

About Madrasa: Learning to communicate

Madrasa is a social-technology community for free-of-charge study of colloquial Arabic. Our goal is to cultivate a shared, communicating Israeli society by making the study of Arabic accessible to all. To do so, we have developed an online platform featuring courses and content, at a variety of levels. The success of the online platform has quickly facilitated real-life study groups. In November 2018, **Madrasa 2.0** was launched – a more advanced and interactive platform which will scale-up our efforts to realize our vision.

The challenge: We don't know how to speak Arabic

Arabic is an inseparable part of the Middle East in general and Israeli society in particular. Arabic is the mother tongue of 22% of the population, and many Jews in Israel, with roots in Arab countries, have a family, cultural and historical connection to this language. A recent study found that 56% of Israeli Jews believe that every Israeli should know Arabic. However, the overwhelming majority of Jews in Israel (95%!) do not speak Arabic. This is partly due to the absence of accessible and reachable programs to engage the population with colloquial Arabic. Thus, instead of serving as a "bridge over troubled water", language has become yet another barrier to understanding and solidarity in Israel.

Vision: An Israeli society that is comfortable in Arabic

While present reality is indeed grim, the time is ripe for a change. Madrasa is a powerful tool in changing this new reality as it can facilitate a platform for a genuine social revolution, on the way to creating a communicating society. **The numbers speak for themselves:**

- **25,000 followers** on our Facebook page receive new content and updates on a weekly basis;
- **Over 5,500 students** practice and interact on our Facebook practice group;
- **Nearly 2,000 students** receive daily content on WhatsApp and Telegram channels; and
- **Over 5,000 subscribers** receive our newsletter every month.
- Last year we held a first public event at Beit Alliance in Jerusalem, attended by over **200 Arabs and Jews**, religious and secular, of all ages.

Madrasa 2.0– The new home for students of spoken Arabic in Israel

After several years of successful activity – during which hundreds of thousands of people learned Arabic by using the Madrasa website – we decided to take the project to the next level. Madrasa has launched a crowdfunding campaign, yielding over NIS 170,000 from 1,200 supporters, to develop **Madrasa 2.0**: an innovative techno-pedagogical platform; an active learning community in social networks; and strategic collaboration with representatives from all sectors of Israeli society.

The Madrasa 2.0 beta site, featuring our new beginner course, was launched in November 2018, after a year of intensive research and development (both pedagogical and technological). The learning process was adapted to address the difficulties of undertaking an independent learning process, challenges which include a lack of opportunities for use and practice.

Our new pedagogical system is based on the Open EdX global platform, which enables interactive learning and collaboration between students. Open EdX is a sophisticated learning management system that enables monitoring the progress of each student, the gamification of the learning process and the provision of evaluation means. The new platform was an immediate success, and after only three weeks, over 4,000 new users registered and began to study. Madrasa 2.0 is also capable of bringing the Madrasa vision into critical intersections in our society, from hospitals to leading employers to social organizations.

Looking to 2019: Developing content and community

While 2018 was mostly devoted to establishing organizational, professional, and community infrastructure, our focus for **2019 will be on development**. The new platform will be upgraded and improved, with a special focus on becoming mobile-friendly, a critical component that can facilitate integrating Arabic study into the busy daily lives of our students. Furthermore, in addition to our beginners' course, we will be adding 3 new courses at more advanced levels and at least 2 new workshops. At the community level, we are working to establish a local community system, and in the coming year we have set the goal of initiating weekly training sessions in 10 communities throughout the country.

In parallel, we are initiating, along with the 929 entrepreneurs and CET, a national campaign for Arabic studies under the auspices of the Office of the President of Israel and in cooperation with fellow colloquial Arabic studies' institutions. The campaign will be geared towards the creation of a public momentum for joint study of Arabic. It is scheduled to continue for eight months (11/19-05/20), which will feature public relations efforts, presentations and the daily publication of content in the media and on social networks. At the core of this campaign will be an interactive marketplace that will direct each and every prospective student to find the most suitable means for them to study Arabic, taking into account their starting point, availability and personal preferences.

For further details:

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