

Arabic Language Teachers' Perceptions of Learners' Motivation in South Korean Universities

Ji-Hyun Kong

(zahiya@hanmail.net)

Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, South Korea

Suk-Ha Shin

(sukhashin@naver.com)

Myongji University, South Korea

Hae-Jung Lee

(narzis80@naver.com)

Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, South Korea

Tae-Young Kim

(tykim@cau.ac.kr)

Chung-Ang University, South Korea

Abstract

It is crucial for second language (L2) teachers to understand L2 learners' motivation in order to meet learners' learning needs and improve their performance. This study investigated Arabic language teachers' perceptions of their students' L2 learning motivation change patterns and sociocultural factors that affect motivation by conducting interviews with seven teachers. Also, five graduates and six students in Arabic language departments were recruited as interview participants for the purpose of data triangulation. The analysis showed that Arabic teachers recognize job expectations, parents or teachers' advice, cultural interest, and desire to go to college as major motivating factors for their students to learn Arabic. All the teachers believed that the motives for Arabic learning went through some remarkable changes after the September 11, 2001 attacks, contributing to increasing the employment expectations of learners. In particular, this study identified media, Confucian culture, and academic elitism as sociocultural factors influencing motivation to learn the Arabic language, which is categorized as a Less Commonly Taught Language in South Korea.

1 Introduction

Since the pioneering work of Gardner and Lambert (1959) was published, motivation has been regarded as one of the most active fields of study of second language (L2) learners. However, it is disputable that L2 motivation research has paid equal attention to the various languages. We reviewed research articles on L2 motivation published for the past 10 years in international journals (i.e., *Applied Linguistics*, *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *Language Learning*, and the

Modern Language Journal). A total of 230 articles was found, in which 119 studies (Applied Linguistics – 50 vs 30, International Journal of Applied Linguistics – 26 vs 17, Language Learning – 78 vs 47, Modern Language Journal – 76 vs 25) were described as being conducted on English as a second language (ESL) or foreign language (EFL) learners, accounting for 52% of the total. To develop a balanced second language learning motivation study, it is necessary to conduct studies of languages other than English.

Various scholars have argued that the demand for Arabic learning has been increasing in many parts of the world since the September 11, 2001 attacks (Allen, 2004; Brosh, 2013; Kong, 2010; Nichols, 2014). For example, enrolment in Arabic at U.S. higher education institutions increased 92.3 percent from 1998 to 2002, and 126.5 percent from 2002 to 2006 (Furman et al., 2010). In South Korea (henceforth Korea), demands for Arabic language study have also greatly increased since the September 11 attacks (Kong). According to Kong, several major events that occurred during the first decade of the 21st century (e.g., September 11 in 2001, the Iraq war in 2003, the dispatch of Korean troops to the Iraqi Peace and Reconstruction Division in 2004, the Lebanon War in 2006, and Korea's winning of the first contract to build nuclear power plants in the United Arab Emirates in 2010) have had direct and indirect impacts on the political and economic relations between Korea and Arab countries and have contributed to raising Koreans' interest in the language and culture of Arabs. As a result, while there were only five universities nationwide that offered Arabic as a major and liberal arts course in 2000, the number grew to more than 12 universities in 2009 thanks to Koreans' enthusiasm for the Arabic language and its study. Kong and Shin (2015) confirmed that the September 11, 2001 incident had a major impact on the change in learning motivation of Arabic learners.

The L2 teacher is known to play an important role in strengthening or weakening the learner's motivation. According to Oxford and Shearin (1994), when L2 teachers understand their students' motivation and respond appropriately to their needs, they can contribute to strengthening and enhancing their students' L2 learning motivation. Some studies have been conducted, reflecting on the importance for L2 teachers to understand learners' motivation (e.g., Buckler, 2015; Dja'far, et al., 2016; Gorham & Milette, 1997; Harvey, 2013; Schwan, 2015). However, research on Arabic teachers is limited to only a few studies (e.g., Al-Mohsen, 2016; Seraj, 2010) that have examined teachers' perceptions of Arabic pedagogy, while there is almost no research that has investigated how Arabic teachers perceive the learning motives of learners.

