabic; but a few courses offer instruction in Arabic dialects. Both Arabic majors have study abroad programs.

Osaka University The Arabic Major at Osaka University is the oldest Arabic program in Japan, but it has changed in institutional form and name over the past 90 years. The current program aims to train people to transmit balanced and unbiased messages about Arabs and Arabic culture. They focus on teaching the extensive Arab cultural attainments from the classical to the modern periods, and thorough knowledge of modern standard Arabic (Osaka University, School of Foreign Studies, Arabic Major, 2016). The quota of the department is 25 students per year. A few of the Japanese major students in each academic year also study Arabic in the Arabic major program.
Akiko M. Sumi and Katsunori Sumi

The program has mainly relied on textbooks written in English, namely *Elementary modern standard Arabic* (EMSA) Part I (1975) and II (1976), from 1986 to 2016. In 2015, there were four Japanese full-time teachers, one visiting full-time native speaker Arabic teacher, and a few part-time Japanese teachers.

**Tokyo University of Foreign Studies**  Since the foundation of the Arabic Department in 1961 (which became an Arabic Major Program in 1993), the department has, according to its faculty, emphasized contemporary affairs—particularly practical knowledge concerning Arab regions and Islam (Tokyo Gaikoku-go Daigaku-shi Hensan Iinkai, 1999, p. 1102). Their policy is apparently to teach Arabic to students so they may pursue Arab studies as area studies. The quota of the department was ten students per year when it began, and in 1974 (the year after the first oil crisis) it increased to 15. In 2012, following the university’s reform of the Arabic Major Program’s structure, its quota was doubled to 30 students. In 2015, there were four full-time teachers, including one native speaker teacher, and some part-time non-native speaker and native speaker Arabic teachers. The teachers published a series of Arabic textbooks for Japanese students in 2013, 2014, and 2016.\(^{17}\)

**ARABIC COURSES OFFERED AS ELECTIVE COURSES FOR NON-ARABIC MAJOR STUDENTS**

Among approximately 50 universities offering Arabic courses (see Figure 3.1), a few big universities offer more than 20 Arabic courses, while many universities offer only one or two courses per year. Most of the Arabic courses for non-Arabic majors offer only modern standard Arabic. Regarding the number of classes, 138 Arabic courses for non-Arabic major students were offered in Japanese universities in 2005 (Takashina, 2007).\(^{18}\) According to our study (A. M. Sumi and Sumi, 2016b), the number of the same kind of courses was 273 in 2014. Therefore, the number of courses doubled from 2005 to 2014. Although the number of universities offering Arabic courses has been fairly steady since 2006, the number of actual courses remarkably increased in the same period.

Based on our survey for the 2014 academic year (A. M. Sumi and Sumi, 2016b), the number of university enrollments in Arabic elective courses for non-Arabic majors were approximately 2,917 students in the Spring semester and 2,362 students in the Fall semester of 2014.\(^{19}\) These numbers include enrollments in the course Introductory Arabic at Open University of Japan, which offers distance teaching via TV, radio, and the Internet.

In our study (A. M. Sumi and Sumi, 2016b), the frequency of Arabic elective courses which meet weekly and the instructors of Arabic courses were also investigated. Eighty-two percent of the courses meet once a week for 90 minutes, 16% meet twice a week for 90 minutes, and the rest meet four times a week or are study abroad programs. Another factor examined was whether the instructors were full-time, part-time, or Arabic native speakers. Nearly 44% (43.8%) of the universities assigned part-time instructors for their Arabic courses, 20.8% used full-time instructors, 8.3% used full-time and part-time instructors, 18.8% had full-timers and part-timers including Arabic native speakers, and 8.3% used only part-timers including native speakers. Overall, only 27.1% utilized Arabic native speakers.

The geographical distribution of the universities that offer Arabic elective courses is inclined toward urban areas. Sixty percent of these universities are located in the Kantō region (Tokyo and its surrounding six prefectures), and 25% are in the Kinki region (i.e., Osaka, Kyoto, and their surrounding five prefectures). For students in the other areas, therefore, the opportunity to learn Arabic locally is very limited.
Arabic Language Institutes and Other Projects

Language institutes and other projects relating Arabic teaching and learning do exist outside of formal education in Japan. In language institutes, intensive study of Arabic can be pursued by both students and the general public. Other projects, like Arabic intensive camps (Sumi Laboratory at Kyoto Notre Dame University, 2016) and Arabic teaching workshops (Wahba, 2015), meet the demands of learners and teachers of Arabic with opportunities that are difficult to find within formal education.

There are two language institutes that are comparatively old: the Asia-Africa Linguistic Institute (Asia-Africa Culture Foundation, 2016) and the Arabic Islamic Institute in Tokyo (Arabic Islamic Institute in Tokyo, 2016). As previously mentioned, the Asia-Africa Linguistic Institute was established in Tokyo in 1961 by the Library of Asian Culture, which is now called the Asia-Africa Library. Arabic is one of the Asian and African languages taught there, which also include Chinese and Hindi. This institute has offered a valuable opportunity to people who desired to learn Arabic, particularly during the 1960s to 1980s when there were less universities that offered Arabic courses. The other institute is the Arabic Islamic Institute in Tokyo, which is the Tokyo branch of Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, founded in 1982. In addition to carrying out Arabic language instruction, its aim is to introduce Arab-Islamic culture to Japanese people. Most of the instructors are native speakers, and their emphasis is to train students to engage in fluent conversation. The institute also organizes symposiums and workshops related to Arabic and Islamic cultures and the teaching of Arabic.

Arabic intensive short camps and Arabic teaching workshops currently exist in Japan (Sumi Laboratory at Kyoto Notre Dame University, 2016). An intensive short camp was held for a week in 2015 and 2016 in Kyoto, Japan. All of the participants made a pledge to solely use the Arabic language throughout the period of the camp, just as the Middlebury Language Schools program does in the USA (Abdalla, 2006). This is the first time that such a program was conducted with university students in Japan. It was not intended to give credit hours and did not belong to any single university, although the director of the camp was a university professor. The main purpose of this program was to improve the communication ability of students, especially speaking and listening (mainly modern standard Arabic). Another aim was to expose students to Arabic culture, such as calligraphy, songs, dance, and cooking. In both 2015 and 2016, approximately 80 students applied for the program. About 50 students were selected from more than 18 universities, and the participants were divided into three levels. The instructors were three or four Japanese and four or five native speakers of Arabic. Because the period was just one week, the effects were limited, but the participants’ motivation to communicate in Arabic was stimulated.

Teachers’ training projects also currently exist in Japan. The Arabic Islamic Institute offers some of these. An Arabic teaching workshop for teachers of Arabic was held in Kyoto in Summer 2015 (Wahba, 2015) and will be held again in 2017. This workshop in Kyoto particularly focused on introducing a communication-based approach. The participants, all teachers of Arabic in Japan, learned how to motivate learners from an experienced, skilled lecturer who spoke in Arabic. These workshops provide a valuable experience for the participants, who may investigate the most recent approaches in Arabic teaching.

Teaching Materials: Textbooks and Online Materials

Arabic textbooks are important in Arabic instruction, especially in school and university education. Arabic teaching materials published in the 1940s and 1950s in Japan are mentioned earlier in
this chapter. According to our research, since the 1960s many books concerning Arabic learning have been published: more than 70 Arabic textbooks (including those for learning only the Arabic alphabet), more than ten textbooks on colloquial or vernacular Arabic, and more than 15 Arabic vocabulary books. Most of the published textbooks are elementary level, and only a small number of textbooks exist for the intermediate and advanced levels. Regarding online teaching materials, Osaka University and TUF, which have an Arabic major program, have produced these on their websites (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 2008; Osaka University, 2014). The Open University of Japan also provided a broadcasted Arabic lecture online from April, 2011 until February, 2017 (Open University of Japan, 2011).