In an attempt to contribute to covering this lack of research, this study investigates how Arabic teachers perceive the motivation of Korean learners to learn the Arabic language, which is classified as a Less Commonly Taught Language (LCTL) in Korea. Studies of Arabic learners (e.g., Abuhakemah, 2004; Husseinali, 2004; Kong & Shin, 2015; Winke & Weger-Guntharp, 2006) found that the September 11 attacks brought significant changes in motivation to learn Arabic. The purpose of this study is to investigate how Arabic teachers perceive the changes in learning motivation of Arabic learners before and after September 11; and to extract sociocultural factors influencing Arabic language learning motivation.

2 Literature review

Arabic is an LCTL in Korea (Kong et al., 2018). Hence, this section reviews previous studies on the motivation to learn the Arabic language in the LCTL context and the sociocultural factors that may influence Arabic learning motivation.

2.1 Arabic language learning motivation in the LCTL context

It has been revealed that differences exist in learning motivation between commonly taught language (CTL) and LCTL learners (Bao & Lee, 2012; Brown, 2009; Magnan et al., 2014).

Moreover, there may also be differences in the learning motivation and needs of each language learner between languages that belong to the same LCTL group. For example, Pratt et al. (2014) discovered that learners of LCTLs possessed primary orientations such as career orientation, personal interest orientation, integrative orientation, and affective orientation; career orientation was discovered to be the most prominent factor for learners of Arabic, Chinese, and Russian, whereas integrative orientation was the most prominent for learners of Japanese, showing their relatively strong desire to live in the target country and learn more about the culture. Howard et al. (2010) also confirmed that, when it comes to American L2 learners studying highly politicized languages such as Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Korean, and Russian, the levels of their career motivation were significantly higher than those of learners of non-politicized languages. Besides, learning motivation toward the same LCTL can take a different form based on learners' cultural backgrounds (Husseinali, 2006; Wen 2011; Winke & Weger-Guntharp, 2006). For example, Husseinali investigated the motivation of Arabic heritage learners and non-heritage learners and discovered that identification orientations were significantly stronger among heritage learners than non-heritage learners. Non-heritage learners showed more intense instrumental orientations than heritage learners.

On the other hand, most of the studies on the motivation to learn Arabic in Korea, where the Arabic language is an LCTL (Kong et al., 2018), have been based on the dichotomy of Gardner's integrative and instrumental orientations. For example, Oh and Kong (2000) looked into the motivation of university students majoring in the Arabic language and found that the students' perception of the opportunity to meet more diverse types of people was the most important factor for Arabic learning, followed by future career motivation. It was also found that, while students with integrative motivation exhibited more positive attitudes toward Arab people, Arab culture, and Arabic language classes, those with instrumental motivation showed more positive attitudes only toward Arabic language classes. Kong (2010) examined Arabic learning motivation and perceptions of Arab people and culture among university students learning Arabic as a liberal arts course by using a questionnaire survey. The results indicated that integrative motivation served as a major motivational source and that students' higher levels of integrative motivation contributed to their intentions to continue learning Arabic.

2.2 Sociocultural factors influencing L2 learning motivation

Inbar et al. (2001) contended that political and cultural values of an L2 may affect motivation to learn the language, and therefore, learning motivation research requires consideration of the historical and political circumstances of L2 learners. In addition, Norton (2000, 2015) pointed out that, to understand L2 learning motivation, we must address influences of political, economic, and social factors, including power and identity, which may not be explained by Gardner's socio-educational model.

For example, Magid (2009) pointed out that Chinese L2 learners' English learning motivation is affected by issues of family, face, responsibility, and pressure. As for Korean students, Kim (2010) claimed that the university entrance examination influences their English learning motivation as a unique social phenomenon of *academic elitism*, as one's educational background is highly emphasized in Korean society. According to Kim (2010), *academic elitism* is a major factor affecting early employment and the future success of learners.

Previous studies on Arabic language learners have also revealed that their motivation is affected by various sociocultural factors (Abuhakemah, 2004; Husseinali, 2004; Kong, 2015; Winke & Weger-Guntharp, 2006). Winke and Weger-Guntharp point out that learners' motivation is susceptible to the environment when the language they learn is highly politicized, thrust into popularity by world events, or culturally stigmatized. For instance, it was found among Arabic language learners in the U.S. that their interest in the politics of the Middle East has become a more influential motivation since the September 11 incident (see Abuhakemah; Husseinali).