Textbooks that have been used in universities include Kuroyanagi and Iimori (1976) and Ikeda (1976), which are based on a grammatical syllabus that focuses on the structure of the language. The former is still used now in some universities. Some Arabic professors have adopted Sasaki (1997), which likewise is based on a grammatical syllabus. Honda (1998a, 1998b) and Takeda (2010) are used in some universities. In addition, the Open University of Japan and some other universities use Sumi (2006, 2011). The textbooks by Honda, Takeda, and Sumi contain a skit, vocabularies, grammatical explanations, and drills in every chapter. These textbooks mostly are used in Arabic courses that are offered as elective courses. As of 2016, the professors at TUF had also composed four textbooks aimed mainly at students who major in Arabic (see note 17).

Teaching and Learning in Arabic Courses at Universities

This section focuses on skills and knowledge emphasized in Arabic courses, and learners’ attitudes for studying Arabic. The results of a survey questionnaire are reported.

Skills and Knowledge Emphasized in Arabic Courses

What skills and knowledge are currently emphasized in Arabic courses in Japanese universities? To answer this question, students’ perceptions of the skills and knowledge that they encounter were examined. This procedure is the same as that used by Sumi and Sumi (2010, 2012). A survey by questionnaire was conducted among students taking Arabic courses between 2008 and 2012. The participants were 291 Arabic majors in two universities (204 women and 87 men: mean age = 20.74 years, SD = 1.85) and 634 non-Arabic majors in 23 universities (441 women and 193 men: mean age = 21.28 years, SD = 5.26). Nine elements were selected for the Arabic language skills and knowledge: speaking ability, listening ability, writing ability, reading ability, grammar, vocabulary and expression, pronunciation, communication ability, and an understanding of Arabic culture. Communication ability means a comprehensive ability to create and deepen relationships with others. Each element was rated by the participants on a five-point scale ranging from “not emphasized in Arabic courses” to “very emphasized in Arabic courses.”

Figure 3.4 illustrates the calculated means and 95% confidence intervals for the item scores of the skills and knowledge for the Arabic and the non-Arabic majors separately. Although there were statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the skills and knowledge (except for vocabulary and expression) between the two majors, the students’ perceptions about skills and knowledge showed a similar tendency between the two groups of majors. In general, regardless of major, these Arabic learners in Japanese universities perceived that their teachers more strongly emphasized reading ability, grammar, vocabulary and expression, and understanding of Arabic culture, but they did not much emphasize speaking ability, listening ability, pronunciation, and communication ability. The only skill that showed a noteworthy difference between the two majors was writing ability. Although writing ability was assigned an above-average emphasis by the non-Arabic majors,
it was said to be below-average by the Arabic majors. It is assumed that writing includes learning the Arabic alphabet, which is required in an elementary course for the non-Arabic majors. Therefore, it is possible that this type of writing did not convey “meaning” to them. Moreover, the focus on the understanding of Arabic culture is important, because transcultural competence is considered an effective element for the acquisition of Arabic (Sumi and Sumi, 2008).

The results as a whole suggest that Arabic instruction for both major and non-major students in Japanese universities is characterized by the traditional instructional approach. This approach regards linguistic forms, including grammatical rules and vocabulary, as the most important element. Both the grammar-translation method and the audio-lingual method are representative of this approach (Long and Robinson, 1998, p. 16). Although “translation” was not included as an element in the survey, we assume that reading a text and translating it into Japanese would be a common activity conducted in class.

It seems that the Arabic majors perceived that teachers do not pay much attention to improve speaking ability, listening ability, and communication ability. The Arabic instruction for Arabic major

![Figure 3.4](image-url)  
Figure 3.4 Means and 95% confidence intervals for the scores on items about skills and knowledge emphasized in Arabic courses, stated by Arabic and non-Arabic majors in Japanese four-year universities.\(^{20}\)
students in Japanese universities may treat these three abilities as less emphasized skills. The results seem to suggest that teachers in the Arabic major go against the current of the communication-focused approach, firmly adhering to the traditional instructional approach.