Meanwhile, Winke and Weger-Guntharp's (2006) study on Arabic language learners in the U.S. showed that the learners' primary motivation went through an overall change. They found a significant increase in instrumental or external and career-oriented motivation for Arabic learning since September 11, suggesting that the perception that Arabic is a competitive tool for employment is increasing, at least in American universities. A study by Kong and Shin (2015) of Arabic learners in Korea found similar phenomena to that of Winke and Weger-Guntharp. They discovered that integrative orientation was significantly higher than instrumental orientation in 1999, but instrumental orientation became significantly stronger than integrative orientation in 2011. Also, the study revealed that learners' attitudes toward Arab people became more negative in 2011 compared to those in 1999. It further suggested that economic and educational interest has become a powerful motivating factor for Arabic learning in Korea.

As noted above, some domestic and international research on Arabic learners has confirmed that the political event of September 11 in 2001 had a significant impact on learners' motivation. In addition to these studies, listening to teachers in the field who directly observed learners studying Arabic before and after the incident and comparing the students' motives may provide a new perspective on the sociocultural factors influencing motivation in second language study. Therefore, by using semi-structured interviews, we investigated how teachers perceived the motivation of Arabic learners through their responses to the interviews. Given its qualitative nature, it was not the purpose of this study to generalize to all Korean Arabic language instructors, Arabic language students, and graduates.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research questions

To address the research focuses described above, three research questions were formulated, as follows:

- 1) What are students' motivations to learn Arabic, according to their teachers' perceptions?
- 2) From the perspective of Arabic teachers, is there any difference in the motivation of Arabic learners prior to September 11 and afterward? If there is a difference, what is the difference?
- 3) What social and cultural factors affect Arabic learning motivation?

3.2 Participants and research background

Arabic language education in Korea officially began in 1965. As of 2016, the Arabic language has been taught as a major in six departments of five universities nationwide. With the 7th National Curriculum of Korea taking effect in 1997, it became possible to teach and learn Arabic as an elective course in secondary schools. However, only two high schools have adopted Arabic as their foreign language elective, as of 2016 (Korea Educational Statistics Service, 2016). Given that Arabic language learning and teaching in Korea has primarily been carried out at the university level, this study is aimed at Arabic learners and teachers who teach Arabic in universities.

A total of 18 participants (seven teachers, six students, five graduates) were interviewed for this study. Seven Arabic teachers and instructors were included in the interview (Table 1). They are currently working in five departments at four universities that offer Arabic studies as a major in Korea. One department not included in the interview is a newly established department; therefore, the teachers of this department were excluded from the study because we believed that it would be difficult to explain the changes in students' motivation during the comparative period.

Table 1. Information of teacher interviewees

Participant	Gender	Major	Affiliation	Years of Teaching Experience
T1	Male	Arabic literature	A university (in Seoul)	19
T2	Female	Arabic literature	A university (in Seoul)	33
T3	Male	Arabic literature	B university (in Seoul)	22
T4	Female	Arabic literature	B university (in Seoul)	28
T5	Male	Arabic literature	B university (in Seoul)	24
T6	Male	Arabic literature	C university (in Busan)	18
T7	Male	Arabic literature	D university (in Gwangju)	33

To increase the validity of the study results and interpretations by data triangulation, six Arabic language students majoring in Arabic at a university at the time of the interview in 2014 (Table 2) and five graduates (Table 3) were recruited as participants. In the case of the graduates, those who majored in Arabic at three universities nationwide in the 1980s and 1990s were included to identify changes in the motivation of Arabic learners before and after September 11, 2001.

Table 2. Information of student interviewees

Participant	Gender	Admission Year	Years of Learning Experience
S1	Female	2014	6 months
S2	Male	2014	6 months
S3	Male	2014	6 months
S4	Male	2014	6 months
S5	Female	2014	6 months
S6	Female	2014	3 years 6 months

Table 3. Information of graduate interviewees

Participant	Gender	Admission Year	University	Profession	Years of Service
G1	Female	1988	A university (campus A)	Journalist	20
G2	Female	1990	A university (campus B)	Translator	20
G3	Female	1985	A university (campus B)	Journalist	11
G4	Female	1986	B university	Employee	22
G5	Male	1985	C university	Government official	10