Learners’ Attitudes and Outcomes

Adequate knowledge about attitudes and outcomes while learning Arabic is necessary to evaluate and improve current Arabic instruction. However, very few attempts have been made to investigate Arabic learning attitudes and outcomes among university students in Japan (A. M. Sumi and Sumi, 2016a; K. Sumi and Sumi, 2016). Based on our recent findings on these topics (K. Sumi and Sumi, 2016), we report on differences in attitudes and outcomes between Arabic and non-Arabic majors in this section. Six attitudes and outcomes are addressed: orientation to learning Arabic, goal of acquisition, learning motivation, learning satisfaction, subjective achievement, and learning anxiety. Our survey questionnaire (K. Sumi and Sumi, 2016) was conducted among 261 Arabic majors (184 women and 77 men: mean age = 20.75 years, SD = 1.88) and 235 non-Arabic majors (129 women and 106 men: mean age = 20.71 years, SD = 2.49) in Japanese universities between January 2009 and February 2012. All of the questionnaire items were rated on a seven-point scale.

“Orientation” has been used in the social psychological study of language learning as a term that refers to reasons for learning languages (Gardner, 1985, pp. 11–12; 2010, pp. 11–18). Orientation is closely related to motivation, which in turn exerts an essential influence on language learning success (Dörnyei and Skehan, 2003, p. 589; Ehrman and Oxford, 1995, p. 68; Gardner, 1985, p. 11). Using a factorial approach (both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses), we confirmed the same five types of orientation to learning Arabic among both Arabic and non-Arabic majors: integrative, instrumental, friendships, travel, and knowledge orientations. Integrative orientation for learning Arabic means that a learner wants to interact and communicate, and possibly identify with members from the Arabic language community. Instrumental orientation refers to a pragmatic reason, such as reading Arabic novels or working with Arabic. Friendships, travel, and knowledge orientations refer to seeking new friendships, traveling, and acquiring knowledge, respectively. These types of orientation were elicited in different contexts in a previous study, with French, English, and Spanish as the target languages (Clément and Kruidenier, 1983). In particular, integrative and instrumental orientations have been extensively investigated (Dörnyei, 2005, pp. 68–69; Kruidenier and Clément, 1986, p. 2). The five types of orientation for learning Arabic were common among Arabic learners in Japanese universities, irrespective of their being Arabic or non-Arabic majors.

In addition, a statistical test of differences in the orientation scale scores between the two majors showed that the Arabic majors had significantly lower scores for integrative orientation \((p > 0.01)\) and higher scores for instrumental orientation \((p > 0.05)\) compared to the non-Arabic majors. No significant differences in the scale scores for the other types of orientation were found between the students in the two majors. In Japan, Arabic majors appear to have a lesser desire to learn Arabic in order to identify with members from the Arabic language community than non-Arabic majors. In addition, in comparison to non-Arabic majors, Arabic majors seem to have a greater desire to learn Arabic in order to achieve practical goals. Moreover, in the Japanese university context, both majors seem to have a comparable desire to seek new friendships, to travel, or to acquire knowledge as a reason for learning Arabic. Our past studies (Sumi and Sumi, 2010, 2012) also indicate that Japanese students desire to improve their communication ability.

The results for goal of acquisition reveal that no significant difference exists between Arabic and non-Arabic majors in Japanese universities. Likewise, there is no significant difference in the scores
for motivation to learn Arabic between the two majors. Arabic and non-Arabic majors in Japan have similar goals when seeking to acquire Arabic and similar strength of motivation to learn Arabic. On the other hand, the scores for learning satisfaction and subjective achievement were statistically significantly higher for the non-Arabic majors than for the Arabic majors ($p_s > 0.01$ and $0.05$, respectively). But non-Arabic majors have statistically significantly lower scores for learning anxiety than Arabic majors ($p > 0.01$). In Japan, Arabic majors exhibit lower satisfaction when learning Arabic, evaluate their own achievements lower regarding tasks and tests in Arabic classes, and feel more anxious about learning Arabic. These findings show that Arabic and non-Arabic majors in Japan exhibit similar and dissimilar attitudes and outcomes when learning Arabic.