3.3 Research procedure and method

This study adopted interviewing (Richards, 2003) as a method for data collection. The questionnaires for Arabic teachers, students, and graduates were different, but core questions were kept the same for a more effective comparison. This interview adopted the semi-structured method of Seidman (1991), through which this study could obtain standardized, comparable, and sufficient data. Thus, the same core questions were asked to each participant in the same order, followed by related and more detailed questions when necessary. This method has proved effective for examining Korean L2 learners' English learning motivation in Kim's (2006, 2015) qualitative studies. To check the appropriateness of the interview questions, preliminary interviews were conducted with one teacher, one student, and one graduate. Through this process, unclear or inappropriate questions were revised to finalize the questionnaires for Arabic teachers, students, and graduates.

The first stage was conducted for a month in September 2014 for students, while the second phase was conducted for a month in August 2016 for teachers and graduates. While analyzing the interview data, follow-up telephone interviews and face-to-face interviews were carried out, if necessary. It took 30 to 50 minutes for each interview. All of the interviews were conducted in Korean, the participants' first language, and the interview excerpts presented in this paper were translated into English.

3.4 Data analysis

All the interviews were voice-recorded and transcribed as soon as possible in order to accurately transfer the interview. The interview data in this study were collected from one-time interviews with 18 participants. The data to be analyzed were considered relatively less complex; therefore, Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) was not employed for this study.

As for the data analysis procedures, the researchers repeatedly read and coded transcribed interview data by categorizing the details. Guided by Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory, the coding categories were structured through the process of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. To ensure inter-coder reliability, each of the researchers in this study engaged in the coding process separately, and then got together to cross-check and discuss the coding results. As a result, the inter-coder percentage of agreement reached 100%.

4 Findings

In this chapter, we will analyze and present the results of the interviews with the participants to understand students' motives to choose Arabic learning and changes in their Arabic language learning recognized by Arabic teachers. We will then discuss social and cultural factors that affect the motivation for Arabic learning. Content analysis was centered on interviews with instructors and lecturers. To diversify the data, we cross-examined the opinions of students and graduates to verify the teachers' opinions.

4.1 Arabic learners' learning choice motives and their change patterns

Teachers perceived that most learners chose to study Arabic with the expectation that they would benefit by getting jobs in the future. They also thought that some students started learning Arabic at the recommendation of their parents or secondary school teachers, whereas others began learning Arabic because of their interest in other cultures and Arab culture. In addition, as a phenomenon specific to the social and cultural environment of Korea, some teachers mentioned that certain students selected Arabic to achieve the college entrance exam score for college admission.

4.1.1 Job opportunities

Employment was an important motivating factor, to the point that all seven Arabic teachers who participated in the interviews mentioned it as one of the main reasons learners chose Arabic as their major. This can be confirmed through the following interviews with teachers.

T3: One of the most important reasons students' choose the Arabic language is as a career opportunity... Because it seems very likely they will get a good job, they choose it in consideration of the quality of their future jobs.

T6: I think that the reason for choosing Arabic is to get a job. They must have thought it would be helpful for getting a job... because getting a good job is an important issue.

This is also evident in interviews with graduates and students.

G5: It was vague, but the reason was a practical need—the need to get a job, a job at a company. This is why I chose Arabic.

S2: I thought that it would be better to learn a special foreign language to get a job. I learned Arabic specifically because I heard that it would be helpful for boys to learn Arabic to get a job.

These interviews are in agreement with the results of the studies of Howard et al. (2010) and Pratt et al. (2014) that the main learning motivation of LCTL learners is career motivation, as well as with the results of the study of Kong and Shin (2015) that instrumental motivation is the strongest motive for Korean Arabic learners.

It is noteworthy to have found that the media has a major impact on students' job expectations, according to the following teachers' remarks.

T7: Students witness a lot of Arab-related news appearing in the media and appreciate the close association of Korea and Arab countries. I think this may motivate students a lot. All in all, students' choices for their majors are inseparable from career opportunities in the future.

In fact, the following student pointed out the influence of the media on choosing Arabic as her major.

S1: I read in a newspaper article that studying Arabic offers 'Blue Ocean'; in other words, there are still many opportunities, and in the case of Arab countries, there is a lot of opportunity for Korean companies to enter the market. There are also many contract orders and a lot of job opportunities.