**Issues Concerning Arabic Teaching and Learning in Japan**

Three broad issues affect the teaching and learning of Arabic in Japan. Two issues involve institutional problems of university education and teaching problems, including which skills should be emphasized in Arabic courses and learners’ orientations. A third issue, which must not be ignored, involves research on Arabic teaching and learning in Japan.

**Institutional Issues in University Education**

Compared to data for the USA, which indicated a surge in the number of universities offering Arabic between 2002 and 2013, almost no growth occurred in Japan. In addition, despite the fact that the number of Arabic classes doubled from 2005 to 2014, the percentage of universities offering Arabic in Japan remains small—only approximately 6% of the four-year universities in 1997 and in 2013. It may be difficult to affect a change in the number of Arabic-offering universities, because opening an Arabic course involves various factors such as interest within the general population, academic demands, university policy, the university’s financial situation, and students’ demands. These factors include many issues that are under the control of institutions offering Arabic.

**The Traditional Instructional Approach in Arabic Courses**

The skills and knowledge emphasized in Arabic courses by both Arabic major and non-Arabic major students also must be addressed. According to the students, their teachers focus on grammar, reading, and vocabulary and expression, which is regarded as the traditional instructional approach. This tendency is stronger in Arabic major programs. But wherever it appears, it is out of step with the direction of the communicative approach, which has been increasingly used for teaching Arabic outside Japan during the past few decades (Abdalla, 2006, p. 319).

From the viewpoint of reasons for learning Arabic, Japanese students who study Arabic have integrative, instrumental, friendships, travel, and knowledge orientations. These results for learning Arabic are related in varying degrees to conversation ability. In addition to this, our previous study (Sumi and Sumi, 2010) found that students learning Arabic in Japan, regardless of whether they were Arabic majors or non-Arabic majors, wanted to improve their communication ability.

In the past, Arabic teaching was largely taught for the purpose of fostering scholars in Arab studies and related studies in Japan (Kadoya, 2006, p. 3). The traditional instructional approach, like the grammar-translation approach, met that need. However, current learners in Japanese universities seem to have a desire to communicate in Arabic. This desire is partly confirmed by the fact that there are many applicants for the Arabic intensive short camps whose purpose is to improve their communication ability.
The Need for Advancement of Research on Arabic Teaching and Learning

Little research on the actual condition of Arabic teaching and learning has been conducted in Japan from the viewpoint of improving practices. This situation is one of the factors which impedes the making of improvements in Arabic teaching and learning. Furthermore, only a small number of people are seriously interested in academic research within this field. This may be attributed to the fact that most Arabic teachers in Japan are specialized in other fields of Arab studies, such as history, politics, and religion.

An example is that Arabic instruction in Japan currently focuses on modern standard Arabic, and colloquial and vernacular Arabic instruction is very limited. The issue of teaching colloquial or vernacular Arabic as a second language has hardly been addressed, though it has been discussed by non-Japanese scholars in the field of Arabic teaching (Ryding, 2016; Younes, 2006). One of the reasons for this problem is that there has been little research upon which to build an understanding of current Arabic instruction in Japan. Another example concerns Arabic textbooks. Few studies have appeared on that subject in Japan, though a number of studies have been conducted outside of Japan (e.g., Wahba, 2016). In addition, it would be necessary to understand the effects of events associated with the Arab world and the Middle East on Arabic learners and courses in Japan. Further research is needed to clarify this issue.

Through research, we are able to grasp actual conditions, make others aware of problems and issues, and attempt to find solutions. The advancement of research, both in quantity and quality, will allow Arabic teaching to spread and be more effective for learners. There is a current need for an objective assessment of the present condition of Arabic teaching and learning in Japan, which should be based upon a broad scientific and statistical analysis.