In these interviews, no significant differences were found between graduates and current students in choosing Arabic as their major to get a job after graduation. However, for students studying Arabic after the September 11 attacks, it is apparent that they chose Arabic as their major with a more specific job vision. In addition, political, economic, and cultural exchanges between Korea and Arab countries have become more active since the September 11 attacks (Kong & Shin, 2015), and the increase in media coverage (Kim, 2013) has affected expectations that employment opportunities will expand.

4.1.2 Recommendation by parents or secondary school teachers

Arabic language teachers perceived that the opinions of parents and secondary school teachers also had a considerable influence on students' choice of the Arabic language. The following two teachers stated that students are highly influenced by parents when they choose Arabic majors.

T4: Parents' opinions have a considerable impact on their children's college major selection. Some parents tell their children to major or not to major in Arabic.

T5: When asked about the reason for choosing the Arabic Department, a student answered, 'A relative told my dad that the Arabic language will be beneficial for getting a job because of its rarity.' These kinds of external factors influence students. 'I didn't want to that much, but my dad told me that if I choose it, it will be good for my future career.'

These influences of parents are revealed in the following interviews with students.

S4: My parents said that it would be nice to major in Arabic, so I applied to the Arabic Department.

S2: My dad advised me to learn Arabic. My uncle also works in the auto parts trade business targeting Arab countries. He told me that he has been facing many difficulties in finding competent Arabic interpreters ... I think I considered what my uncle said.

The findings regarding parental influence are consistent with the results that parents had the greatest influence on students' career choices, found in a survey on career education and guidance conducted by the Ministry of Education (2015) in Korea. According to the Ministry of Education, after parents, teachers had the greatest influence on students' career choices. Excerpt 7 supports this

finding.

T3: I personally think that teachers' influence is huge. When asked about the reasons for applying to the Department of Arabic in college interviews, a student answered, 'When my world history teacher or my social studies teacher illustrated the Middle East, I felt that there was a vision for that area.'

The fact that students choose Arabic on the recommendation of a secondary school teacher is also supported by the remarks of the following student.

S1: One of my high school teachers told me that Arabic will have greater prospects than English if I have command of Arabic as a major.

However, in comparing interviews with graduates of Arabic before September 11 and current students in 2014, there is a noticeable increase in the number of students who were encouraged to study Arabic by their parents or teachers compared to before the September 11 attacks. The number of students who mentioned parental or teacher recommendations was four out of six, while the number of learners who had graduated before September 11 and referred to parental or teacher recommendations was only one in five. The following graduate said that his parents tried to dissuade him from majoring in Arabic.

G4: My parents often told me not to major in Arabic because it would not be easy to get a job after I graduate. I heard a lot of things like, 'Do not study Arabic, study English,' because they thought that there were no prospects after graduation.

Interviews with teachers, graduates, and current students are consistent with the findings of Kim (2012) that Korean learners are greatly influenced by their parents in forming a second language ego. Since Arabic is an LCTL in Korea, most Korean students do not have the opportunity to learn Arabic through secondary school education. As a result, it could be inferred that they are likely to rely heavily on the advice of their parents or teachers in choosing Arabic as a major because they are unlikely to have gained prior knowledge or learning experience in Arabic. It can be also deduced that, after the September 11 attacks, employment opportunities related to the field of Arabic in Korea expanded. As a result, parents and teachers began to actively encourage children to learn Arabic.

4.1.3 Interest in Arab culture or other cultures

It has been reported that students' interest in Arab culture or other cultures can be a major motivation to learn Arabic (e.g., Husseinali, 2006; Kong & Shin, 2015; Oh & Kong, 2000; Winke, & Weger-Guntharp, 2006). Arabic teachers also seemed well aware of this aspect.

T1: When I go into class, I find that some students have distinct goals. There are some students who talk about their goals, saying 'I will study Islamic culture.'

Teachers' opinions that a favourable impression of Arab culture contributed to choosing to learn Arabic are also supported by the interviews with both students and graduates.

S1: I decided to learn Arabic because of an interest in Arab culture. I think that the Arab culture is a very developed one. When I saw their history ... although they took control of other areas ... they did not impose their religion and adopted a conciliatory approach. Maybe it is a benevolent religion? I also thought about that ... I learned this when I studied World History. I thought that Arab culture is not so bad.

G3: My interest in the Arab people functioned as a motive, to some extent. At the time, Arab people were preserving their culture by sticking to their traditional outfits. I guess my interest in that kind of thing encouraged me to choose the Department of Arabic.

In addition, it was revealed that some students determined to major in Arabic as they became interested in Arab culture and people through the media, as depicted in the following teacher's remarks.

T6: I think the media significantly contributes to high school students' interest in Arab culture and Arabic. If they become curious about information on Arabs and Islam appearing in media such as television and newspapers, this can enhance their motivation to learn Arabic.

The influence of the media that the teacher mentioned was confirmed through an interview with the next student.

S3: The owner of the British football league, Manchester City, is Mansour... Manchester City suddenly recruited a lot of players, gave them a lot of money, and won. I thought, 'Who is that guy and why does he have so much money?' I searched the related news and articles on the internet, but I didn't think about the Middle East. Then, I thought that it would be fun to live or work there, so I wanted to come to the Arabic department.

The next two teachers, however, stated that rapid media coverage after September 11 contributed to raising the interest in Islamic culture.

T5: After the September 11 attacks, there have been many comments on TV, especially from intellectuals, about the relationship with the Arab world.

T3: In the past, students were only superficially aware of Arab culture. After the September 11 attacks, it was intensively reported by the Korean media, and the interest of Koreans in the Middle East and Arabs grew. Through this, Arab and Muslim culture became known to many people.

In particular, T3 noted that pre-September 11 graduates had a superficial sense of Arab culture, but current students have more specific perceptions. The differences between these two groups can be seen in the next interview.

G1: When I first started studying, I was uninformed of Arabs and Arab culture. Frankly speaking, I was very ignorant about them.

S5: I saw a lot of documentaries about the Gulf region on TV. When I saw this, I noticed that there was not only the desert and camels but a developed city like Dubai. Through the documentary series, I learned about the Arabian Nights, the history of the Silk Road, the table of the Arabs, and so on. So I became interested in Arab culture and thought that I wanted to study Arabic.

Through the interviews, Arabic teachers can see that the interest in Arabs and Arab culture is a motivation for learning Arabic, while the increased media coverage of Arab countries since the September 11 attacks has increased this interest and contributed to Arabic learners obtaining specific knowledge of Arab culture.

4.1.4 Desire for university entrance

The last motive mentioned by the teachers was students' choices based on their desire for university entrance, as shown in T5 and T6.

T5: There are not a few students who did not carefully consider their aptitude and applied for this department based on their College Scholastic Ability Test scores only.

T6: There could be some students who just wanted to enter university, rather than being set on majoring in Arabic.

Teachers point out that some students, regardless of their aptitude or vision, choose Arabic majors because of the score on the college scholastic ability test, and the goal of entering a highly ranked university. This is also supported by the following student interviews.

S4: I did not know I would be coming to the Arabic language department. Honestly, when I had a second chance to try out for the college and had applied in rolling admission six times, I entered the Arabic department. I did not come because I wanted to learn Arabic from the beginning or because I had a clear goal.

This is a specific socio-cultural phenomenon of Korea, and similarities can be seen in the interview with the next graduate.

G4: There was no special reason to choose Arabic. Because I took the standardized tests at that time, I chose the college that matched my score and entered the Arabic department.

However, several teachers pointed out that the number of students who majored in Arabic due to their desire to go to college was significantly lower than former graduates.

T4: Students in the past came to the Department of Arabic based on their grades and thinking they could get a job somehow if they could speak Arabic, but I think many of the students these days come with a specific plan for their future job and career.

Teachers noted that although students often choose Arabic as a means of entering college, current students' academic motivation to learn the Arabic language is much more than that of former graduates. Teachers say that because information on Arab countries in Korean society has become available, students have more clear goals, such as getting more information and finding jobs.

5 Discussion

5.1 *Elevated status of Arabic as cultural capital and media influence*

The study has revealed that the status of the Arabic language has been strengthened as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) since September 11 and that the media had a great influence on it. The 'expectation of career opportunities' that all teachers interviewed refer to as motivation to select Arabic learning shows that the Arabic language is functioning as cultural capital in Korean society. In addition, in the case of graduates who studied Arabic in the 1980s and 1990s, the number of students who chose 'expectations of career opportunities' in learning Arabic language was two out of five, but in 2014, five out of six students chose that motivation. This indicates that the status of the Arabic language as cultural capital has been strengthened.