Future Directions for Arabic Teaching and Learning in Japan

Apart from the three issues above, some strong points concerning Arabic teaching and learning in Japan are worthy of note. First, the number of universities offering Arabic courses has not decreased since the turn of this century. Second, the number of available Arabic courses doubled from 2005 to 2014, which shows that demand for Arabic has been growing. Third, new efforts, such as the Arabic intensive short camps and teaching workshops, staffed by experienced and skilled native speaker instructors, have appeared. Fourth, Arabic courses are (according to the students’ perceptions) emphasizing grammar, reading, and vocabulary and expression. This instructional approach is at least intended to develop students’ linguistic foundations. Fifth, the fact that an understanding of Arabic culture is emphasized in Arabic courses within Japanese universities is a strong point.

Returning to the three issues raised in the last section, for the first issue, it is hard to find a direct way to increase the number of universities offering Arabic—especially the number of universities that could offer Arabic major programs. This is because of institutional issues. However, for students who aim to have a good command of Arabic, the frequency of Arabic elective courses which meet weekly is not sufficient, even if they attend Arabic courses for four years. If we want more Japanese students to be fluent in Arabic, the number of universities offering Arabic—especially in a major program—should be increased, and the frequency of weekly course meetings also should be increased in a non-Arabic major program. However, if the aim of universities offering Arabic courses is only to allow their students to come into contact with the language to some extent as part of intercultural training, our suggestions will not be accepted.

The second issue concerns instructional approaches. We are aware that the communicative approach has a tendency to de-emphasize grammatical rules. Although this approach is widely supported and used in Arabic teaching, some teachers and scholars worry that grammar is overly
neglected (Stetkevych, 2013, p. 16). Grammar, reading, and vocabulary and expression are important elements in Arabic learning and teaching. The ability to use grammatical rules correctly is important when using Arabic, and these rules are comparatively intricate. Therefore, it is necessary to apply a way to incorporate the rules effectively in the communicative approach. One way is to “focus on form,” as was advocated by M. H. Long (Long and Robinson, 1998). The aim is to direct the learners’ attention to linguistic code features during a meaning-focused classroom lesson; this is the communicative approach (Long and Robinson, 1998, p. 23). A “focus on form” may be useful to current Japanese learners because this method can provide Arabic communication and conversation skills that are bolstered by a solid knowledge of grammar, and vocabulary and expression. For the second issue on instructional approaches, the new projects such as the Arabic short intensive camps and Arabic teaching workshops may help to promote a more communication-based approach. If more Japanese teachers participate in Arabic teaching workshops, they will be more aware of the importance of communication-based activities in classroom. Therefore, it would be better to change the approach to focus more on communication-based instruction, if we wish to match the learners’ orientations and increase their motivation for learning Arabic.

For the third issue, the importance of promoting research on Arabic teaching and learning, this is necessary to provide opportunities for discussion among researchers and teachers of Arab studies, and to make them aware of the need for more and higher quality studies in the field. Possible approaches to this are organizing more panels on related subjects in academic associations for Arab studies, holding seminars with leading scholars invited from abroad and from second language acquisition (SLA) fields as lecturers, and inviting researchers in the field to contribute papers on related themes to academic journals. The continuation of current projects like the Arabic camps and workshops will also help researchers to be more aware of the need to monitor and discuss issues involving Arabic instruction.

Conclusion

The state of Arabic instruction in Japan, which occurs mainly in higher education, has been influenced by changing contexts (i.e., historical, economic, industrial, international relations, social, and educational). Over the past several decades, Japanese university students have developed a steadily growing interest in learning Arabic. To improve current Arabic instruction, we must reform both the educational environments and materials used in instruction, including teaching materials and teachers’ training processes. We also must enrich the available research for the field. For learners, it is desirable to promote beneficial projects like Arabic intensive camps and study abroad programs, so that their Arabic competence, including their communication ability, will improve. The ultimate goal, we believe, is to offer effective, useful, and enjoyable Arabic instruction, which will satisfy both learners and teachers, so that more Japanese people will begin and continue to study Arabic. With Arabic linguistic ability, they will be able to communicate with Arabs and understand various Arabic cultural dimensions. This may be increasingly important in the world of the future. To reach this goal, teachers of Arabic and scholars in Arab studies in Japan must make continuing efforts to seek out and test new practices and theories.