Teachers pointed out that media reports on the Arab and Islamic world, which have increased significantly since September 11, 2001, along with the expanded relationship between Korea and Arab countries since the 2000s, has had a great impact on the increase of 'expectations of career opportunities.' In fact, many Korean media have reported a lack of Korean Arabic expertise in the private and public sectors (Park, 2007) in the areas of Arab region specialists, Arabic translator/interpreters (SBS, 2001), and foreign affairs (Lee, 2012), as well as in the medical sector (Chae, 2013), and that there was a need to nurture them.

According to Kim (2013), Koreans receive information about Arab countries and Islam primarily through the media, including television, the Internet, and newspapers. However, the study revealed that most media reports in Korea related to Arabs and Islam were negative and even provocative and sensational, failing to present Arab perspectives in a fair and objective manner. Cho (1999) also analysed news articles related to the Arab and Islamic world published in a leading Korean newspaper and found that 67% of the articles regularly used negative words. She pointed out that these contents would give Korean readers a negative impression of the Arab and Islamic world.

However, this study found that the media did not only impose negative impressions of Arabs and Muslims. As mentioned earlier by T3 and T5, the media has contributed to enhancing Koreans' curiosity and interest in Arabic and Islamic culture. For example, T7 pointed out that even if the media illustrates the negative aspects of Arab terrorism and violence, it does not affect the motivation to learn the Arabic language at all. On the contrary, students tend to place more emphasis on reports that job opportunities have expanded.

Despite some negative press reports, the increasing motivation of Korean learners to learn Arabic and the increased interest in Arab and Islamic culture can be explained by Bourdieu's (1986) concept of 'cultural capital.' According to his theory, language is a powerful tool for cultural reproduction

that can justify more abilities and success as cultural capital. Several studies (e.g., Duchêne and Heller, 2012; Jang, 2015; J. Park, 2011) based on Bourdieu's language market concept (1991), which regards language as a symbolic or linguistic asset, identified how language capital works in a globalized neo-liberalistic society to produce self-esteem and benefits; and how language markets work and expand. In the Korean reality, where most college students endeavour to find a job after graduation, students choose an Arabic major mainly for utilitarian purposes, expecting that their investment in learning will bring tangible and intangible benefits. Given this, increased job opportunities from closer exchanges between Arab countries and Korea can be interpreted as overcoming the negative perception of the Arab world that has been continuously strengthened by the media.

To compare the numbers of news items related to Arab countries by Korean media before and after September 11, 2001, we searched related news reports from various domestic newspapers using 'Naver,' a representative portal site of Korea. We discovered that the number of related news items during the six months prior to September 11—from March 11 to September 10, 2001—was 695 items, whereas the number during the six months after September 11—from September 12, 2001 to March 11, 2002—was 1,641 items. This result confirms that the number of news reports related to the Arab world increased by 136.12 % during the comparative period. Also, to investigate the images of Arab countries delivered through the media, we selected the *Chosun Ilbo*, a leading newspaper in Korea, and analysed Arab-related news by classifying it as negative, neutral, or positive. As a result of the analysis, we found that the total number of related news reported before September 11 was 158 items (100%). Among them, eight items (5.1 %) were positive, 114 items (72.1 %) were neutral, and 36 items (22.8%) were negative. However, the total number of news items reported after September 11 was 389 items (100 %). Of these, 47 items were positive (12%), 122 items were neutral (31.3 %), and 220 items were negative (56.6%).

As a result of these analyses, we would suggest that the increased number of press reports on Arab countries and the abovementioned lack of experts in Arabic language and Islamic studies since the September 11 attack contributed to the increased interest of Koreans in the Arabic language and Arab culture. Thus, it can be concluded that the students recognized Arabic as a cultural resource and thought it worth learning as an investment for their future; in addition, the media made a great contribution to this recognition.

5.2 *Confucian culture and academic elitism*

This study showed that teachers recognize 'the recommendation of parents or teachers' and 'the desire to go to college' as the main motivations for learning Arabic. The main social and cultural factors influencing the two motives in Korea are Confucianism (George, 2006; Shin, 2011) and academic elitism (Collins, 1979).

According to Shin and Koh (2005), Confucian ideas have served as the basis for familism that stands out among Koreans. Familism in Korea greatly affects individual family members' problems in the form of family prestige, prosperity, and mutual assistance between families. Parents, especially, tend to actively intervene in the education of their children because they have high expectations for their success. T4 stated that, in extreme cases, parents often actively intervene when students plan their credit schedules or timetables.

A number of previous studies have shown that L2 learning motivation of learners in Asian cultures is highly influenced by their families (e.g., Kim, 2012; Kim & Kim, 2012; Magid, 2009). For example, Magid found that most Chinese learners are under great pressure due to parental expectations that their children will find a good job by studying hard and that these expectations have a major impact on students' second language learning motivation. In Kim's (2012) qualitative research, it was revealed that the role of parents, especially fathers, had a significant influence on the formation of a second language ego for Korean students.

On the other hand, education has an important cultural value in East Asian society based on Confucian ideas (Siu, 1992; Strom, Griswold, & Slaughter, 1981). Since ancient times, the teacher has been very important in Korean society as a public role model. The proverb 'the king, teacher, and father are one' illustrates that, as with the king and parents, the role of the teacher is the same as the ruler of society. The results of a survey conducted by the Ministry of Education (2015) showed that parents and teachers have the greatest influence on students' career choices and that this tradition continues to this day. For example, Oh and Kim (2017) pointed out that in modern Korean society, one of the main roles of teachers is to form students' personalities and help make career choices through various guidance and counseling. The role of parents and teachers in the learning motivation of Arabic learners in this study can be understood within this sociocultural context of Korea.

Additionally, the Arabic teachers pointed out that some learners choose to major in Arabic with the desire only to enter university or because of academic elitism, which is considered to be a situation-specific factor in Korea. The education fever of Korean society encourages students to enter university without good reason (Seth, 2002). According to statistics of the Ministry of Education in 2015, the average wage of university graduates was 45% higher than that of high school graduates. Also, according to the 'Social Trends of Korea in 2017' published by Statistics Korea (2017), wages of high-school graduates increased by 168.8% over the past 21 years from 1995 to 2016, while wages of four-year college graduates rose by 186.3% during the same period. Shin (2011) argues that getting into a good college and its alumni network have a profound effect on one's success after graduation, and that some students tend to take college scholastic ability tests several times to get into prestigious universities. The power of a college diploma as cultural and social capital makes students prioritize the acquisition of a degree in favor of improving their social status, as opposed to seriously considering their interest or aptitude in selecting their major. Therefore, as noted by Kim and Bang (2014), many test-takers in Korea tend to focus on popular departments, images or titles of a university, or the location of universities without realizing the importance associated with this major choice. The desire for university admission revealed in the result of this study can also be explained in the context of social education in Korea.

6 Summary and implications

The findings of this research are as follows. Expectations of career opportunities were considered by teachers to be the most influential choice motive for Arabic learning, followed by parents' or secondary school teachers' recommendations, students' interest in Arab culture and other cultures, and students' desire for university entrance. Teachers believed that there was a significant change in the motivation of Arabic learners before and after September 11. According to the interviewees, after the incident, the necessity of understanding the Arab nation emerged in Korea, while the importance of the Arabic language was highlighted by an increase in political, diplomatic, and cultural exchanges between Arab countries and Korea. This has had a great impact on strengthening job motivation, among other Arabic learning motives. Recognizing these changes, parents and teachers have become active advisors in the selection of Arabic majors. This also made learners' interest in Arab culture more concrete, as the value of Arabic as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) increased. The study confirmed that the main sociocultural factors influencing the learning motivation of Korean Arabic learners are media, Confucian culture, and academic elitism.

This study has limitations in that it was conducted in a limited context with a small number of Arabic teachers, graduates, and students. Despite the limitations, the academic significance of this study is large, because it attempted to understand and systematically explain the changes to and causes of learning choices and motivations of Arabic learners. In this regard, future research needs to be conducted with a systematic comparison between Arabic language learners' and teachers' perceptions. It is further suggested to look into the difficulties that Arabic teachers encounter in their teaching context, focusing on solutions to problems and the development of appropriate teacher

training programs.

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