Notes

1 This research was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 26370642. We would like to express our gratitude to Dr. Sumikazu Yoda for his helpful comments on this manuscript.
2 In this chapter, the term L2 or “second language” (Richards and Schmidt, 2010) is used to broadly mean “any language learned after one has learned one’s native language.” Therefore, we do not distinguish between “foreign language” and “second language” here.
According to Ikeda (1980, p. 77), it seems that Matsumoto studied Arabic mainly in Berlin, and traveled to Egypt and Syria on his way from Germany back to Japan.

Izutsu’s textbook (Izutsu, 1950) should perhaps be considered the first one for Japanese readers. Although one Arabic grammar book was published in 1942 and one text for reading Arabic appeared in 1943, both of these were reprints of Arabic textbooks for French speaking readers.

Takushoku University already had opened an Arabic study group for Islamic studies in 1935. They later included Arabic courses as one of the L2 language subjects in 1962 (Mori, 2003, p. 261).

According to Itagaki (1980, p. 61), many Japanese people studied in the Middle East Center for Arab Studies (MECAS), which was originally founded to train British diplomats before the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975.

Though Takashina (2007, p. 18) stated that there were 24 universities that offered Arabic courses as elective courses in 2001 (based on his survey and information from the University of Osaka for Foreign Studies), a survey by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology of Japan in 2001 shows that 40 universities offered Arabic courses, including three universities that had Arabic major programs. The data was directly obtained from the ministry.

The number above a bar is a total of universities. There are no data for 1999 and 2010. This figure is based on Figure 1 in A. M. Sumi and Sumi (2016b), which was drawn using data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology of Japan.

The reason for the choice of the ten languages, including Arabic, is that these languages have been researched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology of Japan since 1997.

The order of these languages from highest to lowest are English, Chinese, French, German, Korean, Spanish, Russian, Italian, Latin, Greek, Portuguese, and Arabic (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology of Japan, 2015).

The reason for the selections of 2002 and 2013 is that these are the years in which detailed statistics were collected by the Modern Language Association of America.

There are no data for 1999 and 2010. There are also no data for Latin in 1997 or Italian from 1997 to 2001. This figure is based on Figure 2 in A. M. Sumi and Sumi (2016b), which was drawn using data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology of Japan.

The white and gray bars represent data in 2002 and 2013, respectively. This figure is drawn using data from the statistics of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology of Japan (2004, 2015) and the Modern Language Association of America (Goldberg, Looney, and Lusin, 2015).

The statistics concerning Japanese students and universities in 2014 are based on data originally collected by us.

According to a survey of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology of Japan (2012), there were three high schools that offered Arabic in 2009, two high schools that offered Arabic in 2012, and no high schools that offered Arabic in 2014 (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology of Japan, 2012). However, our survey has confirmed that three high schools offered Arabic in 2014, 2015, and 2016.

In this chapter, the Japanese term “senkō” translates into English as “major.”


Because Takashina does not show the number of courses by semester, the number by semester was partially estimated.

In the Japanese educational system, most universities begin the academic year in April and have two semesters. Generally, the Spring semester (the first semester) extends from April to the beginning of August, and the Fall (second) semester extends from the end of September to the beginning of February, and includes the winter holidays which are about two weeks in length.

A circle represents a mean for the item score. A bar represents a 95% confidence interval. A solid line is used for the Arabic major students, and a dotted line is used for the non-Arabic major students. “M” is Arabic majors. “nM” is Non-Arabic majors. “a” is Mean for all the item scores of the Arabic majors. “b” is Mean for all the item scores of the non-Arabic majors.

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